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A Reply to the Sole Defender Of Peace

SECRETARY OF STATE Kissinger has been barnstorming around the country recently in support of his policy of "detente" with the Soviet Union, challenging critics to say what they would do differently. On behalf of those — and they are legion — who are dissatisfied with the policy, I accept Kissinger's challenge.

There is, Kissinger insists, "no alternative to coexistence." And then he throws down this gauntlet to critics: "What is the alternative that they propose? What precise policies do they want us to change?"



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Any high-school debater will recognize the tactic: It is known as the false dichotomy. Either you must accept Kissinger's policy of detente with the Soviet Union, or stand convicted of wanting to increase the risk of nuclear war. One or the other: take it, or

leave it. The challenge to propose alternative policies is at bottom rhetorical: It is really designed to suggest that no alternative policies, consistent with the hope of peace, are conceivable.

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BUT THAT is nonsense, and vicious nonsense at that. It is perfectly true that no sane person wants war; but it does not follow by a long shot that everybody who disagrees with Henry Kissinger is endangering peace. Quite the contrary.

A few questions for the secretary: 1) Would you, Mr. Kissinger, argue for an instant that peace would have been jeopardized if President Ford invited Aleksander Solzhenitsyn to the White House? Are the nerves of the masters of the Kremlin so frayed that such a gesture would have edged them toward the brink? Solzhenitsyn is a man of towering stature — the chief human embodiment for our generation of the spirit of freedom and Christian morality in Russia, and thus the symbol of the truest and probably the only hope for that vast country. To have received and honored him — as even Sweden, Russia's little neighbor, received and honored him with the Nobel Prize not long ago — would have restored in small measure the important moral dimension to America's worldview that has all but vanished under your management. Yet, according to reports, you advised the president to be "to busy" to see Solzhenitsyn. Why?

2) By all accounts we are preparing to make yet another gigantic grain sale to the Soviet Union. The rulers of that Workwrs' Paradise, where a full third of the labor force is compelled to devote itself to agriculture, must nevertheless supplement its grain production by purchasing wheat from the United States, where less than four per cent of the work force is involved in agriculture—and you rush to accommodate them.

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HERE, to be sure, you are powerfully urged on by the greed of men like Michel Fribourg, president of Continental Grain, who made such a killing on the last big sale of wheat to the Soviet Union that bread subsequently cost three times as much here as it did there. But why in heaven's name should this country seek to ease the economic pressures on the Soviet Union, which annually spends 40 per cent of its national income on armaments (versus less than nine per cent for the United States)? Why should we provide them with extra butter, and thereby enable them to concentrate on making more guns?

3) Can you point to a single concrete benefit of your vaunted policy of detente? Did it persuade the Soviet Union to diminish by even one tank or one howitzer the military aid without which Hanoi could never have conquered South Vietnam? Has it deterred Brezhnev from swiping Portugal right out from under your nose? Has it increased by so much as a degree the freedom of the Russian people — or have these accommodations with the Communist regime been accompanied instead, as such recent emigree as Dimitri Simes warned they would, by increased domestic repressions?

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THE ISSUE, Mr. Secretary, is not peace. The issue is your obsessive preoccupation with Metternichean ploys that disregard altogether — indeed, affirmatively damage — the only weapon available to the West that communism can never manufacture, buy, or steal: The knowledge of man's God-given right to freedom, and the determination that it shall prevail.

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