

Schlesinger and Kissinger

By Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

ZURICH—I shall never forget, when President Kennedy was assassinated, the pain we felt for America and the bewilderment and disillusionment experienced by the many former soldiers in World War II and former inmates in Soviet camps and prisons.

It was all the worse because of the inability or the lack of desire by the American judicial authorities to uncover the assassins and to clear up the crime.

We had the feeling that powerful, open-handed and generous America, so boundlessly partial to freedom, had been smeared in the face with dirt, and the feeling persisted. Something more than respect was shaken—it was our faith.

Despite the dissimilarity of events, I had a very comparable feeling at the time of the abrupt dismissal of Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, a man of steadfast, perceptive and brilliant mind. Once again, the feeling was that America had been insulted.

I realize that President Ford acted in full conformity with the Constitution. But woe betide a system in which it is sufficient and expedient to govern guided only by one's personal or party's election interests.

There is something higher than jurisdiction, and that is decency. There is something beyond juridical right, and that is good sense. There should at least be decency toward one's allies. After all, the Secretary of Defense is not merely a member of the American Government. He is in fact also responsible for the defense of the entire free world.

It would have been a friendly act first to have received consent from the allies. As for good sense, this involves the way things are handled. A leap-frog succession of officials in such a post can only impair the defense of the country. (It was noted who was pleased by the dismissal.)

There are rumors that the dismissal was linked to another name. It is an

*'There should
at least
be decency
toward
one's allies.'*

irony of history that the two names almost rhyme.

When I was in the United States last summer, I avoided direct questions from the press on assessing the character of Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. But his present triumph and the blinding misinformation being spread to this day about his activities compel me to speak out bluntly.

Defending his policy of unending concessions, Mr. Kissinger repeats the one and same argument almost like an incantation: "Let our critics point out the alternative to nuclear war!" More than anything, it is this phrase that exposes the nature of Mr. Kissinger; in particular, it exposes that he is least of all a diplomat.

"Alter" in Latin means "other (of two)." An alternative is a choice between two possibilities. This is a scientific concept, but even scientific situations often allow a much broader choice. But diplomacy is not a science. It is an art, one of the arts concerning the nature of man. To construct diplomacy on an "alternative" is to put it on the lowest and crudest level.

An art does not recognize alternatives within itself; it would fall apart if it developed only on the basis of two possibilities. No, in every instance art has a thousand choices. Every art has a spectrum, a keyboard of possibilities. From ancient times to the present, the art of diplomacy has consisted of playing on this keyboard.

How many great diplomats of the past have won negotiations even with empty hands or backed by inadequate power, in circumstances of military weakness, conceding nothing and paying nothing, defeating the opponent only by intellectual and psychological means. That is diplomacy.

Mr. Kissinger endlessly deafens us with the threat "... but otherwise, nuclear war." He obscures the fact that this same nuclear war hangs equally over the head of his opponents (at least as of today, until new successes by Mr. Kissinger).

And in these equal circumstances, under the same threat, his opponents are always winning and he is always yielding. Let him learn something from his opponents—how is it that they

operate so successfully in the nuclear age? The answer would be: They study the psychology of Mr. Kissinger.

What an absurdity. The United States was the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the world. Should it because of this have become weaker, and should it because of this surrender its positions in the world?

I dispute not only that Mr. Kissinger has the life experience necessary to understand the psychology of Communist leaders, and as a result sits at the negotiating table as if blindfolded. I also dispute that he is on the high diplomatic intellectual level ascribed to him.

It is not diplomacy to negotiate with a preponderance of power behind one's back, with an abundance of material means in one's pocket, to submit to all participants in the negotiations, to pay them all off and thereby to create unbalanced and temporary grounds for transition to further concessions.

The celebrated Vietnam agreement, the worst diplomatic defeat for the West in 30 years, hypocritically and very conveniently for the aggressor prepared the way for the quiet surrender of three countries in Indochina.

Is it possible that the prominent diplomat could not see what a house of cards he was building? (The Soviet press, in its rage against Andrei D. Sakharov, damned his Nobel Peace Prize as "the ultimate in political pornography." The press aimed in the wrong direction and was three years too late. This abuse would have been more suitable for the Nobel Prize shared by the aggressor and the capitulator in the Paris agreement.)

A similar alarming feeling of shakiness is aroused by the Middle East agreements of Mr. Kissinger (as far as I know, many Israeli leaders do not regard them any higher), although there has not been the kind of open capitulation to which Vietnam was doomed by the same pen.

Mr. Kissinger does not concede that any concessions whatsoever are being made. Thus, it appears: "The Western countries have not set a goal of ideo-

NY TIMES
OP-ED PAGE
DEC. 1, 1975

logical detente" (that is, they have not even tried to eradicate the central aspect of the cold war, so what is their goal?). Or, as he said on Aug. 1, 1975: "It is not, we who were on the defensive in Helsinki. Three months have passed and we ask: What was it, you, who was it?"

The very process of surrender of world positions has the character of an avalanche. At every successive stage it becomes more difficult to hold out and one must yield more and more. This is evident in the new conditions across eastern settlements in the unprecedented arrangements by the Soviet Union in East Africa and elsewhere in the United Nations.

Mr. Kissinger always has an emergency exit available to him. He can transfer to a university to lecture to credulous youngsters about the art of diplomacy. But the Government of the United States (just as those youngsters) will have no emergency exit.

There is much favorite argument by Mr. Kissinger. In the nuclear age, we shall not forget that peace, too, "is a moral imperative." Yes, that is true and not only in the nuclear age (indeed, this nuclear age is an obsession for Mr. Kissinger) but only if one correctly understands peace as the opposite of violence and does not consider Cambodian genocide and Vietnamese prison camps as the attainment of peace.

But a peace that tolerates any ferocious forms of violence and any massive doses of it against millions of people—just so long as this does not affect us for several years yet—such a peace, alas, has no moral loftiness even in the nuclear age.

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, the dissident Soviet writer now in exile, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970. This article was translated from the Russian by Raymond H. Anderson.

**The Secretary
of State
'is least
of all
a diplomat.'**