

others—which he finds objectionable in most applications. . . . Yet there is no use pretending that problems are simpler than they are. There is no avoiding the need for some measure of paternalism. . . . The consistent liberal is not an anarchist. (Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*)

Few, however, will fail to find both pleasure and intellectual stimulus in either or both of these volumes, be he libertarian, socialist, liberal, anarchist, conservative, or even Liberal! But, yes, Virginia, there is a generation gap!

Reviewed by ARTHUR KEMP

Historian and Moral Witness

Solzhenitsyn and the Secret Circle,
by Olga Carlisle, *New York: Holt,
Rinehart & Winston, 1978. 212 pp.*
\$8.95.

VLADIMIR NABOKOV, though a non-citizen in Solzhenitsyn's world of high-purpose exile, was, all the same, a Russian emigré who became, with *Lolita*, an American, an all-American, and who then, with *Ada*, regressed to reactionary residence in a Russo-American cloudcuckooland of revived nostalgia. Despite *Lolita*, no authority harassed Nabokov, and no secret police (not even the CIA) disallowed his trips abroad (whether to fetch a prize or to live out his *entre-trois-guerres* international-Ritz-Hotel dream-life). Such is one of the differences between the two Russians in exile: Solzhenitsyn published one book at home and was forever hounded. Of the two, Nabokov was the more subtle anti-Bolshevik; he was not, however, any part of a prophet, not even a holy man. Still, he was as much opposed to the usurpers of his native country's

home and heart as his fellow exile. Each of them, in his unique way, was more of an internationalist than the dogmatic professionals of the Third, or even the Fourth, International.

Many American commentators have been piqued by the fulminations of the newest Russian prophet as he passed judgment on one country after another; the more he commented on other countries, the more his critics called him, paradoxically, a Nationalist, pejoratively. They ignored the patent fact that the eternal, rooted nationalist often makes the best, the truest, internationalist: the world is based on nationalities. The truer the nationalist, the truer as internationalist; for, as in language, one does not know one's own well enough until one knows another. Authentic paradoxes, these.

Nabokov wrote his all-American *Lolita* in this country, Solzhenitsyn now lives in Vermont and addresses a graduation class at Harvard (even if he is not allowed to address a U. S. President), and Olga Andreyev Carlisle chronicles the ramifications of her life in Russia and America during the years she was a representative of Solzhenitsyn abroad. The Andreyev in her name is the patronymic: her grandfather was the celebrated playwright Leonid Andreyev, and her father wrote a book on his father and took up residence in Paris, where Olga was born.

No one could be better qualified to write of multilingual negotiations in the book world, one complicated in Russia by the state and the police. Her ancestry is Russian, her young youth is Parisian, she has taught poetry at Yale, her literary connections center around New York (where her husband publishes), and she lives in San Francisco on the American ocean-frontier with China and the Far-East of Russia. In the midst of negotiations, secret perforce to protect Solzhenitsyn, who was still in Russia then, she stops off in Paris, where an exhibition of her painting is being held: She is well-rooted in three cultures.

The liberal forces in Spain were horrified when Solzhenitsyn wandered into that country on his own and had a look around, and then reported, when he was slipped in on a pop television "show," that Spaniards should count their blessings first, for they were better off than the Russian masses were sixty years after the triumph of "the workers' and peasants'" Revolution. Yet, there is little doubt that the wild man out of Gulag, proclaiming his awful truth, is socially unacceptable, an undesirable at any celebration. But it may be, however, that his fulmination is the price we must pay for harboring a phenomenon too hot for the Reds to handle, or for an American president to meet.

Olga Carlisle's story of an international misunderstanding is set forth as gently as rain, even if blown about by an occasional romantic squall. She sadly seems not to know why Solzhenitsyn should suddenly blow up a storm, when any reader not in thrall to the *Zeitgeist*, could almost at once offer an intuitive explanation. For Olga Carlisle, fully attuned to the dangers of the Russian situation, is paradoxically also "tuned in" to the American liberal establishment. She cannot understand how Solzhenitsyn could condemn the Peace March on Washington in the Fall of 1969, in which she herself marched in the company of the noisiest of the big names of the liberal apparatus. "At that time I had no notion that Alexander Solzhenitsyn might view our steps along the freezing avenues of the American capital as a craven retreat . . . a sign of the moral weakness of the West." She sees, and sees not. What other "view" could Solzhenitsyn have? The same forces which hounded him were trying to get America out of the East, out of wherever America met their challenge. High romantic impulse abroad was doing the work for the Reds. There were anti-Soviet liberals, like her friend Robert Lowell, but he was committed—he had committed himself—to a pacifist America. Earlier, she had

understood nothing when Joseph Brodsky, before he came to the United States and the University of Michigan, had lauded, in her presence and in Moscow itself, the American presence in Vietnam. Another small inconsistency which might have seemed amiss to the Russian was her addressing him a pivotal letter—in English. He had never been to an English-speaking country at the time, and yet the assumption was made that he could deal with an important communication in the language of his English-writing agent, a trilingual translator by birth and chance, one who moreover does not see or understand the implications of Solzhenitsyn's position in world politics. To an outsider, these misunderstandings between the agent and the writer seem inevitable. Solzhenitsyn was/is a harried man in a terrible hurry to undo and then re-do Russian history in this century. The Russian writer's ends are far from those of radical "Peace" marches, which he considers morally bankrupt, and Olga Carlisle's liberal conformist activity might well indicate that she completely misunderstood his own war.

Thus, if Olga Carlisle is honest and even-tempered in her treatment of Solzhenitsyn, she is obviously naïve in her liberal stance. She meets Daniel Ellsberg and wife at a party and records his words to her: two naïfs exchanging impossibilities. Ellsberg tells her that Solzhenitsyn "was one of my inspirations when I decided to release the Pentagon papers. I was facing what I consider to be a fundamental ethical question of our time—*his* question. Must an individual remain a silent accomplice to his government's crimes?" Solzhenitsyn, the counter-revolutionary, the inspiration for Ellsberg! It would be grandly ludicrous, if it weren't simply dumb. Once in the West, Solzhenitsyn made a point of condemning the same Ellsberg, his "follower," by name.

Ellsberg, it turns out, saw himself in the same position as any one of the scien-

tists in *The First Circle*: "I identified with Solzhenitsyn and his heroes" in that book: he was "shaken," he tells her, when he learned of Solzhenitsyn's condemnation. "I had tried to emulate him." (!) "The time came when I too had to leave the safety of my work and speak out." Now, just when is it that the heroes of Solzhenitsyn's book "decide to leave and speak out"? The comparison is demented. It all proves that books can be read and the whole point (even the factual details) missed entirely, the reader coming to whatever conclusions he chooses. Solzhenitsyn could scarcely be expected to trust one who was a friend of his mortal enemies in the West.

But Carlisle does not ever underestimate Solzhenitsyn's importance. If she errs, it is in overestimating the Russian's merit in the world of literature—an almost fashionable misjudgment. Every year a quota of writers is compared to so many Tolstoy and Dostoevskys; Solzhenitsyn has already had his share of overpraise in the annals of belles-lettres. In this epoch he plays a role as historian and moral witness; he is listened to for other than aesthetic reasons. It is clear that the fierce intellectual arrogance of the prophet (his summoning of a past he must reconstruct, and preparing the way for an uncertain future he must will into being) made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for him to compromise on any level, either at home or abroad, with the West or with the East; he is perhaps incapable of any mundane dealings at all.

Olga Carlisle is a woman of superb good faith. She is also most naïve. Her romantic idealism is of a high order of delicacy. And, in the end, her book celebrates the very man, and his world, which grieved her sorely (and which made it impossible perhaps for her to go back in her life-time to the Russia of her friends and relatives). She deserved her great witness. She has been faithful to him—in her way. Her life and travail with Solzhenitsyn is much more worthy than her

association with her American liberal cohorts. And so her publisher's lamentations in public print are, luckily, untrue. The advertising copy reads: "Olga Carlisle dedicated seven years of her life to an extraordinary mission: securing the forbidden translation and publication in the West, of *The First Circle* and *The Gulag Archipelago*. Her reward: vilification." No! Not by half. Is seven years spent dealing with Solzhenitsyn and his world a loss? There must be many who would exchange their literary "success" for a rough time with Solzhenitsyn and his world. And, can the ex-zek be held accountable (to anyone) for his tragic sense of life and history and for his lack of trust? It would be a lot to ask of a man who has spent his non-fictional life fighting the Nazis at the front; fighting cancer and exile and prison at home, and now fighting liberal dogma in the United States and other suicidal nations in the West.

The misunderstandings traced by Carlisle are not a mere publishing-world blackout. The epical sacrifice on the part of Solzhenitsyn's partisans is of far nobler dimensions—from the suicide of the young woman who caused the manuscript of *Gulag* to fall into police hands, to the great cellist Rastropovich's loss of his homeland as a base for his world music because of his public defense of his friend Solzhenitsyn. The publisher's simplistic lament suggests a public-relations settling of accounts, concluding: "Her response; this book." A false tension is built up by saying that she—and her husband as well—"sacrificed" [did they have something more fascinating in mind?] seven years of their lives, "seven years in which she put aside all her own work while she and her husband, novelist Henry Carlisle, labored to secure the best translations, to time world publication to Solzhenitsyn's advantage, and, above all, to insure total secrecy." Neither husband nor wife translated any part of Solzhenitsyn's work. Finding a good translator (the one they did find apparently did not

satisfy Solzhenitsyn) is not really a labor of seven years. And as for providing secrecy, that is really a matter of vigilance, more passive than active, not really a positive labor either, almost a negative quality and would normally consist, in publishing circles, of not letting another know what one knows, especially not the stupid Russian police. Finally, "timing publication" is not a seven-year job either. Moreover, the way publishers act—totally arbitrarily—would ordinarily make it a useless exercise for any one not a publisher to time anything at all on one's own. In short, there is no question at all of any years ill spent.

"The Secret Circle" of the title was in reality a triangle, a chain of command, through channels, to the Supreme Command, which was Solzhenitsyn himself. The campaign orders were to translate and publish abroad, out of Russia, *The First Circle* and *The Gulag Archipelago*; it was arranged by a dedicated band, centering, secretly, on a U. S. publisher, and called for Olga Carlisle to negotiate with Solzhenitsyn to his maximum advantage while yet preserving his minimal safety in the face of an already enraged KGB. They went about their task on signals from Solzhenitsyn, who was engaged the while in his holy war against the state. In any case, Carlisle writes of the "swirling fogs of a triangle" around the figure and mind of Solzhenitsyn. It was a drama, a fine example of a multilingual multicultural literary transaction. This book, perhaps unintentionally, records this drama, and avoids paranoia throughout; in stating her case against Solzhenitsyn's apparent veilities, Olga Carlisle never loses sight of the higher considerations.

Reviewed by ANTHONY KERRIGAN