

## Letters

### Defending Solzhenitsyn

It is appalling to read the vituperative and baseless attack on Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn by Semyon Reznik, which masquerades as a book review on the pages of The Washington Times ("Russian icon through Western lens," Books, Sept. 23). Mr. Reznik offers a few condescending words of praise for the book he claims to be analyzing ("Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Ascent From Ideology" by Daniel J. Mahoney), before proceeding to vent his formidable peevishness against Russia.

Mr. Reznik's depiction of Russia's assassinated Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin is beholden to the defamatory Soviet version that he must have memorized in his school days. He unscrupulously ignores the historical context that Stolypin single-handedly stabilized a country reeling from a systematic campaign of revolutionary terror that killed more than 20,000 innocents. In subscribing to the preposterous conspiracy theory that the czar's government killed Stolypin, Mr. Reznik implies that prerevolutionary Russia was ruled by men as dehumanized as the Bolsheviks. As for Mr. Solzhenitsyn's description of Stolypin's assassin in "August 1914," Mr. Reznik claims that "the most important aspect of [Dimitry] Bogrov's action is his Jewish origin." It may be the only aspect that Mr. Reznik cared to notice in his tendentious reading, but Mr. Solzhenitsyn clearly shows that the prime mover behind Bogrov's act was the ideological atmosphere that made him believe he was entitled, even compelled, to act.

Furthermore, Mr. Reznik declares that "most reviewers" find Mr. Solzhenitsyn's recent book on Jews in Russia anti-Semitic. This is flagrantly untrue. In reality, Mr. Solzhenitsyn's "Two Hundred Years Together" has contributed to an open and civil dialogue within Russia concerning the mistakes and grievances related to the country's "Jewish question." Mr. Solzhenitsyn writes in a spirit of constructive conversation, reflection and self-criticism. Yet Mr. Reznik treads the same old battleground, throwing inflammatory volleys, bent on reviving the specter of an entire "Russian anti-Semitic subculture."

Why does any of this matter? Yesterday, American conservatives stood up to communism. Today, it is critically important that they not misconstrue Russia's very roots (as Mr. Reznik does) to be anti-Semitic and outright evil. This dangerous bias can only poison the well of future Russian-American relations.

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