

2 March 1974

Dear Harold:

Although this probably won't go out until Monday, March 4, I'll do something now about replying to your mailing of Feb. 26, especially your discouraged note of 2/23.

We get the impression that Solzhenitsyn hit you as a sort of last straw; we wonder only that you don't become more discouraged more often, with or without the aid of Gospodin/tovarich Solzhenitsyn.

As to him, neither of us has paid him much attention. Speaking purely for myself, I immediately became suspicious of him when the American press began building up another Soviet defector as a hero. This is not to attack the validity of his charges against his government: I have no doubt about that. It's just that the surge was too strong for me to accept it on its face value. There has to be a more meaningful explanation.

La STM's reaction was also personal in her own way. She found his pictures repellent, much as you have. He just doesn't look likable or admirable or trustworthy to her. She dislikes his apparent air of sanctimoniousness and objects most specifically to his Captain Ahab beard. ~~Un-Russian~~, she hazards. CONTINUED

As to the whole WG situation, how well we understand the feeling of hopelessness, the overwhelming burden of what must be done as a mere minimum and that entirely inadequate, the refusal of people to see what is before them no matter how hard you work. What can I say, except what we always tell ourselves about our infinitely more modest efforts: that someone must do these things. Who wants to join those who refuse to see or admit what they do see? And when all is said and done, how else is one to keep informed? Certainly not by taking the word of the professionally blind.

Perhaps you counted too much on Solzhenitsyn, so that when his other side became apparent it disappointed something in you which subconsciously had been ~~relying~~ relying on him to show himself to be as advertised. I can say only that any time the American press picks up the ball on something like this, look out. There's always another side, and sometimes it never gets told. I think it's safe to say that 99 per cent of the stories and editorials praising Solzhenitsyn are written by men who have read little more of him than I have -- which is exactly nothing -- so it follows that there must be some other reason for the unanimity concerning him in the American press. I don't know what it is and am not particularly concerned about knowing, so strong is my feeling that somehow in some important respect the whole deal is fundamentally phoney. It stinks as the whole Cold War insanity stank from the beginning. In general I've always liked Russians as people but always found the Soviet variety extremely hard to get to know, but I must say that I've detected nothing in Solzhenitsyn that rang any sympathetic bells beyond his general insistence upon human rights and freedom. The question is, does he really mean it, and for whom?

Hope you're feeling better, and as a matter of fact I'm quite sure you are by this time.

Best,

jdw