

# A Soviet Martyr's Anguished Plea

The following letter, by the Nobel Prize-winning Soviet novelist, is excerpted from the Norwegian newspaper, *Aftenposten*.

By ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

MOSCOW—Shaken by two gigantic world conflicts in quick succession, recent generations have committed an emotional error or misconception. They saw the threat against mankind's peaceful, just and good existence as almost exclusively deriving from war. And thus they strengthened the conception of the contrast of "war or peace."

Many exceedingly vocal and exceedingly one-sided congresses were called together and a world peace council came into being. And those persons who devoted their efforts (some honestly, others playing the role of demagogues) to averting new wars (occasionally favoring one type of war over another) acquired the title of "Fighters for Peace."

But a title of that nature covers considerably more ground than the scope of the task these people assigned themselves. The movement "against war" falls far short of filling the demands of a movement "for peace."

The contrast "peace-war" involves an error of logic. War is a mass phenomenon—compact, noisy, distinct. But it is by no means the only expression of the world-wide wave of violence that never ends. A logically balanced and morally truthful contrast would thus be: peace-violence.

Man's existence is torn and shattered not alone by the violent arms of war but also by the unending, inhuman processes of violence. And if one may say that peace is indivisible—that a small infringement of peace (not merely military!) is a violation of peace in its entirety—then violence must be equally indivisible.

A hostage who is seized and an aircraft that is hijacked are just as great examples of threats to peace as is a rifle shot across a border and a bomb thrown on the territory of another state.

But here we immediately run into a selfish effort to contradict the truth. Well-known groups of violent men insist that just those precise forms of violence that they themselves use cannot be considered a threat against peace, but as instruments in the cause of peace.

One example—the terrorism of the past few years. While man is tense and on his guard against wars, he has a tendency to fail to detect other forms of violence. The confusion is complete, and people are not prepared to reject terrorism committed by a single, little, individual. And most astonishing, a world-wide humanitarian organization is incapable of securing a moral condemnation of terrorism!

One could jokingly suggest the following: "When we are attacked, that is terrorism. But when we are the attackers, then it's a partisan freedom movement."

## The Most Threatening Danger

Permanent state violence—which throughout the decades it has reigned has succeeded in taking over all "judicial" forms, codifying

with the help of the same moralizing facial expressions, it was possible for the English labor leader to sum up his courage and pay a visit to another country (naturally enough, not an African country; that would not have been permitted) and there to issue his own "forgiveness" of the government without having asked the local population.

And when the Norwegians in 1968 proposed—alone—that not all had a right to participate in the Olympic Games, the faces of the majority of the Olympic participants stiffened in an embarrassed moral grimace as they closed their eyes and mumbled something about the lofty interests of athletics and commercialism.

But what kind of wall would they not erect if it was a case of protesting in the other direction? Would, for example, the South African republic be able to hold a black leader imprisoned for four years and subject him to torture, as was the case with General Grigorenko? No, the world's storm of indignation would long since have blown the roof off his prison!

In 1966, an English publication exercising its own unlimited rights of freedom decided tactfully that M. Mikhailov's idea of creating a similar and equally free publication in Yugoslavia was "conceited." And a German publication, looking on from its own idyllic position, decided that Mikhailov's idea had "ripened too soon" and was a disservice to liberalization." (After Mikhailov was broken, we can see how far liberalization has spread in Yugoslavia without any use of disservices.)

And recently New Zealand and Australia protested in vain against the French atomic tests—but why not against the Chinese tests, which are a much more serious matter? Simply because the expenses of maintaining a supervisory vessel are too great and the times for the tests have not been made public in advance? I maintain with conviction: Not just because of a moral grimace, but very simply because of cowardice. Nobody would come back from an expedition into the Chinese desert or to the Chinese coasts, and they knew this.

It is precisely this that constitutes the hypocrisy of many Western protests: They protest where their lives are not in danger, where they can expect the other side to give way, and where they are not risking being condemned by "leftwingers." (The best thing is of course always to make your protest along with them.)

Until the beginnings of the highly motivated 20th Century, one used the term *hypocrisy* when a person used two varying yardsticks of moral judgment. But what do we call it today?

Is it possible that the hypocritical facial expressions of the West can only be seen from a great distance but never detected at close range?

This type of hypocrisy is typical of the American political life of today, for the Senate leaders with their distorted vision, for the sensational "Watergate" scandal.

Without in any way defending either Nixon or the Republican Party, one cannot avoid

*morrow of mankind* and is thus, in the matter of its inner processes, worth full attention by Western observers.

No, it's not the troubles involved with gaining an insight that pose difficulties for the West. Rather, it's the lack of a desire to know, the emotional preference of the comfortable solution instead of the difficult one. Such a searching for insight is fed by the Munich Spirit, by concession and the spirit of compromise, led by an anxious self-deception on the part of societies of good intentions and persons who have lost their determination to make sacrifices and stand firm.

And even though this path of theirs has never meant preservation of peace and justice, but only their being trod upon and violated, human feelings are shown to be stronger than the most obvious lessons. Again and again the weakened world paints sentimental pictures that show how violence has generously become softened and is now willing to part with some crumbs of its superior strength—and all the while one can continue one's unbothered existence.

"Aircraft hijacking" and other forms of terror have multiplied tenfold precisely because we are all too quick to capitulate to them. But when one displays toughness, then one can always triumph over terror. Heed this well.

## Propaganda and Peace

I don't know how it is in Europe, but in our country you will find placed alongside all railway lines small stones with these inscriptions: "Peace for the world!" "For peace throughout the world!" This kind of propaganda is quite useful, if it means that there must not only be no wars throughout the world but that in addition every inner form of violence must end.

In order to achieve not merely a short-term postponement of the threat of war but a real peace, it is necessary to wage battle against the "quiet" hidden types of violence with no less determination than one would wage battle against the "noisier" types. The task must be more than merely stopping the rockets and cannons. We must draw the line against the violence of the state wherever it is necessary to defend members of society. The task must be to banish from mankind's thoughts the idea that anybody has the right to use force against righteousness, against justice, against mutual agreements.

This means that peace is not served by those who trust in the agreeable nature of the men of violence, but by those who—unbribable, uncompromisingly and untiringly—insist on justice for the persecuted, for the subjected, for the dead.

The widespread, mistaken definition of peace as "antiwar" and not as "antiviolence" has quite naturally also led to an incorrect evaluation of individual person's accomplishments in the fight for peace.

One looks first for the best fighters for peace among those who collect laurel wreaths at airports and in parliaments, who at any price divert the threatening breath of war, "warm" or "cold." This is the type who uses