

## The Global Gumshoe

Within weeks after Tad Szulc arrived in Argentina in 1955 on his first Latin American assignment for the *New York Times*, Juan Perón was toppled in a coup. In 1958 Szulc flew into Venezuela just in time to report the overthrow of Dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez. In 1968 he was in Prague when Soviet tanks rolled in. Last week Szulc, 48, now a freelancer, left for Israel to do an article pegged to Henry Kissinger's visit; Jerusalem be alert for some kind of spectacle. If Israel escapes unscathed, Kissinger's image will likely be less fortunate. The Secretary of State has lately been the favorite butt of Szulc's critical articles.

In the 24 years that Tadeusz Witold Szulc (pronounced Schulz) has reported foreign news, he has occasionally found himself between man-made calamities. Not to worry; Szulc has a talent for cultivating his own scoops and controversies. In fact, he is unique among foreign-affairs reporters. In a press corps that tends to mirror the genteel and cautious ways of diplomats, Szulc comes on like a Chicago police reporter—except for the fact that he speaks seven languages. While colleagues are parsing communiqués, Szulc cultivates CIA men or pores over Air Force shipping records to find out where U.S. arms are going.

The global gumshoe has unearthed some remarkable stories. While visiting friends in Miami in 1961, he uncovered detailed plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion. *Times* editors cut and down-

played his story because of national security considerations. Nine years later, Szulc says, he dug up news that the U.S. and South Viet Nam were about to invade Cambodia. This story was never published in any form. A former Kissinger aide recently reported that the *Times* killed the article at Kissinger's request. *Times* editors deny the deed.

**Tap Suit.** In any event, Szulc bounced back with a disclosure that the U.S. was still sending arms to Pakistan despite a State Department ban. That story did appear, and it prompted the Administration to tap the phones of a number of Government employees and journalists. Szulc is now suing the FBI and the "plumbers" for allegedly tapping his phone and breaking into his Washington, D.C., home.

That was only his latest clash with authority. The Czechs expelled him for his enterprising reporting in 1968. Lyndon Johnson denounced him for his skeptical stories about the rationale for the Dominican intervention. Kissinger's sentiments are not on record but can hardly be affectionate.

Szulc, who describes himself as a "Kennedy liberal," was one of the first important journalists to knock Kissinger, and in recent months he has scorched the Secretary's negotiating tactics in *Foreign Policy*, deplored his obfuscation of aspects of the SALT talks in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and accused him of everything from sabotaging democracy in Chile to possessing "a thirst for applause and adulation that can brook no questioning or criticism" in *New York* magazine.

Szulc knows Kissinger only slightly, and insists that he has nothing personal against the man. "I admire him in some ways," Szulc says. "But I take a dim view of what he thinks of human rights in Chile, Brazil and Greece before the coup. I think we got screwed in détente with Moscow. Did we get peace in the Middle East? Did we get a meaningful agreement on SALT? We did not." Some of the Szulc judgments, however, seem unreasonably premature.

Like Kissinger, Szulc was a Jewish refugee from World War II. At the outbreak of fighting, Szulc fled with his mother from their native Poland to France and later to Brazil. He came to the U.S. in 1947 and was about to be deported because his visa had expired when he met a sympathetic young woman at a party. She married him five days later, thus solving the visa problem. Tad and Marianne Szulc have two children, and he is a U.S. citizen.

Szulc also shares Kissinger's ambition and energy. In two years, Szulc has produced four books and 40 articles for a remarkably varied market; *New Republic*, *Rolling Stone* and the *Chicago Tribune* are among his clientele. Now he is finishing a book about Nixonian foreign policy. Less admiring Szulc watchers think that he may be too prolific. Says one: "Tad has several basic themes that he hits again and again. There's his Kissinger article, his Viet Nam article, his Middle East article, his Chile article. He's good at dressing up the package." Yet those packages are typically crammed with meaty intelligence and insights from his network of U.S. and foreign informants.

Szulc keeps in touch with his network via a red telephone in the study of his twelve-room Washington house, his headquarters since resigning in 1972 from the *Times* (colleagues say he was miffed at not being named Diplomatic Correspondent). He sometimes writes all night, then canters through nearby Rock Creek Park early in the morning on his eleven-year-old gelding. Says Szulc: "I make a nice living [about \$50,000 this year, up from \$30,000 at the *Times*]. I write what I want. I'm having more impact than at a newspaper. I like this life."

### CRITIQUE

#### The Literacy Problem

A new minischool of press criticism is forming that may be described as Funky Facile. Perhaps as a reaction to the self-praise of the Watergate period, such stylish writers as Lewis Lapham and Murray Kempton have lately put down U.S. journalism as not worth the penny that newspapers once cost. The

TAD SZULC ON HIS HORSE IN WASHINGTON & BEING FRISKED IN ARGENTINA (1955)

