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Heed the Message of Solzhenitsyn

MUCH has been written about the Washington controversy surrounding Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian writer who survived a concentration camp to tell the story, but too little has been said about his message.

Solzhenitsyn is trying to warn free nations of dangers and forces that may drive them into dictatorships, but influential forces are effectively distracting attention from his message.

Solzhenitsyn says he cannot comprehend the "West's fantastic greed for profit and gain." Perhaps he has trouble with the free enterprise or capitalist system, too, but he made a point when he told a Washington audience that Lenin had claimed the Western capitalists would do anything to supply the Soviet economy — "they will fight with each other to sell us goods cheaper and sell them quicker so that we will buy from one rather than from the other."

He said the Soviet system is so closed that it's almost impossible for

us to understand it, but that the leaders have not given up their "inhumane ideology" and that although there is a struggle within government for power, "they all want the same thing."

"Judge for yourself," he said. "It's a system where for 40 years there haven't been genuine elections, but simply a farce. It's a system which has no legislative bodies, legislative organs. It's a system without an independent press, a system without an independent judiciary, where the people have no influence on external or internal policy — where any thought which is different from what the state thinks is crushed."

He detailed examples of how free countries, including the United States, have helped totalitarianism in war and peace. "The Soviet Union has used detente in its own interest, is using it now, and will continue to use it in its own interest," he said.

"In our heart and soul, we have to recognize that it's almost a joke now to talk in the Western world in the

twentieth century about words like 'good' and 'evil'," the Russian concluded, "These are almost old-fashioned concepts, but these are very real and genuine concepts. These are concepts from a sphere which is higher than us."

"And instead of getting involved in shortsighted political calculations, we have to recognize that the concentration of world evil and the tremendous force of hatred is there, and it's flowing throughout the world. And we have to stand up against it and try not to give to it . . . everything which it asks for."

These are only a few isolated statements from a 90 minute address, but they are samples of the warning that this expatriated Russian is trying to give to free men everywhere.

A significant indication of the peril we face in falling into totalitarianism is the manner in which this warning has become clouded in political fog and emotional mists.