

SOLZHENITSYN, A BIOGRAPHY

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human being," and finally an implacable hostility to all forms of materialism for their falsification of these truths and their location of the moral battlefield not in individuals but in society. It was for this reason that Solzhenitsyn was offering *The Gulag Archipelago* not only as an act of national repentance and contrition but also as a personal confession of guilt and complicity in the larger crime. As in *The Oak and the Calf*, he called on others to emulate this feat of "self-limitation" and contrition.³

Gulag Two went a long way towards rehabilitating Solzhenitsyn's reputation with English and American readers, but there were still problems. Even Professor Schapiro, a profound admirer, was obliged to concede that Solzhenitsyn's counsel of "uncompromising perfection" held difficulties for most normal mortals (though he absolved Solzhenitsyn of the charge of hypocrisy). He conceded that Solzhenitsyn's "fanaticism" often led him to exaggeration, especially in the political sphere, that his "extreme intolerance" towards dissidents (not to speak of others) with opinions at variance with his own was calculated to make him more enemies than friends, and that Solzhenitsyn was "not entirely free from the irritating tendency of so many Russian émigrés to dismiss all the work of Western historians of Soviet Russia . . . as little more than a regurgitation of Soviet propaganda"—as one of the better Western historians, Professor Schapiro was sensitive to (and resented) this charge. So long as the debate was restricted to Russian subject matter, however, and to a discussion of Soviet policies and Soviet society, dialogue was possible, for Solzhenitsyn had thought profoundly about these questions and was writing from long and bitter experience.⁴

As if to confute the apologies and exegeses of his admirers, Solzhenitsyn immediately jumped back into the whirlpool of American politics. From his home in Zurich he sent the *New York Times* an article on the dismissal, in November, of the American secretary of defense, James Schlesinger, by President Ford. The article appeared on 1 December and blamed Henry Kissinger for Schlesinger's downfall, alleging that the defense secretary had been sacrificed on the altar of a false *détente*. Solzhenitsyn accused Kissinger of being ignorant of Soviet psychology, of presiding over a policy of "unending concessions," of bringing about the West's "worst diplomatic defeat" in thirty years (in Vietnam), and of arranging at best only a shaky peace in the Middle East. Kissinger was a "capitulator," a loser, a diplomatic simpleton, who was turning the West's "surrender of world positions" into "an avalanche." As for President Ford, he had acted without decency or foresight and should at least have consulted his allies first, for Schlesinger, "a man of steadfast, perceptive, and brilliant mind," had been responsible for the defence of the entire free world. His dismissal, though an event of a different order of magnitude, had caused in America's friends feelings of "pain, bewilderment, and disillusionment" akin to those produced by the assassination of President Kennedy and by the "inability or lack of desire of the American judicial authorities to uncover the assassins and clean up the crime." The bathos, lack of proportion, and clumsiness of Solzhenitsyn's analogy with