

Kanso-
8/16/76

ADMINISTRATION POSITIONS ON SOLZHENITSYN

Secretary Kissinger's News Conference of Feb. 13, 1974

Secretary Kissinger:

Now, on Solzhenitsyn: The United States has always looked with sympathy and great appreciation on the expression of freedom of thought in all societies. We have regretted some of the manifestations that interrupt this.

We do not know enough about the specific circumstances of the departure of Mr. Solzhenitsyn. And the only problem that we have seen here is the extent to which our human, moral, and intellectual concern for Solzhenitsyn and people of similar convictions should affect the day-to-day conduct of our foreign policy. In any event, we are delighted that Solzhenitsyn is not in some of the difficulties that were feared yesterday.

Q. To follow that up, Mr. Secretary, would Mr. Solzhenitsyn be welcome in the United States if he sought to reside here?

Secretary Kissinger: He would certainly be welcome to reside in the United States if he desired.

Q. How would this affect détente?

Secretary Kissinger: Our constant view has been that the necessity for détente, as we conceive it, does not reflect approbation of the Soviet domestic structure. The necessity of détente is produced by the unacceptability of general nuclear war under present conditions. The accumulation of nuclear arms has to be constrained if mankind is not to destroy itself.

This is a question that will be before humanity under all circumstances, and before American governments, as long as the accumulation of nuclear arms continues. So the United States will pursue a policy to reduce the dangers of war, to increase the possibilities of peace, and to limit the danger of nuclear conflict.

Address by Deputy Secretary Kenneth Rush, New York, Feb. 15, 1974

No discussion involving the question of human rights in the Soviet Union would be complete without reference to the situation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose forced departure from his native Russia has evoked worldwide attention and sympathy. Secretary Kissinger has already expressed what he so appropriately called our "human, moral, and intellectual" concern for Alexander Solzhenitsyn. This concern is founded in the importance which we place upon both freedom of thought and freedom of the press.

There are those who now suggest that Soviet treatment of Solzhenitsyn reveals the failure of our policy of seeking a détente with the Soviet Union. I respectfully submit that this approach is not valid. We have repeatedly emphasized that our effort to seek a relaxation of tension with the world's other superpower does not imply approval of Soviet internal policies and practices. Détente is based on the presumption that nuclear war is unacceptable. A reduction of this threat and an improvement of the prospects for peace are what we seek to achieve through détente. Such a policy, like our concern for the safety and freedom of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, is rooted in our concern for the dignity of man.

I would like to recall in this connection the words of Roy Medvedev, the distinguished Soviet historian and friend of Solzhenitsyn, who pointed out last fall that:

It is precisely under conditions of international détente that the efficacy of international public opinion and its influence on the internal policy of great nations is heightened. For a country that is isolated from the outside world, that fences itself off from the world with the various barriers of the "cold war," will become insensitive to the protests and the opinion of the world's people. . . .

Secretary Kissinger's News Conference, Milwaukee, July 16, 1975

Q. Mr. Secretary, do you consider the recent statements in this country by Alexander Solzhenitsyn a threat to détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, and also, do you think that this Administration should minimize its contact with Mr. Solzhenitsyn?

Secretary Kissinger: I consider Solzhenitsyn one of the greatest writers of this period. In my present position, I seem to read only classified papers. Solzhenitsyn is one of the few unclassified documents that I have been reading. So I have enormous respect and admiration for Solzhenitsyn as a writer.

Secondly, 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.

As for seeing senior officials, this can be considered from the foreign policy aspect. From the point of view of foreign policy the symbolic effect of that can be disadvantageous—which has nothing to do with a respect either for the man or for his message.

Q. If I could follow up for a moment. In what kind of light do you take his warnings that détente is a trap?

Secretary Kissinger: I take his warnings—if I understand the message of Solzhenitsyn, it is not only that détente is a threat but that the United States should pursue an aggressive policy to overthrow the Soviet system.

I believe that 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. Therefore, for those who are responsible for the foreign policy of the United States, his views can be listened to with respect, but they cannot guide our actions, much as we admire his writings.

* * *

Q. You said that Solzhenitsyn, as you understand it, would pursue an aggressive policy to overthrow—

Secretary Kissinger: My understanding of the message of Solzhenitsyn is that the United States should seek to overthrow the Soviet system. And I believe that under modern conditions, with modern weapons, this has consequences that will not be acceptable to the American people or to the world. But this is no reflection on the literary greatness of Solzhenitsyn or on the importance of some of his messages.