

Not a fair trade

Writing about journalist Nicholas Daniloff causes me sharp discomfort. In discussing this case one must make a wrenching separation between heart and mind.

First, the heart. Daniloff, an innocent but pesky journalist, was framed and arrested by the Soviet KGB after one of their men was jailed for spying in New York. Standard KGB operating procedure.

I recall many years ago planning a trip to Moscow. An old friend working in intelligence warned me, "Don't be in Moscow when a Soviet spy gets arrested in the West. You could be picked up for a trade." These words have always haunted me and, I admit, kept me out of the USSR.

When you travel or work as a journalist in a totalitarian country, fear is never far away. Having sweated away days and nights in such police states as Iraq, Syria or Albania, my heart went out to the hapless Daniloff when he became a victim of the KGB machine. Had I been in Daniloff's place, I would have prayed that my country do anything — anything — to get me out.

Now, the painful part. As in all hostage-takings, there are bigger questions than the fate of just one victim. The U.S. made a rotten deal by what amounts to trading an innocent journalist for a professional spy. Never mind the ensuing masquerade aimed at disguising this sordid concession nor talk of a possible release of Soviet dissidents. The U.S. has given *de facto* agreement to Moscow's hostage-taking, a crime every bit as bad as seizing people on an airplane.

The decision to trade Daniloff for a Soviet spy was obviously prompted by the Reagan administration's hunger for impending summit talks. A summit will do much to boost the fortunes of the Republican party in the important November congressional elections — a fact not lost on the crafty Russians.

It's truly ironic. American hostages have been held for more than a year in Lebanon by pro-Iranian groups hoping to exchange them for their men now held in Kuwaiti jails. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz has loudly refused to ever "make a deal with terrorists." So these poor forgotten Americans rot away so that Shultz can get tough with terrorists.

Yet, when an American is seized by Moscow, none other than Shultz sits down and negotiates a prisoner swap. Not a proud moment for American diplomacy.

I know how easy it is to comment from the safety of Toronto. Had I been in a KGB cell, I'm sure I would have said, "To hell with one-upmanship or face, just get me out!" Unfortunately, the "no-deal" rule that we have come to follow in hostage-takings also applies to the Daniloff case. When you

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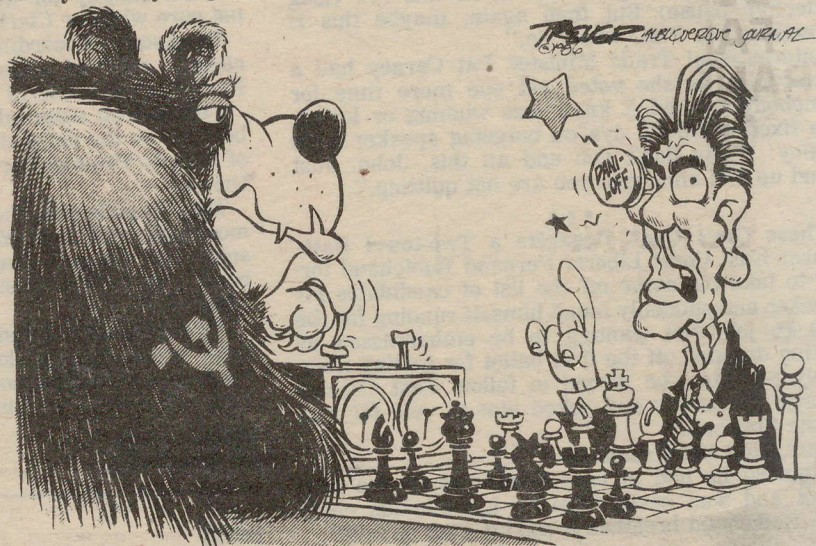


give in once, you will do so again.

What will happen when the FBI wants to arrest a Soviet spy? Will the state department veto the arrest for fear that an American tourist or newspaperman will be grabbed by the KGB? Will Soviet spies now have a freer run in the U.S.?

If Washington now accepts that a Soviet spy also equals a Soviet dissident, as it seems to have done, then the KGB will have an inexhaustible supply of human currency for future spy swaps. The West simply cannot win this heartless game.

Which confirms, once again, that the men mak-



"YEAH, BUT I DIDN'T BLINK!"

ing American foreign policy, and particularly Shultz, lack the sophistication, intellect and strength to deal with subtle opponents.

Instead of caving in and trading a KGB agent for Daniloff, the U.S. should have threatened to kick the entire Soviet UN delegation out of New York, to close the Soviet consulate in San Francisco, to break off trade relations and to arrest scores of known East Bloc agents. Agricultural sales could have been cut, anti-Soviet broadcasts doubled, heavy arms delivered to the Afghans, the Marines sent into Nicaragua, Cuba blockaded.

There are many ways Washington could twist Moscow's arm — action that should have been done silently and swiftly. True, Daniloff would have been a while longer in jail but at least other journalists would have walked Moscow's streets with a greater degree of safety than they now have.

More important, Moscow would have been put on notice that the West will not allow devotion to human rights to be used as a weapon against us.