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A love affair for the ages

On The New York Times's series of essays on Communism.

A case in point is “Red Century,” the remarkable series of essays in The New York Times commemorating the centennial of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Times’s love affair with Communism goes way back. In the 1920s and ‘30s, their man in Moscow, Walter Duranty, sent back cheery stories about life under Stalin. Rumors of state-engineered famines, secret police, and the extermination of undesirables were merely capitalist propaganda, Comrade, a line that won Duranty the Pulitzer Prize, which the Times has never repudiated. Their new series varies considerably in tone, but you will look hard to find much mention of the Gulag or the terror and murder machines of Lenin, Stalin, and their successors. Stalin himself was responsible for the deaths of at least 20 million, and when you tot up the butcher’s bill for Soviet-style Communism writ large the number tops 100 million. It really was, as Ronald Reagan said, an “evil empire,” and not only because of its systematic deployment of terror. As the historian David Satter noted in a recent op-ed for The Wall Street Journal, the “real goal” of the Bolsheviks went far beyond the abolition of private property and collectivization. Ultimately, their goal was spiritual: “For the first time, a state was created that was based explicitly on atheism. . . . This was totally incompatible with Western civilization, which presumes the existence of a higher power over and above society and the state.” Neither the brutality nor the spiritual emptiness of Communism makes much of an appearance in the Times’s celebrations of Bolshevism. Instead, we are treated to essays on the “Promise of Muslim Communism” and “Why Women Had Better Sex Under Socialism,” possibly the single most ridiculous piece the Times has published this year. Like Rousseau (a big influence on Marx), the Soviets were very keen about “changing human nature itself, transforming each individual . . . into part of a much greater whole.” It is extraordinary that the bloody results of that enterprise still have not penetrated the editorial line of our former paper of record.

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