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# Kissinger's Advice on Solzhenitsyn

My brethren in the column-writing game, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, have disclosed an intriguing aspect of Secretary of State Kissinger's efforts to manage the Solzhenitsyn affair. Immediately after the Milwaukee press conference, in which he acknowledged that he had advised President Ford not to meet the famous Soviet exile author, Kissinger sent an emergency message to his old antagonist, Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D.-Wash.).

The message, Evans and Novak report, was a plea that Jackson, who was playing host that day to Solzhenitsyn at a Capitol Hill reception, not denounce Kissinger until he had read what Kissinger actually said.

It was, of course, a futile gesture. No force on earth can slow down Scoop Jackson's reaction time nor stay the power of his mighty mimeograph machine. In a blink of an eye, he had denounced Kissinger for "labeling him (Solzhenitsyn) as a threat to world peace."

Nonetheless, the advice was worthwhile, because what Kissinger actually said in Milwaukee was quite different—if no less disturbing.

When Kissinger was asked whether the anti-Soviet statements by the most distinguished and prominent victim of Russian repression were "a threat to detente," he repeatedly stressed his "enormous respect and admiration for Solzhenitsyn as a writer," and said: "I think this country can well afford to listen to a man of his distinction without worrying about what effect it will have on the foreign policy interests of the United States."

At no point did Kissinger say that Solzhenitsyn or his speeches pleading for an explicitly anti-Soviet policy constituted "a threat to world peace," as Jackson and a good many followup commentators have said.

What he said was quite different: "Solzhenitsyn is a man whose suffering entitles him to be heard and who has stood with great anguish for his views. But I do believe that if his views became the national policy of the United States, we would be confronting a considerable threat of military conflict." (Emphasis added.)

The distinction is anything but

subtle. It's the difference between allowing a fan to holler, "Kill the umpire!" and encouraging the crowd in the ball park to carry out the threat.

What remains unanswered by Kissinger's press conference is why he felt Gerald Ford should not hear, firsthand, a message he said the whole "country can well afford to listen to."

His only answer was that the "symbolic effect" of such a meeting "can be disadvantageous . . . from the point of view of foreign policy." That is an answer that reveals much about Kissinger—none of it flattering.

It reveals, first, how little he understands of the character of the President he is now serving—or how well Mr. Ford's natural character suits the American people.

The openness of Mr. Ford's White House has been a welcome antidote to the neurotic secretiveness of his two predecessors. If Kissinger does not understand the "symbolic effect" of Mr. Ford's suddenly abandoning that most welcome characteristic by snubbing Solzhenitsyn, then he is not the man to be advising the President.

Second, it betrays a terrible sense of insecurity or even inferiority toward the Russian rulers, whose sensitivities Kissinger presumably was trying to protect. If detente is securely rooted in the self-interest of both nations, as he argues, then it can surely survive the shock of Solzhenitsyn's denunciation—even from the steps of the White House. If it can't, then maybe it's not much of a policy.

There has to be more to Kissinger's intervention than that. He must know that Solzhenitsyn is no threat to his foreign policy. The Russian's real claim is not as a foreign policy adviser but as a profound interpreter of human experience and history.

It is in this role that he does pose a challenge to Kissinger. The Secretary of State is not content to be merely the wildest negotiator and most skilful manipulator in the interpartisan arena. He also likes to cloak his maneuvers—and the policies that lie behind them—with a rich patina of history and morality.

It was, for example, by selling Richard Nixon on the idea that he was going to achieve "a generation of peace" that Kissinger rationalized the decision to conceal the secret bombing of Cambodia and to "bug" those who revealed it to the American people.

Solzhenitsyn has his own view of history, and it is not Kissinger's. He has seen the horrors of the police state and knows that nothing can justify such invasions of human freedom. In his address to the AFL-CIO, he deplored conditions where "electronic bugging is such a simple thing, it's just a matter of everyday life."

That is a message Mr. Ford could well hear and heed, even if Henry Kissinger fears its "symbolic effect."