

SOLZHENITSYN: A POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Jean-Marie Chauvier

Introduction

IT would be a relief if Solzhenitsyn were really a writer left over from the 19th century, a purely anachronistic spirit, a Great-Russian chauvinist with nothing ultimately very new or very credible to contribute to our understanding of Stalinism or of Soviet history and Soviet society. It would at any rate relieve the Left in the West of a daunting task—that of deciphering a message which, like many others that are now reaching it from the East, fails to offer an echo to the Western Left's hopes or illusions. However, in order to quell a fever it is not enough to smash the thermometer.

Even if the diagnosis of "fever" is a plausible one, it still remains necessary not merely to justify this but also to explain how a body of writing inspired by such backward-looking ideas can have succeeded in fascinating, even stirring, by its "authenticity", its "skill in saying what is hardest to say", even those who belatedly discover, with astonishment, what the writer's political conclusions are. One still has to account for the pre-eminence of this body of writing in the Soviet literature of the last ten or fifteen years: the audience, the esteem, even the influence that it enjoys among the most outstanding representatives of Soviet prose and poetry, among the Soviet intelligentsia, and, in general, among Russian readers. And, finally, one has to account for the strange dread which it seems increasingly to have cast upon official circles in the USSR. How is it that the rulers of such a great power, claiming to be the ideological leaders of the Communist movement, can be afraid of the books and speeches of an Old-Believer, an apostle of early-mediaeval Orthodoxy?

There is certainly something disconcerting about this *starets*, this venerable sage from the world of legend, who has wandered into the second half of the 20th century. Those who have subjected Solzhenitsyn to censorship, fond though they are of "ideological struggle", have not managed to join battle with him on any point whatsoever, but have felt able to deal with him only by means of sordid measures of persecution, culminating in a barbarous banishment—an admission, if ever there was one, of their impotence, but also a proof of the validity

of that accusation of tyranny, of "survivals of serfdom", that the writer has always levelled against the rulers of his country.

Solzhenitsyn has been a no less baffling surprise for the Left of the West, who would have liked to see in the author of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*—seemingly so unlikely to produce *The Gulag Archipelago*, which was nevertheless already in preparation—the reassuring critic of a Stalinism that belonged to the past, the harbinger of a regenerated socialism.

Many of his bourgeois admirers, dazzled at first by this unexpected gift, have also been taken aback: although the indictment of the Soviet order was most pleasing to them, its religious, Russophil and even anti-capitalist tones made "the conscience of mankind" less easy to exploit than had been hoped.

All these aspects of the Solzhenitsyn phenomenon—the coincidence of a literary achievement and a struggle, the power his writings have shown to upset people, the idolatry that they have been accorded in the West—most certainly call for a political study.

I appreciate the danger of reduction that such a study involves. Some commentators will exclaim, outraged, that Art with a big A cannot be examined and interpreted in this way "at the level of the conjuncture". Has not Solzhenitsyn himself rejected plainly enough all ideology, "the ephemeral requirements of politics and of petty social ideals"?

It remains none the less true that a particular "conjuncture" and the "ephemeral requirements" of a certain kind of politics are what have conferred upon Solzhenitsyn his status as "the conscience of mankind", and that both his ideas and his social ideals (which are far from petty) thrust him into the midst of the vital disputes of our time, which are essentially political: about the balance-sheet of Stalinism and of the Soviet revolution, about the past, present and future of socialism.

The spirit of Solzhenitsyn, that of those who scorn him, and also that, however elegantly draped in aestheticism it may be, of his pious proselytes, all quite clearly belong to the realm of approaches and contexts which are eminently ideological and political.

I

The published work of Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn extends from 1962, when his first story appeared, to the present time. (He actually began writing in 1936–9.) His writings fall into four sections, which are not "stages" but the differing manifestations of one and the same approach. The first section consists of "long short stories" (novellas), most notably *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and *Matryona's House*, in which the writer was revealed to us. Their sobriety, their

language, their narrative method make them *akin* to the *skaz*, originating from the depths of the people and transcribing an orally-told tale.

The *skaz* enjoyed its period of glory in the 1920s, when this genre was practised by such virtuosi as Isaac Babel and Boris Pilnyak. This is doubtless why Lukács sees grounds for finding in Solzhenitsyn a revival of "socialist realism" in its original form.

The author of the great novels, with their numerous characters, descriptive realism and moral tendencies, is naturally linked with the great realistic tradition of 19th century Russian literature, outstandingly represented by Tolstoy. We do not find in Solzhenitsyn, however, either the slow pace, or the ponderous descriptions, or the fatalism that are characteristic of *War and Peace*. The way in which he tackles situations, the "polyphonic" construction of his work (as he himself has described this),¹ the richness of his language (country expressions, religious archaisms, Soviet neologisms, words of the author's own devising), and the topical nature of his ethical preoccupations (even when he projects these upon the world of *August* 1914) show us a writer who is deeply original and in touch with present-day realities.

The trials that have set their mark upon Solzhenitsyn—the war, the camp, cancer—have led him to reinstate the theme of death: confronted with imminent death, the writer questions the meaning of life and of the values of this world.

His testimony-cum-indictment on *The Gulag Archipelago*² has enabled Solzhenitsyn to define his view of the history of the Soviet Union, from which he deduces, among other things, his political philosophy. The latter has been outlined for us in a fourth section of his work—his public statements, the most significant of which to date is his *Letter to Soviet Leaders*.³

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The first reports from Moscow which in 1962 announced the appearance in *Novy Mir* of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* hailed a sort of event in political journalism: the first account to be published in the USSR of one of Stalin's concentration camps. Pierre Daix tells how he heard, from Elsa Triolet, that what it signified was something much more than that: "great Russian prose . . . a real classic". And Claude Roy declared that *One Day* "has emerged as a masterpiece of literature, a book to be set beside Dostoyevsky's *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*". From that moment when criticism of Stalinism was joined with great literary talent, Solzhenitsyn became, for numberless readers in the West who were trying to grasp what had happened in Russia, the writer whom they accepted as their guide. The Left was especially anxious to take him over, to recognize themselves in this "Soviet" author who seemed to have the **backing** of his country's leaders. A critic "from

within" who was also an emphatically modern writer—did not the hope embodied in this phenomenon make up for the shock they had suffered through the revelation of the world of the camps? The fact that Ivan Denisovich's mental horizon lacked any hope for the future, that there was no reference made to socialist ideology, to the "baby" which it was said one ought not to throw out with the "bathwater", certainly gave reason for feeling some perplexity. But Solzhenitsyn, it was supposed, was not shutting any door. When *Matryona's House* appeared, these readers were not too willing to see in it the black picture of rural life in the Soviet Union, or the sort of religion of Russia's continuity, which broke through the socialist frame of reference: the beauty of his art, the genius of his language were sufficient to maintain their belief in Solzhenitsyn's greatness. In *Cancer Ward*, and even in *The First Circle*, people strove to discover the consolation of a socialist promise in full conformity with the anti-Stalinist criticism made by "liberal" or Khrushchevite Communism, or even compatible with the denunciation of "bureaucratic degeneration" as conceived, since Trotsky, by the various "Left" adversaries of Stalinism. Georg Lukács did not differ greatly from this way of seeing Solzhenitsyn, in whom he found a "plebeian critique" of Stalinism, together with a kinship with the socialist-realist tradition of the 1920s—a first step in the critique of Stalinism, inevitably limited in character, but a marker for future progress.■

As Solzhenitsyn's ideas became plainly displayed, however, in *The First Circle* and then in his (undelivered) *Nobel Prize Lecture* of 1972, this endeavour to "absorb" the writer was found impossible to maintain. Pierre Daix said: "Solzhenitsyn does not echo our dreams"; for him, revolution was a lost cause. "The system does not contain potentialities for its own transformation. This transformation will take place from outside it."⁵ But Daix still believed Solzhenitsyn's attitude to be compatible with Marxism, with the hope of a "21st-century socialism". *The Gulag Archipelago* and the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* were to perform the task of ruling out this last hoped-for compromise: Solzhenitsyn is profoundly hostile to Marxism, and for him socialism is neither a problem nor a hope.

It may be thought that this break in Solzhenitsyn's thinking took place gradually, being perhaps hastened by the disillusionment and the manifold harassments that the writer was obliged to endure after the euphoric interval of de-Stalinization. However, a re-reading of Solzhenitsyn in the light of his most recent writings suggests that there has been a fundamental continuity. *One Day* already contains the ideas that were to come to flower in *The Gulag Archipelago*. The latter book was begun at the end of the 1950s, and the author did not share the political hopes that were current at that time. "Re-Stalinization" was

to be, in his eyes, merely the confirmation that what is called Stalinism has never ceased to exist—that it is inherent in the basic characteristics of the system,

From the first novellas to *The Gulag Archipelago* and the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, by way of the great novels, a sort of theory of moral values, an axiology, develops, which organizes through successive inductions what can indeed be called "Solzhenitsyn's thought". It is thought which is radically alien to Communism.

One Day exposed what most Communists had refused to admit until then—the existence of concentration camps in the land of socialism. Daix, who experienced Mauthausen, does not hesitate to compare these camps to the Nazi ones. The documentary aspect of the story is nevertheless very secondary. Shalanov and Ginzburg have given much more detailed descriptions of the world of the exiles.⁸ *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is an ordinary day, when nothing much happened, "almost a happy day", similar to the other "three thousand six hundred and fifty-three days in his sentence. . . . The three extra days were because of the leap-years." In contrast to accounts which lay stress on atrocities and tortures, the horror of concentration camp life is here epitomized in this stripping-bare, this perfectly ordinary, routine, *political* task of dehumanization, of disintegration of the human personality for which the camp serves as instrument. *One Day* is, in fact, only an allegory, with the camp as a microcosm of Stalinist society, a concentration of the essence of the system, of the "socialist community", which here takes the form of a building-site where slaves are set to work: "a barren field covered with snow-drifts, and before anything could be done there, they would have to dig holes, erect posts and put up barbed wire between the posts—to prevent themselves from escaping. And only then could they begin to build."⁹ Because it is a concentration of the essence of the system it cannot be a "cancer", surgical elimination of which would be accomplished by the system itself—in other words, a malign excrescence that a body which had remained healthy could get rid of. There is no salvation within this system. Captain Buinovsky, who shouts at the guards: "You're not true Soviets! You're not Communists", is awarded ten days in the cells, a frightful punishment.⁹ Readers have perceived how unbearable it must be for the guards to be confronted with the values they are supposed to be representing. But Buinovsky's cry reveals also the uselessness of this sort of nostalgia for "true Communism". Salvation is not to be found in the Idea, which still allows a bond of complicity to continue to link the victims with their executioners. It lies in that deep quality of humanity which unites the victims alone, whoever they may be. It lies above all, and more precisely, in the love of work, of creation, the qualities of endurance and the stoicism of the Russian people, embodied in the

muzhik Shukhov. He alone gets by, managing, by refusal to make any compromise, but also without engaging in any futile rebellion, to save his humanity, at the bottom of a well into which no light penetrates any more—in a world wherein one must abandon all hope except what comes "from within". . . .



Returning from exile, Solzhenitsyn draws us into the midst of Russia, where the forests roar in the wind, into villages whose evocatively sonorous names tell us that we are in "the heart of Russia". Here he finds and tells us about Matryona (the Motherland), humble matron and "righteous person" of her village, embodying the ancient peasant wisdom that survives all upheavals and patiently resists the craziness of the collective-farm bureaucracy. Not often does an "immersion in Russia" bring such ecstatic enjoyment as this story does, with its air of authenticity which is still further underlined in the Russian text by language drawn from the speech of countryfolk, sensuous and full of sounds that powerfully evoke the meanings of words—language of which Solzhenitsyn is a past master, and which, it must be said, baffles the reader who knows only the Russian of the newspapers.

It would be pointless here to charge the author with lack of objectivity in depicting the collective-farm countryside in such dark colours. Villages like Matryona's do exist. Whoever travels, as I have sometimes travelled, across central Russia, the countryside that begins at the gates of Moscow, can testify to this rural scene, apparently unchanging, where only the coming of electricity and radio, following the Second World War, seems to have introduced something new and of importance since the time of Tolstoy, despite the cataclysms of the collectivization campaign and the War, and despite the "collective-farm revolution". Down to the middle 1950s agricultural Russia had remained outside the technical progress being realized in the developing cities, and in a state close to destitution. One might contrast with this picture the richer aspect offered by the black-earth lands of the Ukraine, the success achieved by the cotton-producing collective farms in Uzbekistan, or the relatively prosperous standard of living of the peasants of Estonia, as so many proofs of the regime's ability to bring about progress in agriculture. No doubt, indeed, one might—but the writer's purpose is not sociological or statistical in character, it is aesthetic. The essential lesson of the story about Matryona is surely the moral defeat of the ruling ideology, which has done no more than touch the surface of reality, without penetrating into people's consciousness: while on the other hand, the spirit of Matryona, a sister to Ivan Denisovich, bears witness once again to the purifying ascesis of conscientious labour, to the immanent and anonymous justice that waits

in the depths of the people. "None of us who lived close to her perceived that she was that one righteous person without whom, as the saying goes, no city can stand. Nor the world."¹⁰

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Critics have not failed to reproach Solzhenitsyn with his fixation on the "dark side" alone of Soviet life. The view taken is that, as with Stalin, there is a "positive" element and a "negative" one, clearly separable and capable of arithmetical evaluation: the repressions and the camps in one scale of the balance, and the great technical and social achievements in the other, with what decisive superiority! It must be appreciated that in the mental journey that has brought him to the point of repudiating the revolution, Solzhenitsyn has not in the least overlooked the factors of enthusiasm and devotion to the socialist cause that enter into the life of the Soviet people. The novella entitled *For the Good of the Cause* grapples with just this "edifying" theme, and the author even employs in it the contemporary Soviet jargon used by technicians, young people and officials.

Here, we are a-longway from Matryona. In a provincial town the Principal, the teaching staff and the students of a technical college resolve to build with their own hands the new building and installations which they urgently need. They devote to this task—without receiving the least encouragement (quite the contrary) from the ruling authorities—an entire year of work, sacrificing their free time and their holidays, in the spirit of the subbotniki, the "Communist Saturdays" that were dear to Lenin. Without exaggerating, it is a socialist epic, and, to employ the current jargon, a fine example of "self-management". When the work is completed, and the reward so greatly desired at last within reach, a commission composed of high officials arrives and decides to assign the new building to a research institute engaged in "work vital to the State"—not without "observing" that the cramped old premises are perfectly adequate for the needs of the technical college. A struggle is waged against this bureaucratic decision, but it proves hopeless. The point is that certain prospects of promotion are involved: promotion for Khabalygin, who will become head of the new institute, and for Knorozov, the regional party leader, who finds the decision splendid, because "we'll move at once into a different class of town—towns on the scale of Gorky and Sverdlovsk".¹¹ The point is, above all, that there is no appeal from the fatality of omnipotent arbitrariness.

And what about the people concerned, those who had given so much in order to rebuild their college? What explanation are they to be offered? "The institute is vital to the state and it's not up to us to question its suitability", says a Party secretary to those who cannot

accept the *fait accompli*. "Call meetings? Have a special discussion of the issue? No, that would be a political error. In fact, we must do the opposite: if the students of the Komsomol committee insist on a meeting, we must dissuade them from holding it."¹² There is no way round it: all that can be done is to clench one's fists and blink back one's tears.

To be sure, the Principal of the college does find someone ready to listen to him—Grachikov, the secretary of the town's Party Committee. There is always, somewhere or other, an honest official, a true Communist. This one goes to see his superior, Knorozov. Replying to the frank but too unjust declarations of this petty chieftain, Grachikov crosses the **Rubicon**, finding words for a righteous and stinging rejoinder: "We're not medieval barons trying to outdo each other by adding more quarterings to our coats of arms. The honour of our town lies in the fact that these children put up that building themselves, and did it for the love of it, and it's our duty to back them up. But if you take the building away they'll never forget we've cheated them. If you cheat people once, then they realize that you may cheat them again." And later, abandoning **all** restraint, he bursts out: "Why are we arguing over a heap of stones? . . . Communism will not be built with stones but people. . . . It's a harder and longer task, but if we were to finish the whole structure tomorrow and it was built of nothing but stones, we would never have Communism."

All that Knorozov can say in answer to that is: "You're not mature enough for the post of secretary of the town Party committee. . . . We overlooked that."

Never mind: in that moment Grachikov has chosen his fate—he is "sick to the teeth" with this style of **command**.¹³ Soon he will be thinking that profiteers and parasites of every sort "should be immediately expelled from the Party"¹⁴—not reprimanded, but expelled, for their conduct "implied a completely alien mentality, that of an inherent capitalist".¹⁴

While the author's sympathy is with the volunteer builders and with the Communist Grachikov, he allows them no chance of success. The evil that destroyed the inmates of the camp is the same evil that dooms enthusiasm to sterility. The fight for a just cause breaks helplessly against the rock of arbitrary power and bureaucracy. In contrast to most Soviet works that deal with this type of subject, there is here no appeal, no gleam of hope inside the system. And the question arises: what will become of the young people who are being shaped by trials such as this?

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In proceeding from the novellas to the great polyphonic novels the

writer merely widens his field of investigation and deepens his subject-matter. There is not only continuity but also simultaneity between the modernistic author of the novellas and the novelist who is said to have revived the great tradition of Russian literature. Thus, *The First Circle*, the scene of which is the prison-cum-research-institutewhere the author spent four years of detention in the company of privileged slaves (scientists and scholars) precedes (1955-8) *One Day*, which takes place in the lowest circle of Hell (1959). *The Gulag Archipelago* began to be written in the same period. *Cancer Ward* was intended at first (1963) to be a novella, to be followed by other tales.

Masterpieces of a literature of denunciation, *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, attack the Stalinist system in its entirety by way of two distinct sub-entities which, in their characteristic features, nevertheless reveal both the oneness of what is being denounced and that of the accuser's approach to it.

In *The First Circle*, the *sharashka*, that "monkey-house" where the first-class prisoners work, inspires the author to make his first major indictment, violent and sometimes caricatural, of the police system quartering Stalinist Russia.

In *Cancer Ward* the country has, like the author, emerged from the nightmare of terror, and is convalescing. This only means that it is seeking even more deeply for "the reasons why".

Here, three key characters, all faced with death, are made to serve the argument. There is Rusanov, the one-time Communist worker who has become an official and privileged beneficiary of the régime, an informer, a "representative of the proletariat" who has landed up, to his great embarrassment, in the public ward of a hospital. There is Kostoglotov, the survivor of the camps, the incorruptible one who has returned to life, to a life that he wishes to be full and worthy. And there is Shulubin, the one who has experienced Stalinism "in freedom", in fear and abjuration, but finds the strength to rise above it. In face of death the values by which these men have lived are brought to the test, and unavoidable choices loom before them.

The values of the "Marxist" Rusanov seem the most vulnerable, and also the least deserving of respect, for they lack sincerity. They are made up of dusty dogmas, terribly brittle assumptions, and, ultimately, of a totalitarian system of thought which is now confronted with ideas and facts that elude its tyrannical rationality. The denunciation of "Rusanovism", moreover, is a denunciation of bureaucratic parasitism, of the privileged set at the head of the Stalinist power-system, unscrupulous opportunists with stunted minds, loaded with privileges and exemptions of all kinds. Solzhenitsyn does not conceal his profound contempt for them, which is nourished by egalitarian ideals that are typically populist and revolutionary — Shulubin quotes Lenin — and are

expressed in cutting words uttered by Kostoglotov: "You think that while we're working towards communism the privileges some have over others ought to be increased, do you? You mean that to become equal we must first become unequal, is that right? You call that dialectics, do you?"¹⁵

Rusanov had just been explaining the importance, under socialism, of differences in wages, and stressing the difference between the contributions made to the national income by the person at the head of the public health service and by the person who washes the floor in the clinic.

Rusanov is not unlike Drozdov in *Not By Bread Alone*. Dudintsev and Solzhenitsyn have written some of the most vigorous pages in Russian literature on the subject of those whom Konstantin Paustovsky called "the new race of carnivores and property-owners which has nothing in common with the revolution". But whereas, for Dudintsev and Paustovsky, salvation is sought in a socialism restored to its original revolutionary purity, Solzhenitsyn's characters are bringing to ripeness meditations of a different sort. Kostoglotov no longer wants to distinguish between the camps and the régime, and displays a radical scepticism. Shulubin advocates a kind of ethical socialism: "'But is socialism to blame? We made a very quick turn-around, we thought it was enough to change the mode of production and people would immediately change with it. But did they? The hell they did! They didn't change a bit. Man is a biological type. It takes thousands of years to change him.'

"'Can there be socialism, then?'

"'Can there indeed? It's an enigma, isn't it? They talk about "democratic" socialism, but that's just superficial, it doesn't get to the essence of socialism, it only refers to the form in which socialism is introduced, the structure of the state that applies it. It's merely a declaration that heads will not roll, but it doesn't say a word about what this socialism will be built on. You can't build socialism on an abundance of material goods, because people sometimes behave like buffaloes, they stampede and trample the goods into the ground. Nor can you have socialism that's always banging on about hatred, because social life cannot be built on hatred. After a man has burned with hatred year in, year out, he can't simply announce one fine day, "That's enough! As from today I'm finished with hatred, from now on I'm only going to love!" "'

Shulubin eventually defines the socialism he wants to see: a moral socialism, "a society in which all relationships, fundamental principles and laws flow directly from ethics", and from them alone. Ethical considerations must determine all considerations: how to bring up children, what to train them for, to what end the work of grown-ups should be directed, and how their leisure should be occupied. As for scientific

research, it should only be conducted where it doesn't damage morality, in the first instance where it doesn't damage the researchers themselves. The same should apply to foreign policy. But what is this morality? Shulubin does not clarify his idea any further. What we do know is that there will no longer be any question of the pursuit of a chimerical happiness for future generations that have not been consulted. It will be a morality of "mutual affection". Shulubin's references are to Vladimir Soloviev, Kropotkin and Mikhaylovsky. These are perhaps, to some extent, Solzhenitsyn's own "authorities": I shall come back to this point.¹⁶

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But Solzhenitsyn's grand design is situated on the plane of history. He wants to join up again the broken thread of Russian continuity, to examine the events through which Russia was suddenly swept into the turmoil of revolution.

A monumental work on the war of 1914–18 is to serve to accomplish this design. The author looks upon it as his most important task: he had conceived the idea of it already when he was leaving adolescence, all his other writings being merely products of circumstances and of the "peculiarities" of his life-story. This opinion may evoke surprise. More than one reader will, like myself, have felt when reading *August 1914*, the first instalment of this huge undertaking, that the "first" Solzhenitsyn, concerned with what he had personally experienced, and moving us because of the authenticity of his tone, had gone away from us.

Half-way between a testimony and a reconstitution of events, *The Gulag Archipelago* already marks a certain stage reached along the road to this recovery of the collective memory. The realm of fiction is abandoned here in favour of that of documentary *montage*: autobiography, collected testimonies, investigation on the basis of official documents, personal reflections—these are the materials used for this enormous fresco of the world of the concentration camps, the two first parts of which (out of the seven planned) were published almost by accident.¹⁷

We are here standing, without any doubt, at the foot of a tremendous monument of the literature of denunciation. It is above all a work resulting from a powerful emotional discharge, the ejaculation of a long-restrained cry. We recall the author's words in his *Nobel Prize Lecture*: "During our exhausting forced marches in the camps, as we were taken to work and back again to our huts, with those little chains of lanterns just shining through the mist of the evening frost—many was the time that there arose in our throat those words which we would have liked to shout out to the whole of the world, if only the world could have heard just one of us."¹⁸

The historian's approach is governed by passion that is ethical in nature. Passion to perform the service due to the memory of the martyrs: "I dedicate this book to all those who did not live long enough to tell what is told here. May they forgive me for not having been able to see everything, retain the memory of everything and fathom everything." Passion of a kind of purificatory catharsis. If he points his finger at the murderers who have gone unpunished (they are still around, either torturers making new careers in various departments, or major operators of the terror, like Molotov, living in comfortable retirement), he does so not in order to demand vengeance on the scale of the crimes he committed, but to oblige the nation to sit in moral judgement: to speak the truth, to condemn the criminals, but above all to condemn their crime, this seems to him to be the key to the deliverance from evil, the method of collective psychotherapy whereby the Russian people can recover their moral balance. "What message will Russia be able to leave to the world if she does not root out this rottenness?" This descent into Hell is not weighed down with the crude imagery of vulgar propaganda: the anger does not need emphasis, the sorrow is conveyed without ostentation. The pamphleteer has not betrayed, in his haste and eagerness to denounce, the artist, the master of words and of feeling.

The author's intention, as he announces in his subtitle, does not go beyond an "attempt at a literary investigation". This modesty is praiseworthy and proper. Let us not then try to find here, as some Western zealots in apologetics have tried, the history, "revealed at last", of the Soviet Union, the "scientific rigour" from which the "myth of Lenin the Good", it is said, will never recover. Although his method is indeed literary, however, the author's ambition is that of an historian, and furthermore one who does not content himself with describing the facts but also propounds a sovereign judgement upon the history he records. This does not happen without some ambiguity. The author's central thesis is, indeed, that what is called the "Stalin" terror resulted from the very quintessence of the régime that was born in October 1917 and continues to exist today. His proof that this is so is far from being demonstrated by scientific method and argument—a point to which I shall come back. In particular, the "terroristic" quotations from Lenin, isolated from their context, are not adequate to support a critique of Leninism which, in fact, does not enter into the writer's preoccupations. Social-Democratic and Anarchist critics have done much better in this line. Roy Medvedev himself, even though he stops short of breaking the "taboo" on a critical re-evaluation of the Lenin period, provides a body of systematic information and analysis on the subject of Stalinism to which *The Gulag Archipelago* cannot be compared. When it is said that Solzhenitsyn "establishes the truth" it

must be made clear that, behind and beyond the partial truths assembled in *The Gulag Archipelago*, the great "Truth" towards which the writer strives is not historical or social in nature, but moral.

The Gulag Archipelago begins at the point of time when Solzhenitsyn's series of books on the war of 1914-18 is to conclude, assuming that he succeeds in completing this task, which, by his own account, may take him twenty years, and for which "most probably" his life "will not be long enough".

The form of this work is that of a trilogy of novels. August 1914 is the first panel of the triptych, or, more precisely, the "first node". By "node" the author means a decisive event in the unfolding of history—here, Russia's defeat at Tannenberg. Description of military operations is mingled with description of Russia as it was then, the Russia which, as later became apparent, was in its death-throes.

The author is working in virgin territory. He did not himself live through the situations he describes, although one feels that he has projected upon them his own experience of war. Witnesses are few, Government archives not accessible. The writer therefore draws upon oral tradition and the memories of former generals, published abroad. The reconstitution accomplished is all the more remarkable: not only the events, but the atmosphere, the language, which is quite archaic ("Church Russian", a reader notes),¹⁹ make of it a kind of literary "museum of Russia" which has not failed to dumbfound Soviet visitors to it. Nothing here recalls the ideas that are generally accepted in the USSR, where the entire process of the ending of old Russia is "arranged" so as to lead up to the outcome: the Revolution. It is clear that Solzhenitsyn's purpose is to show that the latter, contrary to what Soviet historiography implies, was not an inevitable occurrence—a point of view which, in itself, is not in the least sacrilegious for Marxists! The writer therefore sets himself to reconstruct all the potentialities of Russian society on the eve of the great turning-point. To be sure, stormladen clouds are not lacking: military defeat, negligence on the part of high authorities in the Army and the State, intrigues in the Tsar's entourage, the unworthy role being played by the Church, that of the liberal intelligentsia. . . . But the Russia of 1914 is also a society filled with dynamism. Released at last from serfdom and its sequelae, agriculture is recording successes that are not to be matched again for a long time.²⁰ Industry is in full "take-off". The towns are expanding: in Moscow an underground railway is being built (the War was to interrupt this work). Cultural life has been showing, since the turn of the century, a no less remarkable degree of vitality: is not Moscow on the way to becoming one of the centres of the international artistic movement, particularly in the plastic arts?

In all respects, the picture that the writer paints of the Russia of 1914

is the opposite of the picture of a backward poverty-stricken country, a picture to justify the Revolution, which was to be subsequently retained in the USSR. Solzhenitsyn's picture is certainly the true one where many points are concerned: but it overlooks the dark areas that are no less deserving of attention. The Russia of the *muzhiks* and the "lower depths", the country with more than a hundred million illiterates, of proletarian misery, of epidemics and still frequent famines (despite the high production of wheat, a large part of which was exported), of economic colonialism—none of *that* figures in Solzhenitsyn's landscape. The working class and the poor peasantry are, moreover, entirely absent from *August* 1914, except as they appear wearing the greatcoat of the Russian soldier, whose courage and endurance are extolled. The officers, the well-to-do peasantry, the intelligentsia, the engineers, the teachers: these are the protagonists of history as Solzhenitsyn relates it. It has been said that, in restoring "all the options" that were then open to Russia, Solzhenitsyn has favoured none above the rest, and that, furthermore, neither the structure nor the development of his novel is "pre-determined". My own impression is very different. While rejecting the retroactive "determinism" of October 1917, Solzhenitsyn is concerned to suggest, *a contrario*, not only that the Revolution was not inevitable but *that it would have been desirable that it should not have occurred*. True, one cannot pre-judge the way the story is to develop in the remaining instalments. But *August* 1914 already provides us with enough "pre-determinations" and value-judgements (none of which should surprise us) to show that history is being re-written in accordance with a "higher" moral truth. This truth comes through in the sympathies revealed by the author and the views, obviously representing his own, that he puts into the mouths of certain characters.

Thus, Solzhenitsyn's sympathy clearly lies with the new bourgeoisie of engineers and entrepreneurs, whereas the revolutionary intelligentsia inspires him only with apprehension or contempt. "Even in those days [the late 90s] the students were split between the revolutionaries and the engineers—the destroyers and the builders. In those days I, too, thought that to build was impossible. But one only had to spend some time in the West to be amazed at how peacefully the anarchists lived there and how hard they worked. As for industry, anyone who has created something with his own hands knows that production is neither capitalist nor socialist, but *one* thing only: it is what creates national wealth, the common material basis without which no country can exist." The character who in this way crosses swords with young "contestationists" gives an example of how he sees the class struggle:

"Along comes a bunch of arts students and they explain to the workers that they are earning too little, and that that little engineer in spectacles over there is earning God knows how much, and that it's sheer bribery!

And these simple, uneducated people believe it and get indignant: they can understand the value of their own work, but they're incapable of understanding or putting a price on somebody else's."²¹

In another passage, a wise old man questions the worthwhile-ness of the line taken by youngsters who have chosen as their path of salvation that of service to the people: "But what if that sacrifice proves to have been misconceived? Don't the people have any *obligations*? Or do they only have *rights*? Are they simply meant to sit and wait while we first supply them with happiness, then provide for their 'eternal interests'? And what if the people themselves aren't ready?"²² The coming of the Revolution is heralded in apocalyptic terms. An engineer exclaims angrily: "I have built two hundred mills, steam and electric, in southern Russia, and if those starvelings really do arise and start lashing out, how many of those mills will be left to grind the corn? And what will we have to eat—even at this table?"²³

Two minorities, at opposite extremes, will suffice, it seems, to render the clash inevitable: "'On one side—the Black Hundreds, on the other—the Red Hundreds! And in the middle'—he formed his hands into the shape of a ship's keel—a dozen people who want to pass through to get on with a job of work! Impossible!" He opened his hands and clapped them together. "They are crushed! Flattened!"²⁴

The destructive force of the Revolution, the "lie" of the class struggle, the arrogance of youngsters who "contest" without knowledge, the continuity of history which it is costly to try and break, the irresponsibility of the revolutionary intellectuals, the suffering of the Russian people, so rich in men and women of powerful spirit: so many images of Russia, of the anxious or vindictive ideas which did, perhaps, occupy the minds of a *certain* section of Russian society in the year 1914.

What is very much less open to doubt is that these ideas occupy Solzhenitsyn's mind today.

II

The Solzhenitsyn of the mythology which has arisen with him as its object of veneration appears as "the seeker after truth", the creator, the Good Man who is resolutely independent of ideology, of any ideology at all. But what is more *ideological* than Solzhenitsyn's presentation of Truth, of Creation, of Good? While the author of *One Day*, of *Cancer Ward* or of *The Gulag Archipelago* certainly does not set forth any doctrine, any coherent system of thought, he does develop in those works some *ideas* which, in his important public statements, like the *Nobel Prize Lecture* and the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, express a political philosophy with fairly definite features.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's thought is organized around a few essential

axes. The first of these is rejection of an ideology and an ideocratic system which he identifies with lies and violence. The second is affirmation of a universal system of values based on the primacy of the spiritual, an anthropological conception of history, and an ethic, with a mystical basis, of individual responsibility and social action. The third is a reaching back to embrace Russia's national and religious traditions. The whole proceeds from a veritable axiology, a theory of values in which the forefront is occupied by that which gives organization to all the rest—the key concept of *pravda*, which is both Truth and the moral ideal of Justice, the central concept of Russian Christianity.

The Nobel Prize Lecture, which extols the virtues of art as the language that unites mankind, appears, on a superficial or indulgent reading, to be a profession of humanist faith which transcends all frontiers and spares no oppressive regime. Actually, it is clear that the only ideology attacked—and to be attacked much more systematically in the Letter to Soviet Leaders—is the Soviet ideology. And this applies to all the miseries, faults and tragedies that are denounced.

What does this rejected ideology amount to? A totalitarian ideocracy which has turned Marxism-Leninism into the "science of sciences", the Word without which are only heresy or treason—a determinism that reduces history to the working of "economic laws" and the human being to the status of a cog in a "collective", a class, a party, or the Soviet Fatherland.

This ideology is false in that it conceals the real relationships, like a piece of "stage scenery" (this comes close to Marx's "false consciousness"). Between falsehood and violence there is an inevitable association: "Violence can only be concealed by the lie, and the lie can only be maintained by violence. Any man who has once proclaimed violence as his method is inevitably forced to take the lie as his principle."²⁶

The "necessity of the lie" is, according to the Letter to Soviet Leaders, no longer so obvious, since "nobody believes in it any more", and it is now only the ridiculous mask worn by a reality that everyone has learnt to recognize. But long before it became this insipid "piece of stage scenery", the lie was the tribute that had to be paid by political voluntarism: in other words, the Revolution. In order to build a new society it is indispensable that men should learn not to see depressing realities, should learn to despise "petty truths" so as to devote themselves to the "great truth": the former are bound up with things as they are, the latter expresses the tendency towards things as they will be, or (and to an ever greater degree) as they ought to be. This is a dispute that is as old as Soviet literature itself, and which has broken out again in connection with Solzhenitsyn. In the 1920s, Boris Pilnyak gave a notable formulation of this logic of the lie: "I have thought a great deal about the will to see, and I have set it in relation to the will to want.

What emerges is that there is another will, too: the will not to see, when the will to want comes into conflict with the will to see. Russia is living by the will to want and not to see.¹¹²⁴

The services rendered to the cause by lies both big and small are not negligible. But Soviet literature and Soviet life have in recent times shown the baneful consequences of falsehood: deception no longer spares anyone, the gulf between words and facts grows wider, and a type of split (schizoid) personality is being formed as a result of this situation.

But Solzhenitsyn does not linger on the subject, or perhaps does not see in this ideology what it may contain that is special, distorted, perverted, in relation to Marxism and Leninism: indeed, he does not study the origins and historical functions of these bodies of thought. On the contrary, it is "Marxism" in general that he rejects. For him it is an imported ideology, alien to the Russian spirit, "primitive, superficial", which has been wrong about everything, has predicted nothing, and is, in the last analysis, the source of all the misfortunes that have afflicted Russia. "Cast off this cracked ideology! Relinquish it to your [Chinese] rivals. . . ." This is the appeal he addresses to the leaders of the Soviet Union; an appeal which the author is not, apparently, convinced is doomed to remain entirely without echo. According to him, all that is needed is to bring what is said into line with what actually happens: "For a long time now, everything has rested solely on material calculation and the subjection of the people, and not on any upsurge of ideological enthusiasm, as you perfectly well know. This ideology does nothing now but sap our strength and bind us.¹¹²⁵" This is the same ideology, moreover, that the writer denounces as being present in the movements of "world revolution" instigated by the USSR, the youth movements which "are blissfully repeating the discredited platitudes of our Russian 19th century". These naïve young people do not realize that justice cannot result from their revolts, and the older people who know this to be so take good care not to teach it to them: "There are those who have lived a little, who understand, who could argue with these young men and women, but many of them do not dare to argue. Instead they try to worm their way in among them — anything rather than be labelled 'conservative'. Once again, we had this in Russia in the 19th century. Dostoyevsky called it 'becoming a slave to silly little progressive ideas.'¹¹²⁶

Similarly, through and behind the facts denounced in *The Gulag Archipelago*, all revolutionary violence is condemned. "Intensive study has convinced me that bloody mass revolutions are always disastrous for the people in whose midst they occur.¹¹²⁷" Thus the "warning" given in August 1914 is confirmed: "Above all, no revolution ever strengthens a country: it tears it apart, and for a long, long time. What's more, the

bloodier and longer-drawn-out it is, and the dearer the country pays for it—the more likely the revolution is to be given the title of 'great'.³⁰ (Here the writer is evidently alluding to the quasi-ritual adjective used in the Soviet Union when referring to the October Revolution.)

Nothing that Solzhenitsyn is now saying about violence ought to surprise those who read his *Nobel Prize Lecture* of 1972. The picture he then drew of the struggles taking place in the world arena was indeed most eloquent: "The same old cave-man impulses—greed, envy, lack of restraint, mutual ill-will—still tear and rip our world apart, though now they have adopted such 'decent' labels as class conflict, race war, the struggle of the masses or the trade unions (*klassovoy, rasovoy, massovoy, profsoyuznoy* borbui). A primitive refusal to compromise has been turned into a theoretical principle and is seen as the great virtue of orthodoxy. It demands victims by the million in still unfinished civil wars, and still dins into our brains the fact that there are no firm, generally-approved concepts of goodness and justice, that all such concepts are fluid and liable to change, which means that one should always act in the way that is most profitable to one's own party. Groups of workers or professional men wait for every suitable moment to grab a bit extra, whether they have earned it or not, whether they need it or not, and then they seize it, and to hell with the whole of society."³¹

The "devils" who are creeping across the world appear, in Solzhenitsyn's eyes, to wear the quite distinctive faces of the Palestinian terrorists who at the time he was writing (summer 1972) were the objects of much publicity: "And now they hijack aeroplanes, seize hostages, cause fires and explosions. All their work of recent years is evidence of their determination to shake out and destroy civilization. And they may well succeed."³²

In Vietnam, to be sure, "civilization" was putting up a good defence. . . .

* * *

The system of values from which Solzhenitsyn seeks to draw his answer to the crisis of civilization is supposed, of course, to be unconnected with any ideology, and in particular with any sort of rationalism. (The crisis of civilization affects, indeed, "the entire culture and world outlook which were conceived at the time of the Renaissance and attained the acme of their expression with the 18th-century Enlightenment."³³) The keystone of this system seems to be the idea of "truth" which is so deeply rooted in Russian Christian tradition. *Pravda*, a concept that is untranslatable and is not to be reduced to concrete truth (*istina*) is in this tradition not identified with objectivity, or with the

correlation of reason with itself, or with the Kantian sense of co-ordination of ideas. Nor is it, either, as with Kierkegaard, inherent in subjectivity. It is "trans-subjective" (Berdyayev) in the sense that it belongs to man's spiritual dimension, which is distinct from his consciousness in the strict meaning of that word. Its revelation, in every spiritual manifestation, in every creative act by which man rises above his enslavement to objects, is therefore not at all a matter of rational cognition. It is above all "an evaluation" (Berdyayev), a value judgement, and thereby, through the creative act, the divine presence is made known. ■■

To Russia's youth, tired of a utilitarian morality (with varying and contradictory uses) Solzhenitsyn offers a "truth" that ignores secular contingencies and opportunisms. He explains to some student readers that "there is nothing relative about justice, as there is nothing relative about conscience. . . . You will never err if you act in any social situation in accordance with justice (the old way of saying it in Russian is: to live by truth)." ■■

Inward order, moral order—ensuring the primacy of the spiritual factor in human activities—undoubtedly has Tolstoyan resonances. But Solzhenitsyn professes a much more voluntarist and individualist conception of history and of man's responsibility in history than we find in Tolstoy.

True, history is free from the social determinisms proclaimed by Marxism. "Our intelligence is usually not sufficient to grasp, to understand, and to foresee the course of history. . . ." ■■ "History is *irrational*. . . . It has its own, and to us perhaps incomprehensible, organic structure."³⁷ At the same time, however, one is aware, in *August* 1914, for instance, of the extent to which men's responsibility, the choices they make, their mistakes, are what determine the way events develop. The theme of responsibility, of shared guilt, of self-accusation, is also present in the works that deal with the Stalin period. Individuals are for Solzhenitsyn the protagonists of history—not the masses, nor the classes, and still less the accidental, chance things that happen. This outlook separates Solzhenitsyn both from historical materialism and from a fatalistic idealism.

Man, the maker of history, makes himself as well, in the creative act. It was at the bottom of the concentration-camp abyss that Solzhenitsyn appears to have discovered in work (a value already sublimated in Soviet tradition) the last redoubt of the human personality, that unconquerable area where it is possible for a transcendence, or, to employ another concept typical of Russian Christianity, a "transfiguration" of life to take place. Creative labour, like a genuine work of art, like every transcending of biological and social limitations that man achieves, tends towards the spiritual "feat" (*podvig*)—another familiar

concept in religious writing, and closely related to that of resurrection.

Solzhenitsyn's ethic could be defined as a personalism with a mystical basis.

The reflections upon socialism in *Cancer Ward*, the appeal for solidarity among writers in the Nobel *Prize* Lecture, and above all the programme of moral rearmament set forth in the Letter to Soviet Leaders show, moreover, that his aim is to lay the foundations for a kind of social action: he wants to see the coming of a "moral society".

Is Solzhenitsyn, like his character Shulubin, an advocate of "moral socialism"? It seems likely that that was a residual expression which the writer does not adopt on his own account. He has never, certainly, expressed opposition to the collective taking-over of the factories in 1917-18. His work contains sufficient harsh passages about capitalism or the "consumer society" for us not to suspect him of "bourgeois" sympathies. On the other hand, he calls upon the Soviet leaders to "give up the forced collective farms and leave just the voluntary ones", abandoning "ideological agriculture".³⁸ But, in fact, questions of the organization of society occupy a very small place in Solzhenitsyn's concerns: socialism is not his problem. What does concern him, however, is the moral grounds for the choices to be made regarding national development. To the discredited Marxist ideology he counterposes the moral foundations of "ancient Orthodoxy". He has no belief in the virtues of democracy in a country (such as the Russia of 1917, and a fortiori, the Russia of today) which has not been prepared for it. An authoritarian régime would suit Russia perfectly. "It is not authoritarianism itself that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted upon us. Not so much authoritarianism as arbitrariness and illegality. . . ." Russia lived for a thousand years under an authoritarian order—"and at the beginning of the 20th century both the physical and spiritual health of her people were still intact". This order rested, inter alia, upon "the Land Assemblies of Muscovite Russia, Novgorod, the early Cossacks, the village commune". The author also recalls "the real power of the Soviets", which existed until 6 July 1918, and which he suggests might be restored. He demands "a free art and literature, the free publication not just of political books—God preserve us!"³⁹

Socialism? It would be safer to say that the political system favoured by Solzhenitsyn contains both elements from Russia's traditions of patriarchal rule and community organization and from a legalism of more recent origin. Popular and depoliticized Soviets, freedom under supervision, unrestricted development of religions and of philosophical discussions: this is, at least, the "minimum programme" which Solzhenitsyn summons the leaders of the USSR to implement.

Solzhenitsyn's adhesion to the Orthodox Church bears a special (critical) significance. The Church's enslavement to the State, its administration by a state council for religious affairs ("a church directed dictatorially by atheists"⁴⁰), is intolerable to him. Desire for separation of the Church from the State does not relate for Solzhenitsyn merely to the present period, in which the State is identified with atheist rule. It forms part of the old Orthodox conception by which the Church, charged with a messianic task (the Third Rome) was to guide the State while remaining independent of it. In his letter to the Soviet leaders Solzhenitsyn is quite clear on this point. He invokes "the ancient, seven-centuries-old Orthodoxy of Sergei Radonezhsky and Nil Sorsky, before it was battered by Patriarch Nikon and bureaucratized by Peter the Great".⁴¹ Indeed, the Church's claims to independence and to the primacy of the spiritual power proved unable to withstand the strengthening of monarchical absolutism. The necessary subjection of the Church to the State began, with the help of Patriarch Nikon, in the 1650s, through a reform of the liturgy (uniformization of the rites of the Churches of Russia and the Ukraine, correction of the Scriptures in accordance with the Greek texts). This reform was to give rise to the schism (raskol) of the Old-Believers. To this day the old faith has been able to find underground channels of survival and influence. Some religious philosophers of the late 19th century and of the present century, including Nikolai Berdyaev, have sought to revive it.⁴² This appears to be the spiritual line of descent to which Solzhenitsyn belongs: a primitive, spiritual, ascetic Christianity which is yet impregnated with pagan feelings, as we see from the cult of the Earth and of the Forest (in *Matryona's House*, August 1914, the "roots of life" in Cancer Ward, etc.)⁴³

Nothing provides better justification for this attitude than the present situation of the Orthodox Church. The liquidation of the old structures of rural life in the 1930s, urban growth, atheist propaganda and the whole arsenal of repressive measures (closing of churches, exiling of believers, etc.) put into effect under Stalin deprived Orthodoxy of its mass basis and the chance to influence the rising generations. The regime's anti-religious policy underwent an eclipse during the War, when the Church became one of the chief props of the spirit of national resistance. Strangely enough, it was during the Khrushchev period, between 1958 and 1964, that the anti-religious campaign was resumed more vigorously even than before: some 12,000 churches were closed, not without acts of violence and plundering. Solzhenitsyn denounces "backward and frenzied atheism".⁴⁴ That was the period when the official in charge of the ideological department of the Party's Central Committee, Ilyichev, declared that extirpation of religious sentiments was one of the "pre-requisites" for the achievement of Communism—

the latter being, of course, a matter of the immediate future. (On this question he was publicly contradicted by Palmiro Togliatti and Roger Garaudy.) During that testing time Russian Christianity perhaps gained in fervour and in spirit of abnegation, which would explain the influence it has won over a narrow fringe of the rising generations. But the official Church, set in its immutable liturgy, resistant to all the currents of ideas that have revived Christianity in the West, and even the Polish Church, obsessed with preserving the slender possibilities of survival allowed to it by the State in exchange for good and loyal service, presents the picture of a petrified institution.

Following the example given by the Dissenting communities, sectarian but amazingly alive, such as the Baptists (Alyosha in *One Day*), the neo-Orthodox like Solzhenitsyn want to rescue their Church from its torpor and give it back a sense of militant evangelism, even at the price of a further martyrdom. This ambition is closely linked with that of reviving the national traditions. Solzhenitsyn recalls "that radiant Christian ethical atmosphere in which over a period of a thousand years were established our mores, way of life, view of the world and folklore, even the very name in Russian for the Russian peasants—*krestyane*".⁴⁵



Solzhenitsyn's patriotism has been variously characterized as "Russo-philism", "Slavophilism", "isolationism" and even "Great-Russian chauvinism".⁴⁶ The confusion in the terms used reflects the confusion of the thinking: neither Solzhenitsyn's ideas nor the Slavophil tradition seem to have been understood correctly.

Great-Power ideology has, in the Russia of today, nothing oppositional about it and does not need to be smuggled in. On the contrary, it finds expression both in the policies and in the language of official circles. It was especially overt at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and of the clashes with Chinese forces on the River Ussuri. A whole literature has flourished for several years now, with full official approval, which exhales the scent of the Russian soil, singing the beauty of Russia's countryside and of Russian architecture, recalling with emotion the greatness and the wars of the past, of the conquest of Siberia by the Cossack chieftain Yermak, and so on. . . . This tendency is not a new one: we can date its resurgence exactly—along with the restoration of officers' epaulettes and the dropping of the Internationale as the state anthem—to the time when, in the early 1940s, Stalin rallied to the Great-Russian national tradition. What is new is the intensity, the aggressiveness with which chauvinism is thrusting itself into the cracks, which are certainly considerable, in the allegedly internationalist official ideology. The poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko alluded to this at the

Fifth Writers' Congress in 1971, when he mentioned the **historico-literary "reconstitutions"** which have been popular in the Soviet cinema in recent years. In these films, he noted, the "nests of gentleness" are idealized: "the camera glides so tenderly over the curves of a piece of old oak furniture, brought from some antique-shop, and over the family jewels. No oppressors, no oppressed, but splendid landowners, an idealized picture of Russia with peasant-girls crowned with wild flowers who have come straight out of the pre-Revolution magazine *Niva*."

Great-Russian chauvinism seems to have found very active adepts in the leadership of the Komsomol, of its publishing house ("Molodaya Gvardiya"), of the newspaper *Sovietskaya Rossiya* (the Party's daily organ for the Russian Republic) and the illustrated weekly *Ogonyok*. The Rodina club, officially devoted to restoring historical monuments (which means, mainly, churches) has become the rallying centre of this trend, which is naturally inclined towards xenophobia and antisemitism. Alongside these official *Russity*, or *pochvenniki* ("men of the soil") are active dissident groups enjoying a greater or lesser degree of toleration, such as the group that has been formed around the *samizdat* review called *Vecher*, edited by Osipov. These circles, unlike Solzhenitsyn, proclaim their loyal attitude towards the ruling authorities, just as they integrate the "Russian Revolution" of 1917 into the patrimony of Russia's national greatness. It is therefore not accidental that this same review *Vecher* accused the author of August 1914 of being a "germanophil" and a "slanderer of Russia".⁴⁷

One of the main ideas developed by Solzhenitsyn in his Letter to Soviet Leaders is precisely that "ideological" Great-Power objectives should be renounced, whether in relation to China or to the Mediterranean. Nothing gives us reason to assume that Solzhenitsyn's patriotism includes any leanings whatsoever towards chauvinism or national exclusivism.

"Slavophilism" itself needs to be understood with attention to its different shades. In the first place, the idealization of the past and the belief in Russia's "spiritual mission" on the part of the Slavophil thinkers of last century, such as Khomyakov, did not necessarily imply the imperialistic use of these attitudes that was made by the Tsars. The idea of domination, of a "chosen people" is, in any case, not to be found in Solzhenitsyn's work. On the contrary, he reveals himself as being, in his own way, intensely universalist, in his *Nobel Prize Lecture*. Solzhenitsyn's Russophilism is consequently not without a certain originality. It is linked both with his conception of history as "organic", of the role of nations, and with a utopian vision of Russia's "restoration". Solzhenitsyn believes in the continuity of Russia. This forms part of the "organic tissue" of history, which reason cannot grasp. History,

therefore, in contrast to the Marxist conception of it, which sees history as being accomplished through the dialectic of social contradictions, with the class struggle as its "guiding thread", tends rather towards a slow, harmonious, "organic" development. This, at any rate, is its tendential "truth", the moral idea that a nation can set up for itself: an accidental tragedy like the October Revolution may divert it from this path, but this is only a diversion, and, sooner or later, continuity will be re-established.

Solzhenitsyn has recourse to the classical symbolism of the tree: "History grows like a living tree. And as far as that tree is concerned, reason is an axe: you'll never make it grow better by applying reason to it. Or, if you prefer, history is a river; it has its own laws which govern its flow, its bends, the way it meanders. Then along come some clever people who say that it's a stagnant pond and must be diverted into another and better channel: all that's needed is to choose a better place and dig a new river-bed. But the course of a river can't be interrupted—block it at all and it won't flow any longer. And we're being told that the bed must be forcibly diverted by several thousand yards. The bonds between generations, bonds of institutions, traditions, custom, are what hold the banks of the river-bed together and keep the stream flowing."⁴⁸

For Solzhenitsyn the national idea implies no sort of superiority or self-sufficiency. It merely signifies a cult of *difference*. The "growing unity of mankind" appears as a unity in diversity, a striving for a symphony of differences. "In recent times it has been fashionable to speak of a levelling of nations and of a disappearance of peoples in the melting pot of modern civilization. I do not agree with this, but any discussion of it would be a separate issue. Here it is right that I should say just this: were nations to disappear, we would be impoverished in exactly the same way as if all people suddenly became alike, with the same character and the same face. Nations are part of the wealth of the human race. Although generalized, they are its individuals. The smallest of them has its own special colours and hides in itself some facet of God's design."⁴⁹ At the same time, the nations must seek a common language, exchange their experiences, fight against mutual indifference: "The fact is that in our cramped, little world there are no longer any 'internal affairs'. Man's salvation depends upon everyone making it his business to know everything. It depends on the people of the East not being entirely indifferent to the opinions of people of the West, on people in the West not being entirely indifferent to what is happening in the East."⁵⁰ The international solidarity for which Solzhenitsyn calls here is certainly very restricted in its scope: it is the solidarity that he thinks the international community of writers ought to show towards oppressed colleagues in the East and towards the Czechoslovak people.

Nevertheless, Solzhenitsyn's universalism is incompatible with the "isolationism" of which he has been accused. Between someone like Sakharov who is for a convergence between East and West, a Roy Medvedev whose inclination is rather towards a coming-together of the progressive forces, specifically, of East and West, and the Russophilism of Solzhenitsyn, the dispute is no mere repetition of the old dispute among the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century, in which "Slavophiles" opposed "Westernizers". Even at the time the dispute was not so clear-cut as all that. A "Slavophil" attitude might, in the case of Alexander Herzen, form part of a progressive social outlook. The "Westernizers" were split between Liberalism and Marxism. The socialist idea drew strength from both trends. Today the dispute has arisen again in a very different setting—that of a world unified by capitalism, and a Russia profoundly transformed and linked with the outside world (capitalism, the socialist countries, the revolutionary movements) by a complete network of relations.

Stalinism nevertheless prepared the ground for a come-back by Russophilism. Solzhenitsyn is certainly mistaken when he rages against the avant-garde outlook and contempt for tradition which he thinks he can perceive in the official ideology—the "Progressive World-View", as he scornfully refers to it. The avant-garde stance, futurism, progressivism with a world-wide mission all belong to the mental world of the Revolution and the 1920s. Stalinism merely perpetuated a fleshless caricature of all that: itself, it enforced a cultural autarky to which Solzhenitsyn's political ignorance bears witness. What the appearance of the new Russophiles, or *Russity*, strikingly proves is that this autarkic ideology, more and more completely withdrawing into chauvinistic values, has not succeeded in filling the gap left by the ebbing of internationalist Marxism. It is true that Stalinism was, in the last analysis, not so much a "return to Russia" as a retreat into Russia, with all that that could imply in perversions, by a policy that was highly Westernizing, European or, if there must be an analogy, "Petrine". In notable contrast with a certain type of Western anti-Stalinism, disposed to denounce "Oriental despotism", Solzhenitsyn blames the "blind imitation" of Western civilization. And—the height of seeming paradox—his critique is not lacking in environmentalist overtones which seem almost familiar to us in the West. "We had to be dragged along the whole of the Western bourgeois-industrial and Marxist path in order to discover, at the end of the 20th century, and again from progressive Western scholars [Solzhenitsyn refers to 'the Teilhard de Chardin Society and the Club of Rome'], what any village greybeard in the Ukraine or Russia had understood from time immemorial and could have explained to the progressive commentators ages ago, had the commentators ever found the time in that dizzy fever of theirs to

consult him: that a dozen maggots can't go on gnawing the same apple forever; that if the earth is a *finite* object, then its expanses and resources are finite also, and that the endless, *infinite* progress dinned into our heads by the dreamers of the Enlightenment cannot be accomplished on it."⁵¹ According to Solzhenitsyn, we must turn our backs on economic progress. (He uses the word progress and not *rost*, i.e. "growth", as some translations of his writings might suggest.) But this is possible only at the price of saying goodbye to Marxism: "If we renounce industrial development, what about the working class, socialism, communism, unlimited increase in productivity, and all the rest?" Solzhenitsyn asks why socialism has shown itself "so dolefully unoriginal in technology, and why have we so unthinkingly, so blindly copied Western civilization?" And yet "one might have thought that, with the central planning of which we are so proud, we of all people had the chance *not* to spoil Russia's natural beauty, not to create anti-human, multi-million concentrations of people. But we've done everything the other way round: we've dirtied and defiled the wide Russian spaces and disfigured the heart of Russia, our beloved Moscow. . . . We have squandered our resources foolishly without so much as a backward glance, sapped our soil, mutilated our vast expanses. . . ."⁵² The ecologist critique corresponds to a concern that is widespread, both in official circles and among the "dissident" elements of the population: more than once in recent years the alarm has been sounded in connection with the wasting of natural resources, the pollution of certain lakes, the disfigurement of Moscow by the building of such architectural monstrosities as the giant Hotel Rossiya, next door to the *Kremlin*.⁵³ Never till now, though, has this critique been directed so radically at the pattern of industrialization, the giantism of production and cities, or the uselessness of the "conquest of space". Soviet industrialization, although less anarchical than ours, and undoubtedly more careful, for several years now, to preserve resources and the environment of human life, continues to secrete the phenomena of gigantomania, urban concentration and differences between town and country which were supposed to fade away as the march to Communism progressed.

The way out, or at least the way of atonement for the mistakes committed, lies, according to Solzhenitsyn in opening up in an original manner the vast undeveloped territories of Russia's North-East. As a pole of attraction, a hope, a "source of stability", the North-East would be, in a sense, the place where the wounded nation might convalesce. Solzhenitsyn sees this region as a land of "clean air and clean water", of health-giving silence, where towns will once more belong to those who live in them, and where a new youth will arise, freed from the obligations of military service. "Utopia or death" seems to be his message, delivered in his own fashion—which is not

however, that of a René Dumont or an Ivan Ilitch. In his case, the Utopia is wholly and profoundly backward-looking, as he says himself: "let us go back". "Back" means, for him, to the golden age of old Russia, to "our old towns . . . towns which were humane, friendly, cosy places, where the air was always clean, which were snow-clad in winter and in spring redolent with garden aromas streaming through the fences into the streets". "Back" means, for him, schools where the pupils "respect their teachers", and families in which the wife can devote herself solely to her household "toils and troubles" without being forced to go out and earn "a separate pay-packet".⁵⁴

Now, there is nothing here, as regards fundamentals, that should surprise us. The rejection of Marxism and of the class struggle, the personalist ethic, the return to the sources of Russian Christianity, the "organic" conception of history, all go together: Solzhenitsyn's moral society is a society based on religious values, the only values that can ensure national "continuity", which for him means re-establishing the link with medieval Russia.

In this regard Solzhenitsyn's ideas remind us of the "Christian policy" conceived in the last century by Vladimir Soloviev, to whom the writer several times refers. He has also been influenced by the ethical and personalistic conceptions of Mikhaylovsky, one of the theoreticians of Narodism, and of the Anarchist Kropotkin (quoted in *Cancer Ward*). But it is above all Soloviev, the advocate of an economy with moral purposes, Dostoyevsky, with his theocratic Utopia, and perhaps also Berdyayev, the theoretician of a religious socialism of communities and "councils", who seem to have been closest to Solzhenitsyn at a time when (being in the USSR) his knowledge of Russian religious philosophy was still, inevitably, limited. Solzhenitsyn's thought has doubtless not yet attained its final form.

III

Solzhenitsyn's moral condemnation of violence is directed at a clearly defined type of violence—that which frankly comes forward into the open, justifying itself by some ideology. Solzhenitsyn's point of view sees neither causes nor cures for violence other than those of a moral order, whether ideological or anti-ideological. It is the same where the class struggle is concerned. The Marxists have made an ideology of it—but are those who "refute" it any less devoted to constructing an ideology? There lies the whole problem.

What is Solzhenitsyn's thesis regarding the Stalin terror? Leninism contained the germ of it, and October 1917 made it inevitable. This terror was therefore not "Stalin's", but was, quite logically and without any breach in continuity, revolutionary.

There is no shortage of arguments to sustain this thesis. In the weeks following the October Revolution the Bolsheviks dispersed the Constituent Assembly, banned the Cadet Party and arrested the office-workers' strike committee. Counter-revolution was brought under fire, but so also, very soon and at the same time, were "anarchy", "drunkards and hooligans", the printing workers of Petrograd, landowners, priests and monks, members of the religious sects, the Tolstoyan pacifists, the Christians engaged in the first agrarian communes where complete communism was practised—everything and everybody that hindered the dictatorship of the Party. Lenin called for the land of Russia to be "cleansed of all vermin". And Solzhenitsyn lists the many passages in which the head of the young Soviet State incited to intolerance, hardness, mass application of the death penalty.

The "cleansing" assumed an unprecedented form: the Cheka, the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Sabotage and Counter-Revolution, was the first instance in history of a state police force that concentrated in its own hands all powers of investigation, arrest, examination, trial and execution. Founded in December 1917 it possessed at first only limited powers of preliminary investigation. In practice, however, it took to itself additional powers with every passing day. On 21 February 1918 it superseded the judiciary. In the course of eighteen months (1918 and the first half of 1919) it shot 8,389 persons and arrested 87,000. Thenceforth arbitrary power was absolute in Russia.⁵⁵

Among the instruments of Red Terror were the concentration camps. The first in Russia to use the term was Leon Trotsky, on 4 June 1918. Sent there, one after the other, were Czechoslovak mutineers, Russian officers who refused to serve the Soviet state, persons suspected of anti-Soviet agitation, saboteurs, parasites, speculators, etc. . . .⁵⁶ Under War Communism, compulsory labour service tended to make more widespread the institution of forced labour. "Deserters from labour" were sent to the camps.⁵⁷ Dzerzhinsky recommended that separate camps be established for the bourgeoisie and for the workers and peasants—so that the former should not contaminate the latter. The camps continued in being during the 1920s, under the New Economic Policy, especially for "re-education through labour". Political and common-law prisoners arrived in droves from 1923 onward in the Solovki, the special camps on the Solovetsky Islands. There it was that was to be tried out in the mid-1920s (and glorified in Soviet literature) the new type of slavery which, during the reign of Stalin and of Gulag became a mass phenomenon that was not merely political and repressive in nature but also economic, supplying a reserve force of labour for the great works of the industrialization programme.⁵⁸ In his desire to justify the measures of War Communism Trotsky had already

provided a certain theoretical foundation for this resort to forced labour: "We are now heading towards the type of labour that is socially regulated on the basis of an economic plan, obligatory for the whole country, compulsory for every worker. This is the basis of socialism. . . . The militarization of labour, in this fundamental sense of which I have spoken, is the indispensable basic method for the organization of our labour forces. . . . Is it true that compulsory labour is always unproductive? . . . This is the most wretched and miserable liberal prejudice: chattel slavery, too, was productive. . . . Compulsory serf labour did not grow out of the feudal lords' ill-will. It was (in its time) a progressive phenomenon."⁸⁹

As we have seen, the terror is for Solzhenitsyn not something exclusively connected with Stalinism or with some "bureaucratic degeneration" or other. It is integral to the régime and ideology that prevailed under Lenin and Trotsky. But its inevitability goes back even before that time, being inherent in the Revolution itself. "Well before any sort of civil war began, it was clear that Russia, given the nature of her population, could not, of course, be led towards any sort of socialism, that she had spoiled everything." Why had this spoiling come about? The writer intends, in the successive instalments of his great novel about the war of 1914-18, to try to throw some light on this question.

In his book, which parallels *The Gulag Archipelago*, Michel Heller offers his answer to the question: the Revolution lacked a social basis, and in particular lacked the proletariat in whose name it was made. Accordingly, "from the earliest days of Soviet power coercion emerged as an absolute necessity. This was not just coercion in general, or that coercion directed against the hostile classes which is inevitable in any revolution: it was coercion imposed upon the working people, peasants as well as workers."⁹⁰ Even while it was being glorified, labour became a punishment. The experiment with workers' control, the taking over of the enterprises by those who worked in them, which was attempted at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918, ended in catastrophe, with production completely disorganized. After having upheld the view that every cook must be able to rule the state, Lenin turned back to the thoroughly traditional notion that only compulsion can overcome disorder and idleness. The move in the direction of the militarizing of labour coincided with Lenin's recognition of the merits of the Taylor system, which was increasingly adopted in Russian industry from the NEP period onward.

Was the coming of the terror a matter of will, of inevitability, or of continuity with what had gone before? While there is room for an investigation aimed at bringing out the significance of deliberate choices made, of the compelling pressure of circumstances, and of a

concatenation of terrorist measures obeying their own logic, the deductions drawn from all this by Solzhenitsyn, as by Heller, are neither so obvious nor so irrefutably well-supported as may seem at first sight to be the case.

Although the October Revolution was indeed carried through by "violence", "the midwife of history", the majority of those who witnessed it or have written about it acknowledge that this violence was not excessive, and that the Bolsheviks showed "relative but very genuine moderation" in their use of it against the Revolution's adversaries. "It was a moderation that was sometimes reminiscent of the generosity that had occasionally accompanied the euphoria of earlier revolutionary victories." For example, the Red Guards released the officer-cadets who had fought against them, requiring only that they give their word not to take up arms against the Revolution any more—an undertaking which the cadets hastened to violate only a few days later. Some ministers in the Provisional Government who had been arrested were set free. General Krasnov, who had tried to reconquer Petrograd, was allowed his freedom in return for a promise not to resume battle against the Soviets—and almost immediately joined the anti-Bolshevik forces gathering in the South. Moreover, "during the first months of their rule, the Bolsheviks, far from inflaming the anger and vindictiveness of the masses, sought to set bounds to the manifestation of such feelings". No death-sentences were passed during the first three months of the new régime, and, indeed, one of the Soviet Government's first decrees abolished the death-penalty. This moderation contrasted with the multiplying acts of violence by counter-revolutionaries and the first outbursts of White Terror, such as the massacre of their "Red" prisoners by the officer-cadets in Moscow, and the slaughter of between ten and twenty thousand "Reds" in Finland.⁴¹ Roy Medvedev records that during 1918, even at the height of the civil war, the Cheka's activities were "moderate" as compared with those of the Whites, and kept in check by the political authority. He recalls that a demand for torture to be used, since the Revolution's foes were using it, met with "widespread indignation in Party circles".⁴²

If reprisals became ever more frequent and arbitrary methods were introduced, if the death-penalty was restored, if concentration camps were established—undeniably, and with "chronological" proofs at hand—the fact is that these developments took place in response to the increasing onslaught of the counter-revolutionary White armies and the intervention by foreign expeditionary forces sent to help them.

But it is precisely the counter-revolution and the foreign intervention, the attempted murder of the young Soviet Republic by all the exploiting classes and reactionary groups, expropriated or seized by

panic, in Russia and the entire bourgeois world, that Solzhenitsyn either ignores or plays down.

It is true that, as Solzhenitsyn observes, the "wide range of targets" (Liebman's phrase) proposed by Lenin for attention by the organs of Red Terror — Tsarist military men, kulaks, prostitutes, bureaucrats, speculators, "unstable elements" were all marked down for extermination — soon makes an apocalyptic impression on the reader. Some of Lenin's orders seem to echo the command of one of the White generals, as reported by Victor Serge: "The orders are to hang all arrested workers in the street. The bodies are to be exhibited for three days."

Lenin's psychology and his tendency to verbal excesses are probably only of secondary importance in explaining how the Red Terror mounted in intensity. There is a logic in this matter, which is well described by Isaac Deutscher: "The terror has its own momentum. Every revolutionary party at first imagines that its task is simple: it has to suppress a 'handful' of tyrants or exploiters. It is true that usually the tyrants and exploiters form an insignificant minority. But the old ruling class has not lived in isolation from the rest of society. In the course of its long domination it has surrounded itself by a network of institutions embracing groups and individuals of many classes; and it has brought to life many attachments and loyalties which even a revolution does not destroy altogether. The anatomy of society is never so simple that it is possible surgically to separate one of the limbs from the rest of the body. Every social class is connected with its immediate neighbour by many almost imperceptible gradations. The aristocracy shades off into the upper middle class; the latter into the lower layers of the bourgeoisie; the lower middle class branches off into the working class; and the proletariat, especially in Russia, is bound by innumerable filiations to the peasantry. The political parties are similarly interconnected. The revolution cannot deal a blow at the party most hostile and dangerous to it without forcing not only that party but its immediate neighbour to answer with a counter-blow."⁶³

This complexity of the social and political fabric shows how dangerous are the hasty schemas and the cult of violence characteristic of various "ultra-left" elements. Civil war rarely splits society into "exploiters" and "exploited": it almost always raises up against the progressive forces not merely the reactionary classes but also broad strata of the people who still side with the latter owing to ideology, cultural backwardness and the weight of certain clerical influences, not to mention fear of "upheaval", an apolitical outlook, and all the manoeuvres and provocations to which poverty and forced idleness can give rise among the most deprived sections of the population.

It cannot be denied that the policy and style of repression that were inaugurated by the civil war survived that conflict, even if only, during

the 1920s, in a mitigated form. On the initiative of Lenin, who recommended re-abolition of the death penalty already in 1920, the Cheka's prerogatives were sharply restricted. The GPU, its successor, was made subject to the political authorities, and had to accept that "the power of judgement belonged exclusively to the Courts". But this was only a precarious interval.⁶⁴ The GPU retained the Cheka's power of administrative repression and internment in camps.⁶⁵ At a time when Lenin was waging a desperate struggle against bureaucracy and Great-Russian chauvinism, and when he acknowledged the right of the trade unions to defend the workers against their own "workers' state with bureaucratic distortions",⁶⁶ he does not seem to have paid overmuch attention to the problem of the rule of law, which was constantly being undermined by police (and even political) tyranny. In a letter dated 10 February 1922, unpublished, and circulated by *samizdat* methods some years ago, after its inclusion in Lenin's "Complete Works" in 55 volumes had been turned down by the censors, Lenin shows himself especially ruthless in his attitude to the clergy, who were resisting confiscation of the Church's valuables. (The immediate purpose of this confiscation, it should be mentioned, was to obtain means for famine relief.) "The bigger the number of representatives of the bourgeoisie and the reactionary clergy that we manage to shoot, the better that will be. What we have to do, in fact, is to educate those people in such a way that for decades to come they will not be able even to think of putting up any sort of resistance." The letter was addressed (as a communication classified "secret") "to Comrade Molotov and the members of the Politburo".⁶⁷ In other documents of the same year Lenin insists on continuation of the terror, and even defines a new category of offenders, namely, whoever "gave help objectively" to the external foes of the Soviet régime.⁶⁸

Liebman asks: "Is not the origin of the often gratuitous terror of Stalinism to be found in the largely uncontrolled and uncontrollable violence of the years 1917 to 1920?"⁶⁹ The origin of Stalinism is seemingly to be found not only in the stigmata of this period but also in the political consequences of the civil war: the elimination of all political forces other than the Bolsheviks themselves which might have co-operated with the new régime, and some of which showed readiness to do this (e.g. the Left-wing Mensheviks and some sections of the Anarchists); the replacement of the dictatorship of a proletariat which had been decimated or scattered by the war by a "dictatorship of the proletariat" that was exercised by the Communist Party in its name; the devitalizing of the Soviets, which might, in particular, have ensured wide participation by the poor and middle peasantry in the government of the country; and the prohibition of tendencies and factions in the Party in 1921 (a measure described as "temporary" but which is

still in force. In other words it was this one-party and bureaucratic regime, born of circumstances rather than of any deliberate choice, more or less accepted and at the same time feared by the Bolshevik leaders, but which quickly changed from a necessity into a virtue in the eyes of Lenin and Trotsky, and soon, under Stalin, became identified as the political system appropriate to socialism—it was this régime, together with the exigencies of industrialization, speeded up from 1928 onwards, that was to manifest a sort of "structural" need to resort to tyranny and repression.

What Stalinism did, however, was to free this "need" from all the safeguards provided by the political intentions, the democratism and the international outlook which, in spite of everything, continued to be characteristic of Lenin's struggle. The discontinuity between Leninism and Stalinism is therefore not without importance.⁷⁰ Police methods became the norm, the axis, and not something exceptional or auxiliary, in the way the country was governed.

It was no longer only or even mainly "class enemies" that the Stalin terror crushed, but real or potential *allies* (poor and middle peasants), and soon the workers themselves and the most faithful cadres of the Revolution (Oppositionists first, then loyal Stalinists as well). The bulk of this terror's victims were *imaginary* enemies of the Revolution, if not of Stalin himself.

Along with Solzhenitsyn we can doubtless accept that there is a fatality of violence in every revolutionary process. Not that this must necessarily—as it did, almost inevitably in Russia—take the extreme form of a civil and even an international war, but because profound changes in social structures, overthrowing propertied classes and sweeping away modes of production that have outlived themselves, cannot take place *without* violence. It is in this sense that the latter has been, throughout the centuries, "the midwife of history", as Engels put it.

But Solzhenitsyn fails to see the roots of this violence, and its scope, perceiving only, and then in a distorting light, the *revolutionary* element in it. This abstract preaching of non-violence, which almost always has for corollary a condemnation of the violence of the oppressed, goes back a very long way.

The pattern of the revolutionary "break" does not depend wholly upon the methods chosen by those who promote it: Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, Mao in China, or Castro in Cuba. It also mirrors the social relations that it confronts. In Russia the survivals of patriarchal and feudal relations and ways of thought, and the centralized and authoritarian political system prevailing in Russia since Peter the Great's transformations, did not go for nothing in determining the pattern of the revolutionary struggle and, subsequently, the building of the Soviet state.

The ignorance, isolation and brutality that marked the life of the

peasants did not prepare them, either, for a revolution "in the spirit of the Enlightenment". A people reared under the knout and in fear of the gendarme will not produce a revolution such as might be dreamed up by a study-commission of the *Parti Socialiste Unifié*. Nor was the Revolution like the one that the Russian revolutionary intellectuals had expected. When the common people forced their way into the boulevards of St Petersburg or into the old palaces of the Romanovs, littering the former with spat-out sunflower-seeds, and in the latter using precious vases from Sèvres, Saxony or the Orient as chamber-pots, they seemed not so much the bringers of an uplifting future as creatures moved by zeal to destroy, in the eyes of those very persons who, in books, had prayed that they would rise up. Furthermore, that which gave strength to the Russian Revolution, the fact that it "broke the chain of imperialism at its weakest link", became a source of weakness as soon as isolated, deprived of the prospect of world revolution that had nourished it, suffering from the "sanitary" blockade imposed by the industrialized countries of the West, and betrayed by the Right-wing Social-Democrats, Soviet Russia found itself alone with the burdensome heritage of the past, the devastations of the war and the ruin of the productive forces that had been accumulated between 1900 and 1913, and faced with the task of building a socialism that appeared increasingly both hypothetical and hypothecated.

The "break" deplored by Solzhenitsyn certainly occurred, a "break" that was indeed deplorable and which went much further than the mere "smashing of the State" aimed at in October—but not necessarily in the sense that Solzhenitsyn means, for the Soviet régime took upon itself, even if unwillingly, a certain "Russian continuity" of bureaucracy and chauvinism, against which real internationalist socialists like Lenin and Trotsky were to wage a last desperate struggle. What did occur was a "break" in economic life and professional traditions, and a break, to the greatest misfortune, with the West—its technology, its universalist culture, its working-class movement.

The violence of the propertied classes, moreover, is neither governed nor disciplined by a project for social liberation. It is merely a matter of defending property and privilege, and nothing more than that. It is not encumbered by any humanitarian scruples. And this is why a cold and determined savagery can so easily sweep away all the baggage of refinement and humanism of which these classes seem to be the heirs. In this connection the conduct of the former Tsarist officers fully lived up to a tradition that runs from the "Versaillais" of 1871 to the generals who made the putsch in Chile, and includes the Ruhr tycoons and Prussian aristocrats who served Hitler.

In any case, as Liebman writes, "there is often an element of hypocrisy in the reproach brought against the nascent Communist movement

and the Bolshevik leaders that they employed methods of terror, as though the violence that broke out in Russia somehow defiled an epoch of peace and progress". Solzhenitsyn's condemnation of terrorism belongs, it must be said, to this same category of hypocrisy. "People have been refusing to accept as terrorism a treacherous assault under peaceful conditions against peaceful people by military forces that have been surreptitiously armed and are frequently dressed up in civilian clothes. They demand that we study the aims of the terrorist groups, the base that supports them and their ideology, and then perhaps accept them as sacred 'guerrillas' (in South America they have even gone so far as to give them the comic description 'urban guerrillas')." Further on, he writes: "The bestial mass murders in Hue,⁷¹ which had been reliably proven to have taken place, were only noted in passing and almost immediately forgiven—because society's sympathy leaned to that side and nobody wished to oppose the consensus." Again: "Hijacking' and all other types of terrorism have increased tenfold simply because people have capitulated to them too quickly. But when one shows firmness, one wins over terrorism—mark my words."⁷²

As we see, Solzhenitsyn, who has more than once shown his lack of tenderness for the terrorism of movements by oppressed people, none the less calls for "firmness". Firmness by whom and against whom? It is clear that the preaching of non-violence, where Solzhenitsyn is concerned, has nothing in common with Gandhism or with the attitude of the War Resisters' International. It is quite frankly a stand in favour of "order" and "civil peace", as this is understood by the defenders of the "free world". Solzhenitsyn's voice has never been raised against the massacres carried out by the imperialists in Vietnam, Chile and so many other places where "firmness" reigns.

Finally, the class character of the acts of violence perpetrated during the civil war is ignored completely in Solzhenitsyn's analysis, and not without reason. The impression is given that an incomprehensible cataclysm engulfed the good people of Russia, destroying their way of life and their precious values.

That cataclysm, for such it was, began with the Great War, and that war resulted from the striving to conquer markets and Lebensraum, from the repartition of the world: it was a consequence of capitalism, and millions of workers and peasants, all over Europe, were its victims. This is a rudimentary but nevertheless enlightening Marxism fact which enables one to grasp. In this cruel conflict the clash between fatherlands, between nations, took precedence over the conflict between classes, and the International of the proletariat did not survive it. With flowers in the muzzles of their rifles, workers and peasants went forth to fight other workers and peasants. For what interests? Here was an opportunity for the author of *August* 1914, so sensitive to ideological falsehood, to detect

what the stance and talk of "the Fatherland in danger" concealed by way of ideology—and what sort of ideology?—with the purpose of breaking up some solidarities in favour of others—to whose advantage? The revolution, a class war, proceeding from other interests and a different ideology, sought, in the shaken edifice of the world imperialist system, to find a crack through which it could enter, and this it found in Russia. One logic spurned the other. Among the most symbolic scenes of the Revolution was that in which, at the front, Russian, German and Austrian soldiers embraced each other—men who had, until that moment, been occupied in killing each other. What attitude will Solzhenitsyn take towards that scene?

Was not the violence that, in their turn, the White generals, the fallen barons, the politicians cast by October "into the dustbin of history", unleashed against the Revolution—was this not class violence?

The fact that this broad picture included, in inextricable confusion, such tortured personal destinies as that of Doctor Zhivago, experiences, ideas and feelings that have only a distant, often invisible, relation to this socio-historical truth, justifies us, perhaps, in "qualifying" it with a whole range of partial truths, but not in rejecting it, *in the last analysis*.

Revolutionary violence is, moreover, identified by Solzhenitsyn with terror and destruction. This is an approach that both *misrepresents* and *reduces* the revolutionary phenomenon, ultimately rendering it incomprehensible. The Red Army fought at the front—but also strove to overcome popular illiteracy. The Cheka and the GPU carried out repression—but their creation of the first colonies for re-education through labour, replacing the old prisons, their organization of labour communes governed on their own behalf by young criminals, also form part of that great effort to establish a new way of life of which, among others, Wilhelm Reich and Anton Makarenko wrote.⁷⁸ Lenin showed no pity for the enemies of the revolution, but his uncompromising attitude went along with a continual appeal for initiative and cultural improvement on the part of the masses. It is interesting, in this connection, to restore to its context a little phrase that is frequently quoted in *The Gulag Archipelago*. The passage in which Lenin demands, in incredibly harsh tones, that the land of Russia be "cleansed of vermin", and sets forth a whole catalogue of terroristic measures to this effect, comes from an essay entitled *How To Organise Competition?* written in December 1917 (old style). What Solzhenitsyn does not mention is that this essay is above all a stirring plea in favour of the dignity of the working class. The "vermin" of whom he writes are "yesterday's slaveowners", the "rogues", "idlers" and "rowdies", and the intellectual "lackeys" who refuse to put their knowledge at the service of the people. Against all these, Lenin calls above all for a spirit of initiative and emulation to find expression: "Every factory from which the

capitalist has been ejected, or in which he has at least been curbed by workers' control, every village from which the landowning exploiter has been smoked out and his land confiscated has only now become a field in which the working man can reveal his talents, unbend his back a little, rise to his full height, and feel he is a human being. For the first time after centuries of working for others, of forced labour for the exploiter, it has become possible to work for oneself and moreover to employ all the achievements of modern technology and culture in one's work. . . . At all costs we must break the old, absurd, savage, despicable and disgusting prejudice that only the rich, and those who have gone through the school of the rich, are capable of administering the State and directing the organizational development of Socialist society." And this essay, an improperly isolated phrase from which Solzhenitsyn seeks to use to overwhelm Lenin, ends with these words: "In what commune, in what district of a large town, in what factory and in what village are there no starving people, no unemployed, no idle rich, no despicable lackeys of the bourgeoisie, saboteurs who call themselves intellectuals? Where has most been done to raise the productivity of labour, to build good new houses for the poor, to put the poor in the houses of the rich, to regularly provide a bottle of milk for every child of every poor family? It is on these points that competition should develop between the communes, communities, producer-consumers' societies and associations, and Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. This is the work in which talented organizers should come to the fore in practice and be promoted to work in State administration. There is a great deal of talent among the people. It is merely suppressed. It must be given an opportunity to display itself. It and it alone, with the support of the people, can save Russia and save the cause of socialism."⁷⁴ Milk for poor children and the workers as masters of their fate—this is the inspiration of Lenin's hunting-down of "vermin". . . .

This restatement brings us to consider one of the most intense moments of revolutionary violence, what has been called "the period of the Red Guard attack on capital", and which was marked by the spread of workers' control, at the same time as, in the countryside, the peasants were taking possession of the estates confiscated from the big landowners and the Church, and the State was leaving them to enjoy it. "The land to the peasants, the factories to the workers"⁷⁵—revolutionary violence, in its initial phase, also meant that. Michel Heller is caricaturally unfair when he ascribes to the revolutionaries this idea: "Everything seemed very simple. Once the workers had established their control over production, all economic problems would immediately be solved."⁷⁶ In the thinking of the revolutionaries, on the contrary, nothing was more complicated than this apprenticeship to management.

"Workers' control" was a spontaneous creation of the proletariat, from February 1917 onward, which was encouraged by Lenin (unlike other Bolsheviks, who preferred state control) and was gradually brought under regulation by the new Soviet power. Now this "control" implicitly demonstrates that the immediate objective of the revolutionary authority was not to take over production: it was merely a matter of the workers' exercising a right of supervision and veto which was eminently political in character. The libertarian urge of the masses, but also, and most important, the employers' and engineers' refusal to co-operate, and their actual sabotage, caused this plan to be thwarted: gradually, workers' control became transformed into collectivization, and even "wildcat" self-management, and it was doubtless prematurely that the Soviet Republic found itself, at the beginning of the summer of 1918, confronted with the obligation to manage a large part of Russia's industry. It is no less caricatural to attribute to workers' control, as Heller suggests, responsibility for the economic catastrophe that then descended upon Russia. Not that anarchy and the absence of an effective co-ordinating authority did not make their contribution—but the war, the lack of raw materials and fuel, and sabotage by the bourgeoisie, were infinitely more decisive factors.⁷⁸ The disappointing experience of workers' control, which was succeeded rather quickly by the system of authoritarian management of enterprises, nevertheless served as a school from which emerged a number of future worker-administrators, and in which, above all, as in the Soviets which covered Russia for a few months, a huge mass of people had undergone an apprenticeship to an intoxicating and genuine freedom.

This cannot be left out of account when the problem of the "non-existent" social basis of the Revolution is considered. On the one hand, this basis certainly shrank during the civil war: the proletariat emerged from its battles greatly weakened, the frightful economic situation fostered discontent among the peasants and workers to which the Red Army and the Cheka replied bluntly (as at Kronstadt); the phenomena of "de-classing" of the working class occurred of which Lenin speaks; the Soviets were rendered insubstantial; and at the end of the civil war, the Bolsheviks' military victory was lumbered with a political defeat—the Party had largely lost the confidence of the masses and was ruling Russia in spite of them and even against them.

On the other hand, however, how are we to understand this victory over the Whites, achieved in face of the hostile coalition of the bourgeois world, and after coming to the brink of disaster? How could a revolution "without a social basis" have succeeded in meeting so deadly a challenge? Even an historian so openly hostile to the Bolshevik Revolution as Adam B. Ulam is not satisfied, in answering this question, to refer to the inadequacy of the outside aid given to the Whites, their

lack of unity and their military mistakes, their extortions from the civil population, the **anti-Jewish** pogroms and the execution of prisoners, which certainly contributed greatly to discredit them. Although he sees the division in the ranks of the Whites as a major cause of their defeat, this writer nevertheless does not remain silent about a series of other causes, which most historians of the Revolution have emphasized. Movements of hostility against the commissars and the Cheka in the Russian provinces only rarely took precedence over hatred of the old **régime**, and did not affect the people's attachment to the Soviets, so that there took shape in the popular mind "the legend of the golden period of Bolshevik rule, the period of the Soviets". On the other hand, "without a massive foreign intervention, the Civil War in Russia could have ended in a Bolshevik defeat only if the opposite side had produced a leader of unusual appeal and organizing ability, or if the Whites . . . could have produced a political organization possessing the cohesion and sense of mission of the Communist Party". Finally, to **Denikin**, who expressed contempt for "formulas", **Ulam** replies: "But what, if not declarations and formulas, were 'All power to the Soviets', 'All land to the peasants', 'The right of every nationality to choose its own form of government', which certainly helped sway the course of the Russian revolution and the civil war?" Formulas? But by what accident was it that these particular "formulas" were those *of the Bolsheviks*?

An astonishing contradiction is contained in the attempt to reduce the Revolution, and the Soviet **régime** to a system of "terror and lies". On the one hand we are shown a revolution that is the work of a tiny minority, a coup *d'état*, in fact, imposed upon a people 150 millions strong. On the other, we are told that this people, especially in the 1930s, is a victim of the **régime's** ideological lying.

That the Revolution made use of force and the Stalin **régime** of lies is absolutely true. But by what miracle tens of millions of men who had been "forced" to accept the new **régime** bestowed upon it thereafter such blind devotion—that is something that, after all, calls for some further explanation! Some **polemicists** in a hurry will quote other notable instances of mass spell-binding in history—the Nazi period in Germany, say, don't forget that. Without going into the detail of possible comparisons, the brittleness of this analogy seems obvious, so far as the "spell-binding" aspect is concerned, at any rate. From the technical standpoint alone, Soviet rule, including its Stalin phase, possessed neither the means of persuasion nor the network of communications needed for such a conditioning of the masses as could be effected in highly-industrialized, Germany. Till the end of the 1920s illiterates were still numerous in Russia, and radio sets rather few. Consequently the impact of strictly ideological means of manipulation

was considerably less than in Germany. But this is not the main thing. The Nazis appealed to values that *united* the people—the nation, the race, antisemitism, the spirit of superiority and conquest. The Soviet regime—including the Stalin regime, at least until the early 1940s—was driven by ideals of *differentiation*: class struggle, socialist revolution, cultural revolution, destruction of the religious heritage (the spiritual cement of Russian tradition), international proletarian solidarity ("aid for Spain"), antifascist solidarity. It is unnecessary to point out, in addition, how fundamentally different were the *respective* values of the two regimes, and therefore their ideological motivations. In order to explain why the masses rallied round the Soviet *régime* we need to find more convincing arguments: terror and "conditioning" do not account for everything, or even for what is most important.

This is not the *place* to go at length into what would constitute part of a history of Soviet society, and more especially a social history of Stalinism, which no-one has so far attempted.⁷⁸ In the 1920s the regime was able to draw the majority of the youth and of the proletariat behind it in pursuit of aims of civilizing (and Europeanizing) Russia and, to some degree reorganizing life on socialist lines. This meant, on the one hand, opportunities for social advancement through education and the "proletarianization" of the country's *leadership* at all levels. But it also meant mass participation in political life, an explosion of cultural and artistic activity, the search for a new way of life through art, the theatre, modern architecture, sexual reform, new ways in teaching, in psychiatry. . . . Without spreading oneself on this theme and without idealizing phenomena which remained, after all, very much the concern of minorities only, and largely premature at that, is it not the case that any attempt to assess the past and foretell the future in the Soviet Union must include a re-discovery of this "heritage of the 1920s", which is still largely unexploited, and which the kind of concern with the past that is characteristic of Solzhenitsyn necessarily ignores?

After the phase of social experimentation, coinciding with the ambiguous period of the New Economic Policy, the social transformations accompanying Stalin's industrialization campaign formed the basic background to the *régime* of terror which historians, including Medvedev—and, of course, Solzhenitsyn—tend to detach from its context: final disappearance of the old exploiting classes, formation of a new working class and a peasantry that was either proletarianized (in the State farms) or collectivized, and on this basis, new stratifications of society that provided Stalinism with its social foundation (to a much greater extent than the Bolshevik Party apparatus and the *vestiges* of the old ruling classes); the determining role played by education, liquidation of illiteracy, ending of infectious diseases, and so on. . . . How is it possible to close one's eyes to this gigantic "stirring up" of the

former *muzhik* masses, this revolution that was both social and cultural and meant turning upside down the society of the former Russian Empire, bringing it greater homogeneity and in particular the capacity to resist attack from without (as was shown in 1941–5)? It is beyond doubt that the history of Soviet society is not to be reduced to that of a "world of concentration camps", and its present characteristics are not definable either, by Andrei Sakharov's polemical formula: "one huge concentration camp".

* * *

The problem of morality holds a central position in Solzhenitsyn's work. Its importance in Soviet literature since the time of the 20th Party Congress corresponds to the crisis of ideals engendered by the revelation then made of the crimes, and, more generally, the deceptions of the Stalin period. But it certainly has deeper roots than that.

It was by way of revisionism and moralistic criticism that after 1956 a revival began in social thought in the USSR, including interest in Marxism and the Communist ideal. And this was no accident. The "dictatorship of the proletariat", the "higher (historical) interests of the proletariat", the "class struggle", with the Stalinist variant whereby "the class struggle grows more intense as the building of socialism proceeds", "class" morality—all this had served as ideological camouflage for tyranny, the concentration-camp system, the massacre of millions of citizens, including many Communists. It would be futile to expect that these same concepts should, as though by magic, become operative once more in exposing the trick that had been played. There is certainly nothing surprising in the fact that they were deeply discredited, and that the socialist ideal, when it again sought to find its identity, endeavoured to assume "a human face". But it was not merely a few formulas that were discredited. The "return to Lenin" was not adequate to close the account of the deception that had been experienced, and the moral defeat suffered by the régime, with its incapacity to create, transcending the class struggle and its harsh exigencies, an ethic for the new way of life corresponding to a society on the road to communism, in which the class struggle would have ceased to be the driving force of history and man would become the *subject* of history. Consequently, the revelation of the gap between "official truth" and reality effected by Solzhenitsyn and other moralistic critics, even when this has been done in a disguised form, has proved more important than all the tons of learned "Marxist" works that have been devoted, in the East as in the West, to dodging the real problems. From this it does not follow that Solzhenitsyn is acceptable either in the way that he presents these problems or in the solutions that he advocates. It does follow, however, that Marxism will not succeed in working

out its own solutions unless it recognizes its own limitations, and overcomes them.

One of the adepts of the new moral socialism, Georgii Pomerantz, formulates the question in these terms: "Crude civilizations are incapable of filling the ideological vacuum. They collapse like a house of cards. One of the principal causes of the vacuum arises from the collision between two conceptions of the world: the religious one and the scientific. Mankind's centuries-old heritage has been codified in the world religions. The scientific revolution has shaken the world religions, but without proving capable of creating, at the same time, symbols of a beauty that can stand comparison with those of Buddha or Christ." Pomerantz sees the way out through reviving the dialogue between Marxism and the old philosophies: this seems to him to provide the key to a new culture. This position is certainly different from that of Solzhenitsyn, who is less concerned with such a dialogue than with a new theocratism. It also differs from the ideas of Krasnov-Levitin, who seems to see in Christian spirituality a kind of addition of a soul as leaven to socialist democracy. (This trend is truly representative of a "Christian socialism".) What reply can Marxism give to the needs that find expression through the new moral doctrines?

Official ideology confines itself to the "moral code of the builders of Communism", an improved version of Stalinist moral doctrine. The "testament" of Eugen Varga noted the "petty-bourgeois view of the world" that lurked beneath the bark of this official morality. Roy Medvedev acknowledges the undeveloped character of the "ethical conception" in Marxism-Leninism, and considers it impossible to "construct a solid system of morality" on such a "simplistic" foundation as: "whatever helps the Revolution is moral".

This criticism hits indirectly at Lenin, for whom proletarian morality had to be "wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat"—a conception which, with all that follows from it on the practical plane, was defended with talent by Leon Trotsky. "Whoever accepts the end . . . must accept the means. . . . Nevertheless, do not lying and violence 'in themselves' warrant condemnation? Of course, even as does the class society which generates them. A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However, there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is, violent, means."⁷⁹ The author of *Their Morals and Ours* bursts out angrily against the indictment brought against Bolshevism by "moralists" of every variety, at the time of the Spanish civil war and the Moscow trials: "A slaveowner who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning or violence breaks the chains—let not the contemptible eunuchs tell us that they are equals before a court of morality".⁸⁰ And

yet Stalinism is far from being justified by this conception. Trotsky gives a definition of Bolshevik morality that is perhaps wider than Lenin's, when he writes that not everything is permissible. "That is permissible . . . which *really* leads to the liberation of mankind . . . when we say that the end justifies the means, then for us the conclusion follows that the great revolutionary end spurns those base means and ways which set one part of the working class against other parts, or attempt to make the masses happy without their participation: or lower the faith of the masses in themselves and their organizations, replacing it by worship of the 'leaders'."⁸¹ But, above all, Trotsky emphasizes the interdependence of means and ends: "Seeds of wheat must be sown in order to yield an ear of wheat."⁸²

The Soviet experience offers a good illustration of the truth of this proposition of Trotsky's. Putting it the other way round, the crop that comes up shows what was sown. The moral consequences of Stalinism cause us to look back at the means employed, and from these means we look back at the nature of the "socialism" which inspired them: the dictatorship of the proletariat through an *interposed* bureaucracy, and perhaps the entire conception of building socialism on the basis of first of all accumulating the productive forces, at a rapid rate. We need to investigate how these two major conditions not only determined the resort to violence and lying *on* the grand scale *but*, more generally, how they postponed, hindered and in the end seriously compromised the *régime's* socialist aim, namely, the creation of new social relations of a liberating kind.



But although Solzhenitsyn does give expression to the alienated relation, which he has experienced, of millions of men to the mega-industrial reality, the way he expresses it is clearly warped by an ideology turned towards the past and in no way concerned with recasting social relations in a liberating form.

Ignorance of the discontinuities of history (the mutations of the growing tree!) has, in fact, several consequences for Solzhenitsyn. The first and most obvious is his nostalgia for an idealized version of a Russia without internal antagonisms, without class struggles, that never existed outside the writer's dreams: here he is, recalling, after many other nostalgic sighs, that, "for centuries Russia *exported* grain,"^{yy} whereas nowadays she has to import it—forgetting to mention that the existence of this exportable "surplus" did not prevent many peasants from dying of hunger in certain periods.⁸⁴

The second consequence is his failure to grasp what is irreversible in the "discontinuity" of October 1917 and Stalin's achievement, even if, contrary to what is implied by official apologetics, they constitute

neither the beginning nor the end of Russian and Soviet history, which is said to be open henceforth only to "improvements" to a path that has in essentials been finally laid down for the future. History is neither "closed" nor is it reversible.

In the third place, Solzhenitsyn seems to be unaware of the *Soviet* constituent in the Russian patriotism of today. This patriotism cannot be understood—nor the chauvinism that arises from it, either—without taking into account the revolution, the industrial achievements, the scientific and cultural successes, the victorious war with Hitlerite Germany, the new building-sites in Siberia—in short, everything that in the last half century has enriched the heritage of the Russian people and those associated with it in the Soviet Union. It must be added that "patriarchal" values have little chance of making much appeal to the young people and the women of present-day Russia. Even in the depths of the countryside, where attachment to the land is strong enough to make the authorities attempt experiments in "personalizing" its cultivation, the dream of the boys and girls of today is not so much to perpetuate or enlarge the petty domestic economy, with all that this means in advantages, but also in burdens, as to study, acquire a well-esteemed trade or profession, and enjoy those comforts and "leisure" opportunities that are appropriate to an urban way of life.

Finally, and above all, the Soviet Union exists. It is made up of an economic, historical, social, and to an increasing extent cultural reality, in which a tremendous mingling of population has taken place, through mixed marriages, and a type of human being has emerged having a composite personality in which the "Soviet" characteristics jostle with distinctive national peculiarities that are more or less pronounced. It would be as absurd to deny this reality as to claim that the Russian, Georgian, Uzbek, Estonian, etc., cultures are no longer "national" except in form, and "socialist", Soviet in their content. Solzhenitsyn does not deny this reality. He simply shuts his eyes to it.

Is this because it is only, after all, an "ideological" reality? In any case, Russia forms an integral part of this reality, and Solzhenitsyn's Russocentrism, unless it takes account of *this* dimension of present-day Russia, can offer no prospects in which the non-Russian peoples of the Union can recognize themselves. To "civilisation in an impasse" Solzhenitsyn's answer is the impasse of a retrograde turning towards the past, incapable of integrating and thereby transcending the substrata that history has left in men's way of life and thought. The return to Holy Russia may serve as a theme for a new poetry of "compensation", but it cannot help to bring about new social relations in the Soviet society of this last quarter of the 20th century.

IV

The "*affaire Solzhenitsyn*"—the persecution and banishment of the writer and the use of him as a political tool—has been revealing in several interesting ways.

It has revealed, in the first place, the vulnerability of the Soviet leaders to a critique the anachronistic character of which, and complete lack of influence among the Soviet people, they were pleased to emphasize without troubling about the contradiction implied, although, logically, what they said about it should mean that it had no prospect of being "subversive". It has also revealed the unscrupulousness and shamelessness of certain circles in political life and the mass media in the West, which have transformed the writer (with his consent) into a consumer-product for anti-Communism of a particularly vulgar sort. Finally, it has revealed the embarrassment into which this kind of event continues to plunge the Left in the West—especially, of course, the Communist Parties linked with the Soviet Union.

Undoubtedly Solzhenitsyn owes to the officials of the Writers' Union, the KGB and the CPSU a considerable proportion of his international audience and his reputation as "the conscience of mankind". His talent and his personal courage, however great they may be, would not have sufficed for this. The banishment of Solzhenitsyn, though it may have seemed the shrewdest possible action to take, among several evils, having regard to the political repercussions of the affair, has nevertheless done severe damage to the Soviet Union's prestige, especially in intellectual circles and among sympathetic progressives. It is true that the leaders of the USSR are a great deal more concerned today to win economic and trading partners from among the most representative and stable forces of world capitalism than they are to develop a serious, and inevitably critical, dialogue with sympathizers or potential allies in the international Left. No one any longer doubts that a stable Gaullist or post-Gaullist France is more welcome in Moscow than would be a France which set out along the hazardous path of an uncontrollable socialism. But what is it that obliges the-soviet leaders to take risks with their own recalcitrant intellectuals which entail such serious harm to their socialist "brand-image"?

The answer most commonly given to this question is that the writers who criticize the set-up, and Solzhenitsyn in particular, would become widely influential in a situation in which the rulers were discharging some ballast. In the restricted circles in which they have circulated for some years now, Solzhenitsyn's works have indeed had considerable impact. "One will no longer be able to write or to think, from now on, as if he had not existed", say young Soviet intellectuals who are never-

theless not greatly disposed to agree with the theses of the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*. The brilliance of the writing, even if it counts for much, is not enough to account for this audience. A significant complicity has been entered into between the world of Solzhenitsyn's writings and the intimate spiritual life of his readers.

"The dumb have, thanks to you, recovered their power of speech", the writer Lydia Chukovskaya wrote to Solzhenitsyn. "I don't know of any writer more eagerly awaited or more indispensable than you. Where the word is still living, the future is safe. Your bitter books at once wound and heal our soul. You have given back to Russian literature its formidable strength." Even readers who are remote from Solzhenitsyn's ideas will subscribe to those words. There is no shortage of writers of talent in the Soviet Union. Most of them write something "for the drawer" or for circulation in *samizdat* form. Some very valuable books are also published, in the most normal manner, and without any whiff of scandal attracting to them the too selective sense of smell of the world's newspapers. All this is true. But no-one, perhaps, has so completely freed himself from "Aesopian language" and found such authentic and profound accents in which to express the tragedy which, since the return from the camps, has gnawed at the consciences of very many Soviet people. Only a minority? That is undeniable. The anti-Stalinist intellectuals, the "dissidents", acknowledge their isolation. "A sound-proof wall", writes Chukovskaya, "methodically and hatefully erected by the leaders between the creators of spiritual values and those very people for whom these values have been created, has been made thicker. . . ."

But does not the very fact that this wall is kept in good repair show that the leaders fear the contagion of subversive ideas?

The problem here is not whether or not Solzhenitsyn's political attitudes might or might not find a wide public to support them if they were allowed free circulation. This is doubtfully the case. Not that a favourable soil does not exist for backward-looking and Slavophil ideas—with or without Solzhenitsyn, moreover. But the attraction of technocratic-liberal ideologies is felt more strongly among the intellectual youth. And, besides, the attachment of the broad masses to the conquests of October, the social and cultural achievements of the régime, the familiarity of the system of collective ownership of the means of production, are firmly rooted enough to make unlikely the success of any "anti-Sovietism" in the strict sense of the word. Anti-Stalinism itself does not appear to be the current of opinion that the leaders have most to fear so far as the mass of the population and the young generations are concerned.

The problem is that any breach, however narrow and debatable it may be, in the monopoly of ideas and information, involves the risk of

bringing about fatal consequences for the stability of the established order. An open discussion about Stalinism and about all the problems of current politics—which might start, say, from the beginnings made by Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, but would quickly advance beyond them, in all probability—would cause to manifest itself in the country an unsuspected potential of criticism and aspiration. In this respect, the agitation of the "dissident" minorities is not the only factor that has to be taken into consideration. Recent discussions in the Party on the subject of methods of management, among collective farmers on the subject of the experiment of "collective-farmers' councils", in the trade-union organizations about the rights of works committees, all reflect the presence of social movements, favourable to a democratization of the machinery of society. To be sure, these still barely perceptible "movements" may seem very remote from the preoccupations, and very far short of the demands, formulated by the dissident groups. The latter are, moreover, inclined towards a paralysing pessimism as to the possibilities of change in the immediate or fairly near future. This pessimism and political despair is reflected, among other things, in the urge to emigrate. The "atmosphere of departure" has become dominant in certain intellectual circles. The example set by the Jews has had a lot to do with this. Some Russian writers or scientists who have no "new homeland" to kiss are also tempted by the prospect of emigration, and the authorities are not in every case resistant to their wishes. . . .

On the other hand, Roy Medvedev continues to hold the view that a movement for the democratization of Soviet society can develop only given an initiative from the top.

The extraordinary "power of words" in the USSR is related, obviously, to realities that are not familiar to Westerners. In this connection one remembers the moral and messianic traditions of Russian literature. And also the "ersatz" for a political debate that can be constituted by a novel or a poem (and the collective celebration of such works, such as poetry meetings, encounters between writers and their public, etc.) in a country in which public opinion is without adequate means of expression in the form of newspapers and institutions. But this "power of words", or at least of ideas, results also from the nature of the cultural advance and certain changes that are in progress in Soviet society. In the context of "ideocracy", producers of ideas, and therefore writers, are traditionally charged with a high civic mission. A very large public has been formed, and continues to be formed, for the consumption of the régime's cultural values, which vary a great deal in quality. The thirst for knowledge is tremendous. Quite recently Marc Chagall, returning from his first visit to the USSR since 1922, bore witness to this: "Nowhere else in the world have we seen

such a love of reading and of art. In spite of omnipresent television, everyone carries books and reads, in the parks, the public gardens and the Metro. You should see and feel how they can listen to music. . . . Such attraction towards and respect for culture is quite simply amazing and overwhelming." Furthermore, the advance in education, the changes in the ways in which the working class is reinforced and trained, the establishment of a new way of life in the towns, the modernization of the country districts during the last decade have all caused new forms of behaviour and new needs to appear, which cannot be neglected in any serious analysis of Soviet society today.

Among the intelligentsia circles that are most sensitive to moral and political questions it is necessary also to reckon with the profound disillusionment that followed the stopping of "de-Stalinization", which culminated in the April Plenum of 1968 (the signal for a vast internal campaign of ideological prophylaxis) and intervention in Czechoslovakia in August of that year. Political *samizdat* did not really "take off" until after 1964. At the time, "anti-Stalinist" criticism still, as a general rule, developed within the setting of the ideas of the 20th and 22nd (1961) Congresses of the CPSU. Thereafter, and especially after 1968, the most radical, frankly anti-Communist documents circulated in great numbers. It was inevitable that Lenin and Bolshevism should be called in question as this intellectual maturation proceeded. This criticism took the form, with some, almost inevitably, of systematic iconoclasm. Solzhenitsyn's thought thus matched a movement of ideas that was not confined to himself.

Is this to be seen as a "reactionary" movement? Undoubtedly this question, as Pierre Daix says, has "come out of our world, our society". The old Bolsheviks, Anarchists and Christians who have shared a common fate in Stalin's camps are less concerned with their differences among themselves than with what marks them off from those who formerly held them in captivity and torment. The Communist writer Alexander Tvardovsky, the historian Roy Medvedev (a member until recently of the CPSU) and even General Grigorenko, well-known for his radical neo-Bolshevism, are closer to the "reactionary" Solzhenitsyn, in the political spectrum of the USSR, than they are to the "progressives" in the leadership of the Party or the KGB. It is hard to construct a "Right-Left" typology of the oppositionist currents in accordance with our Western criteria. The first priority, struggle for freedom of thought and expression, cuts across philosophical differences. But nevertheless these exist, and are becoming clearer. Around two or three ideological axes—Liberal Westernism, Russophil Christianity, socialism—a spiritual life is reawakening which had been numbed but not entirely extinguished by more than forty years of monolithism.

The "Marxism" that Solzhenitsyn attacks so crudely, calling it

"economico-mechanistic", is obviously a Marxism-Leninism impoverished by the officially-approved form in which it is presented, and which has, moreover, been cut off from all living Marxist tradition for half a century: in a country where even the writings of Rosa Luxemburg are still "censored" there can clearly be no question of publishing Lukács, Gramsci, Lefebvre, Mandel, Marcuse, Gorz, etc. Marxism in the Soviet Union is impoverished to such an extent that it is no longer being developed, nor can it come to grips with the other systems and trends of thought that have constituted the heritage of Western culture for the last fifty years: sociology, economics, psychology, psychoanalysis, etc.

This poverty of social thought and of official Marxism (or simply of what is known of Marxism) does not fail to affect the quality of oppositionist thinking. In comparison with the intellectual richness that preceded and marked the movement of socialist rebirth in Czechoslovakia, the moralistic type of protest that has appeared in the USSR cannot but disappoint. Yet it arises from a unique experience, and constitutes a probably necessary element in the "reawakening of consciousness".

In any case, it is not Solzhenitsyn's political thinking that will dissuade us from letting Marxism have a chance, and recognizing its necessary part in the critical analysis of Soviet society that Soviet Marxists will develop. It was probably as a joke that, in an important Brussels newspaper, Nikita Struve, publisher of *The Gulag Archipelago*, assured us that Solzhenitsyn's work deals a "quasi-mortal blow" to Marxism-Leninism. ■■

While, however, this statement, if it was not made as a joke, must cause us to doubt the perspicacity of the man who uttered it, tells us a great deal about one of the aspects of the political campaign of which Solzhenitsyn has become the unfortunate plaything. Undoubtedly, anti-Sovietism, in the Western world which is now involved in the dialectic of the rapprochement between East and West, has reasons for existence that derive not merely from the nostalgias of people for whom the Cold War has never ended, but also from the very dialectic of this rapprochement, in which factors of co-operation do not eliminate the antagonistic realities of the two systems. But it is above all anti-socialism, anti-Marxism, in a context of multiple crises, that explains why certain testimonies are exploited in what is often a quite frenzied fashion.

The attitude of part of the Left in the West, especially the Communist Parties, continues to lay itself open to such exploitation. I have in mind here not merely the obtuse reactions of a Georges Marchais, or the active participation of several Communist Party papers (particularly in Austria and in France) in the campaign of slander against Solzhenitsyn

in connection with the Vlasov affair. In the most liberal reactions—which are, of course, to be welcomed—a persistent short-sightedness is apparent. Thus, people become indignant when they find that Solzhenitsyn is not a "socialist", at the same time as they urge that the "Soviet comrades" ought to have published him, in order the better to criticize him.

This short-sightedness is clearly possible only in so far as the "case of Solzhenitsyn" is treated independently of the historical and political realities that gave rise to it. A study of these realities does not fail to inform us that anti-socialism is a perfectly conceivable attitude among the Soviet intelligentsia of 1974, and that "free discussion" of Solzhenitsyn in the USSR is not among the "options" that are open to the leaders within the framework of the present political régime in that country. At the very least, Solzhenitsyn's testimony, and the sad "*affaire*" that has taken possession of it, remind the Left in the West of tasks which other events will not omit to render urgent: critical, Marxist analysis of the Soviet experience; critical reflection upon the ties (in the case of the CPs, ties of subordination) between the working-class movement and the leadership of the USSR, and the need to establish "bridges" between the progressive movements in East and West, to resume a dialogue that has been suspended for too long and is certainly burdened with serious misunderstandings.

NOTES

1. A novel in which several voices speak, with the author intervening discreetly in the argument between his characters.
2. *Gulag* is the acronym formed from the Russian title of the "central administration of labour camps" which existed under Stalin.
3. Addressed to the leaders of the USSR under date 5 September 1973, having been written six months previously. Published by the YMCA Press in February 1974: English translation, by Hilary Sternberg, published in April 1974 by Index on Censorship, London. Quotations are from this translation.
4. Georg Lukács, *Solzhenitsyn* (English translation), London, 1970.
5. Pierre Daix, *Ce que je sais de Soljénitsyne*, Paris, 1973.
6. Cf. V. Chalanov (Shalanov), *Article 58*, Paris, 1969, and E. S. Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, London, 1967.
7. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, translated by Gillon Aitken, London (The Bodley Head), 1971, p. 174. Quotations are all from this translation.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
10. "Matryona's House," in Solzhenitsyn, *Stories and Prose Poems*, translated by Michael Glenny, London, 1971, p. 54.
11. "For the Good of the Cause," in *ibid.*, p. 112.
12. *Ibid.*, 105.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
15. *Cancer Ward, Part Two*, translated by Nicholas Bethell and David Burg, London (The Bodley Head), 1969, p. 135.
16. Quotations from *ibid.*, pp. 173-6.
17. It was the seizure of a copy of the manuscript in the possession of a woman friend in Leningrad, who killed herself after interrogation by the KGB, at the beginning of September 1973, that caused the writer to decide to publish a work that he had originally intended should not appear until after his death.
18. Nobel Prize Lecture, translated by Nicholas Bethell, London (Stenvalley Press), 1973, p. 17.
19. "August *Chetyrnadtsatogo*" chitayut *na* rodine (a survey of reactions to August 1914 by readers inside the USSR, published in Paris by the YMCA Press).
20. Not until the 1950s did the USSR surpass the quantities of grain harvested and the numbers of cattle that Russia could boast of in 1913.
21. August 1914, translated by Michael Glenny, London (Bodley Head), 1972, pp. 601-2.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 606.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 608. The Black Hundreds were a terrorist organization of the extreme Right, especially notorious for pogroms against the Jews. The implications suggested by the expression "Red Hundreds" will be appreciated.
25. Nobel Prize Lecture, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
26. Quoted by Michel Heller, *La Monde concentrationnaire et la litterature sovietique*, Paris, 1974 p. 103.
27. Letter to Soviet Leaders, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.
28. Nobel Prize Lecture, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
29. Letter to Soviet Leaders, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
30. August 1914, *op. cit.*, p. 605.
31. Nobel Prize Lecture, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
33. Letter to Soviet Leaders, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
34. N. Berdyaev, *The Realm of Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, London, 1952, pp. 18, 19.
35. Letter to Three Students, October 1967, in Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record, ed. L. Labeledz, London (Penguin), 1972, p. 151.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
37. August 1914, *op. cit.*, p. 429.
38. Letter to Soviet Leaders, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-4.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-4, 56.
40. A Lenten Letter to Pimen, Patriarch of All Russia, English translation, Minneapolis, 1972.
41. Letter to Soviet Leaders, *op. cit.*, p. 52. [Solzhenitsyn is referring to St Sergius of Radonezh, who died in 1391—he founded the famous Troitsk Monastery, and played an important part in uniting the Russians in resistance to the Mongol yoke, as Solzhenitsyn recalls in his story *Zakhar-the-Pouch: and to St Nilus of the Sora*, who died in 1508—an ascetic, he fought strongly against corruption and worldliness in the Church—Translator.]
42. Berdyaev, *op. cit.*, and also *The Origin of Russian Communism*, London, 1937.
43. This same filiation and this same sensibility are expressed in Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Rublyov* [about a great Russian painter of the 15th century who was a monk in St Sergius's monastery—Translator.]
44. It is true that this atheist propaganda sometimes has to wrestle with a religiosity that is no less "backward" and "frenzied": an anthropomorphic notion of God, and obscurantist sectarian practices such as refusal to conform to standards of hygiene or to compulsory education.
45. A Lenten Letter . . . , *op. cit.*

46. *Cahiers marxistes*, Brussels, May 1974.
47. "August chetyrnadtsatogo" chitayut na rodine, op. cit.
48. August 1914, op. cit., pp. 429–30.
49. *Nobel Prize Lecture*, op. cit., p. 33.
50. Ibid., pp. 49, 51.
51. *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, op. cit., p. 21.
52. Ibid., pp. 24–6.
53. A. S. Sakharov, *Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* (London, 1968); R. Medvedev, *De la Démocratie socialiste*; M. Sholokhov, speech at the 23rd Party Congress.
54. *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, pp. 37, 39, 40.
55. *The Gulag Archipelago*, Chapters 2 and 7.
56. Michel Heller, op. cit.
57. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, London, 1954, p. 499.
58. Heller, op. cit.
59. **Trotsky**, speech at 3rd All-Russia Trades Union Congress, quoted in Deutscher, op. cit., p. 501.
60. Heller, op. cit., p. 23.
61. Marcel Liebman, *The Russian Revolution*, London, 1970, and *Le Léninisme sous Lénine*, Vol. 2, Paris, 1973 (an English translation is shortly to be published by Jonathan Cape), quoting Victor Serge, J. L. H. Keep, F. Kaplan, Boris Souvarine, etc.; also E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–23*, Vol. 1, London, 1950.
62. Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, London, 1972, pp. 261–2.
63. Deutscher, op. cit., pp. 338–9.
64. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, op. cit., p. 391.
65. Heller, op. cit.
66. See on this subject Moshe Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, London, 1969, and *Le Testament de Varga* (preface by Roger Garaudy), Paris, 1970.
67. Published in *Vestnik russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniya* (Paris and New York: organ of Russian Students' Christian Action), No. 98, April 1970.
68. Lenin, *Polnoye sobranie sochineniya* (Complete Collected Works), Vol. 45 (published 1964), p. 191. [The phrase occurs in a letter to Kursky dated 17 May 1922. The document is omitted from the *Collected Works*, 4th edition, English version, Vol. 42: see p. 419 and note 477—Translator.]
69. Liebman, *Le Léninisme sous Lénine*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 163.
70. In his last writings, Lenin declared himself plainly against any hastiness in carrying forward the socialist process, and in favour of a *gradual* collectivization of agriculture.
71. A city in Vietnam bombarded in February 1968 by the National Liberation Front, during the T&O offensive. [Hue] was briefly occupied by the Communist forces during this offensive, and after its recapture by the South Vietnamese forces about a thousand bodies of executed persons were reported to have been found buried in mass graves—Translator.]
72. Letter to the Oslo newspaper *Aftenposten*, 5 September 1973, nominating Academician Sakharov for the Nobel Peace Prize. English translation in *Index*, Winter 1973, pp. 47, 48, 50.
73. See Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution*, London, 1969, and A. S. Makarenko, *The Road to Life: An Epic of Education*, Moscow, 1951.
74. First published in *Pravda*, 20 January 1929 [sic]: *Collected Works*, 4th edition, English version, Vol. 26 (1964), pp. 404–15.
75. Heller, op. cit., p. 14.
76. J.-M. Chauvier, "Contrôle ouvrier et 'autogestion sauvage' en Russie (1917–1921)", in *Revue des Pays de l'Est* (Brussels), No. 1 of 1973.

77. Adam B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks*, London, 1966, pp. 433, 437, 440.
78. An outline of such a history will be found in Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge*.
79. Trotsky, *Their Morals and Ours* (1938), London (New Park Publications), 1968, p. 30.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
83. *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, op. cit., p. 34.
84. The Russia of Pugachev, of Stenka Razin and the great peasant revolts is no less "traditional" than that of the Old-Believers!
Interview in *Le Soir*, 22 March 1974.