

# Stalin's Brutal Faith

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"Vital Articles on Science/Creation" October 1987

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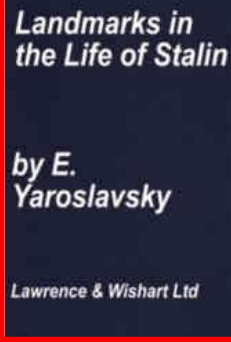
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Some have the mistaken notion that faith and religion are linked inseparably with the confession of a supreme being, but many exercise faith in self and other human beings--to the exclusion of the divine. This, too, is religion. Whatever serves as one's basic system of beliefs about his or her place and role in the universe is certainly a faith, a religion.



Joseph Stalin, though an atheist, was a believer. His was a faith resulting in tremendous brutality--nevertheless, a faith! What was this faith? Was it uniquely Stalin's? Also, how brutal was it? The purpose of this article is to offer some answers to these questions and to add insights of the eminent authority on Russia's soul, Nobel laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

## STALIN'S FAITH--WHAT WAS IT?



Often an individual's faith is firmly attached to a book of some kind. Muslims have the Koran; Hindus, their Veda; and Christians, the Bible. Writings of Confucius, Buddha, and indeed, Mao Tse-Tung, serve similar purposes for other groups. In Stalin's case, the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin incited him, but to stop here would be premature. There is one man-book amalgam which may have been even more determinative for Stalin, especially during his youthful, impressionable years. The man was Charles Darwin; the book--his *The Origin of Species*.

To document this, appeal is made first to a book published in Moscow entitled, *Landmarks in the Life of Stalin*. It was written during Stalin's "glory," and was designed to set him in a positive light. Note in the selection cited, that faith in Darwin and his "book" contrasts markedly with faith in a supreme being:

At a very early age, while still a pupil in the ecclesiastical school, Comrade Stalin developed a critical mind and revolutionary sentiments. He began to read Darwin and became an atheist.

G. Glurdjidze, a boyhood friend of Stalin's, relates:

"I began to speak of God, Joseph heard me out, and after a moment's silence, said:

"You know, they are fooling us, there is no God. . . ."

"I was astonished at these words, I had never heard anything like it before.

"How can you say such things, Soso?" I exclaimed.

"I'll lend you a book to read; it will show you that the world and all living things are quite different from what you imagine, and all this talk about God is sheer nonsense," Joseph said.

"What book is that?" I enquired.

"Darwin. You must read it," Joseph impressed on me" <sup>1</sup>

A few pages later, another individual--also reflecting on Stalin's youthful pursuits, added the following:

". . .in order to disabuse the minds of our seminary students of the myth that the world was created in six days, we had to acquaint ourselves with the geological origin and age of the earth, and be able to prove them in argument; we had to familiarize ourselves with Darwin's teachings."<sup>1</sup>

### **HAD MARX, ENGELS, AND LENIN SHARED THE SAME FAITH?**

It has already been stated that Stalin was influenced by the writings of these men. Did this dilute the effect of Darwin on him, or were these men also affected by the same British naturalist? The answer to the second question must be affirmative. Conway Zirkle, Professor of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania, published a book in 1959 entitled, *Evolution, Marxian Biology, and the Social Scene*, in which he cites comments made in correspondence between Engels and Marx. As early as December 12, 1859 (only months after *The Origin of Species* was published), Friedrich Engels wrote to Karl Marx, "Darwin, whom I am just now reading, is splendid." [2] About a year later (December 19, 1860), Marx, the Father of Communism, responded, "During my time of trial, these last few weeks, I have read all sorts of things. Among others, Darwin's book of Natural Selection. Although it is developed in the crude English style, this is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view."<sup>2</sup> To one Ferdinand Lassalle, he wrote (January 16, 1861), "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history." [2] Zirkle also indicated that Marx wanted to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin.<sup>2</sup> Harvard's Stephen Jay Gould, an intense and modern spokesman for evolution, corroborates this by reporting that he saw Darwin's copy of Marx's first volume inscribed by Marx--describing himself as a "sincere admirer" of the English naturalist.<sup>3</sup>

Ruis credits Vladimir Lenin with the following commentary on Darwin:

Darwin put an end to the belief that the animal and vegetable species bear no relation to one another, except by chance, and that they were created by God, and hence immutable.<sup>4</sup>

### **HOW BRUTAL WAS STALIN'S FAITH?**

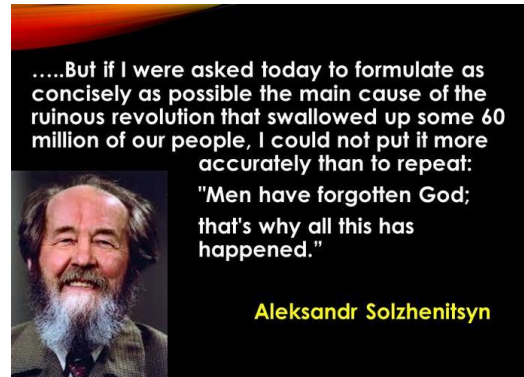
The 20th century has been one of tyranny and mass genocide. One needs only to remember the two million Cambodians slaughtered under Pol Pot, the six million Jews exterminated by Adolf Hitler, and the 20 million helpless lives aborted in America. Leading the list of atrocities, however, might well be the millions of Russian people eliminated under Stalin's murderous rule.

Harrison E. Salisbury of *The New York Times*, described the Soviet system of prison camps as "a whole continent of terror. . . . Compared with those who brought about the hundreds of thousands of executions and the millions of deaths in the Soviet terror system, the Czars seem almost benign. . . . Our minds boggle at the thought of a systematized, routine evil, under which three or four or more million men and women were sentenced each year to forced labor and eternal exile--and in a manner so casual that the prisoners often were not even told what their sentences were. . . ." <sup>5</sup>

### **SOLZHENITZYN'S INSIGHTS**

In 1983, Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, winner of the 1970 Nobel Prize for Literature, gave an address in London in which he attempted to explain why so much evil had befallen his people:

Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." Since then I have spend well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." <sup>6</sup>



But has Solzhenitsyn considered any relationship involving Soviet oppression, Stalin's terror, and Darwin's theories on origin? In his towering book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn recounts an incident which apparently took place in 1937-38 at a district Party conference meeting in Moscow Province. The secretary (replacing an arrested one) was paying tribute to Comrade Stalin. The group, including the new secretary, was standing and applauding their esteemed Leader. Even a single minute of feverish clapping consumes energy, but in this case it was important to sustain the "enthusiasm" much longer. Three, four, five minutes passed and more! Tired arms!--but who could risk stopping? Seven, eight, and nine minutes elapsed. It was absurd! Finally after eleven minutes (!), a local factory director stopped clapping and sat down. All followed suit, but that night the one who stopped first was arrested and given ten years! He was told, "Don't ever be the first to stop applauding!" Solzhenitsyn queries, "And just what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to stop?" <sup>7</sup> In harmony with the position of this article, he adds:

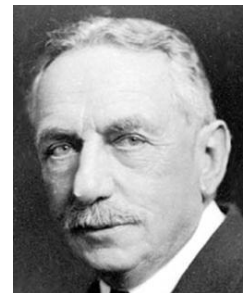
Now that's what Darwin's natural selection is. And that's also how to grind people down with stupidity. <sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In a previous article, <sup>8</sup> the present author documented the thesis that Hitler was a fanatical evolutionist. Evolutionary language and terms were shown to be used in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Sir Arthur Keith summarized, "Hitler (was) an uncompromising evolutionist, and we must seek for an evolutionary explanation if we are to understand his action." <sup>9</sup>

This present article relates Stalin, along with the Fathers of Communism, to the same concepts. The attachments of these men to Darwin have been made explicit, and, again, it would seem wise to include evolutionary explanations if we want fully to understand their actions. Of Hitler it may be said that he killed millions; of these men--and especially of Stalin--tens of millions!

Of course none of this either proves or disproves the theory itself, but it does strongly suggest that much evil has entered the world under the tutelage of Darwin's theory.



Henry Fairfield Osborn [see image] once wrote, "The ethical principle inherent in evolution is that only the best has a right to survive. . . ." <sup>10</sup> Jesus, however, was concerned to heal

the sick and deformed. He showed compassion for the weak and enfeebled. Not much of a follower of evolution's "ethical principle" was He, but, then again, one would hardly expect this from the Creator.

"Men have forgotten God;  
that's why all this has happened."

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- <sup>6</sup> Edward E. Ericson, Jr., "Solzhenitsyn - Voice from the Gulag," *Eternity*, October 1985, pp. 23, 24.
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- <sup>10</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, *Evolution and Religion in Education* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 48.



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How brutal was stalin's faith? The 20th century has been one of tyranny and mass genocide. One needs only to remember the two million Cambodians slaughtered under Pol Pot, the six million Jews exterminated by Adolf Hitler, and the 20 million helpless lives aborted in America.Â \* Paul G. Humber, A.B., M.S., M.Div., is a schoolmaster at a college preparatory school in the Philadelphia area. Cite this article: Paul G. Humber, M.S. 1987. Stalin's Brutal Faith. Acts & Facts. 16 (10).

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