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Is Solzhenitsyn Paranoid, Or Is He Not?

By Reuven Bar-Levav, M.D.

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist, spoke recently in New York warning Americans of Soviet danger. Citing recent events in Portugal, India and Southeast Asia, Mr. Solzhenitsyn deplored what he described as the reluctance of people in the West to grasp the simple notion that the purpose of the Soviet Union and its far-flung Communist alien is "to destroy your society."

"Nikita Kruschchev came here and said: 'We're going to bury you.' Now the Communists have become more clever, now they say D tente."

According to Solzhenitsyn they really mean the same.

Solzhenitsyn mocked with much sarcasm the naivete of the American people and of the American government in believing that the Soviet Union is genuinely interested in peace:

"Your government is constantly being deceived by the Soviet Union which cheats about the size and number of its missiles and nuclear warheads. . . . Soon they will be twice as powerful as you, and then five times and ten times. And some day they will say to you: 'We are marching our troops into Western Europe, and if you act, we shall annihilate you.' And the troops will move, and you will not act."

Instead of American action, he speculated, some American theoretician would probably applaud the lack of action as a positive move.

"Is it ever possible to warn anyone of oncoming danger? How many witnesses have come to your country, how many waves of immigration, all warning you of the same experiences and the same dangers? Yet those proud skyscrapers still stand, and you go on believing that it will not happen here. Only when it happens to you will you know it is true."

Had any American, such as Senator Goldwater or George Wallace, said these words he would surely have been accused of being rabidly anti-Communist and paranoid. Coming from Solzhenitsyn, with his reputation for courage and moral rectitude, the words are taken seriously, as an expression of an honest man who perhaps possesses more wisdom than we do. Nobody has accused him, so far, of being paranoid.

Many of the bills proposed in the legislature to remedy the malpractice crisis have been passed or are just about ready to become law. The public, press and many in the medical profession seem to feel that the situation has been corrected and the crisis is over. Yet, a recent letter from the Michigan Department of Commerce announcing the rates of malpractice premiums for July and August indicates, when computed on a yearly basis, that they would range from approximately \$1,200 for Class I to \$8,000 for Class V. Although an improvement, it is still an unreasonable burden and has not basically altered the public climate in which physicians are fair game in the hunt for easy money by unscrupulous individuals.

The U.S. Postal Service is right now investigating the AMA to determine whether its Journal should lose its publication mailing rates since the AMA also has a political arm concerned with legislation affecting physicians and Medicare. If the decision goes against the AMA, the cost of mailing the Journal will almost double, and millions of dollars would be charged for back postage. According to a confidential AMA memorandum, made public by the *New York Times*, the Postal Service has already rejected such mailing rates for the Medical Society of the State of New York and has taken away such mailing privileges from the Medical Society in Mercer County, N.J. Wheth-

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er designed for such purposes or not, such tactics are obviously being used to scare the medical profession into lowering its voice and from engaging in educational activities on behalf of its professional interests.

This editor has for some time been wondering privately whether the social climate that allowed for the development of the malpractice situation and the passing of so many laws and regulations that affect physicians adversely is a coincidence or not. Some physicians, efficient but greedy and lacking in the humane qualities that have always turned physicians into healers, have contributed to the lowering of Medicine's status. And yet, is it possible, perhaps, that powerful political forces have been working in concert for years, behind the scenes, to create a situation in which the role of the physician will be so diminished, his prestige so lowered and his options to continue in private practice so minimized that a nationalized system of health care delivery will be a natural, and perhaps the only possible, consequence?

Unreasonably high malpractice insurance rates drive some physicians out of private practice or may force them to leave medicine altogether. The only remaining alternative is to become employees of hospitals or other institutions, a trend that would fit into this scenario. The energies of physicians are being sapped and the morale of the medical profession is slowly being eroded in an endless series of battles. Could they all be part of a Master Plan, a grand design, as devious and yet as clear as that claimed by Solzhenitsyn to be at the root of all Soviet tactics?

If Solzhenitsyn is not paranoid, perhaps even this editor will be saved from similar accusations.

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"HOUSE CALL"

"House Call" the monthly Michigan State Medical Society television program on Channel 56 W.T.V.S. will air 1/2 hour earlier than usual during August and September.

On Wednesday, August 6th House Call will be seen at 7:00 p.m., on Channel 56, physician panelists answering questions phoned in by viewers will include Robert Woodward, M.D., Birmingham psychiatrist, Richard Gallucci, M.D., Dearborn family physician and Richard Gascoigne, M.D., Adrian surgeon.

The September edition of "House Call" will air on September 3, 1975, and will present Drs. Gerald O'Connor, Ann Arbor, Tom Berglund, Kalamazoo, and M.S.M.S. Past President John Coury, Port Huron, to answer viewers' questions. The program will again air at 7:00 p.m.

Moderator for the popular program is Ken Ford, Channel 2 newsman. More than 100 questions are normally phoned in during the 1/2 hour program.

Do You Know . . .

Dr. Lee B. Stevenson of the Editorial Board has been appointed to the AMA Section Council on Obstetrics and Gynecology to replace Dr. Stewart Fish.



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