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Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Character Consequences As A Result Of The Prison Experience

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ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN:
CHARACTER CONSEQUENCES AS A RESULT OF THE PRISON EXPERIENCE

by
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A Thesis
Submitted to
The Department of English
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In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Academic Honors
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This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of English.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ................................................................. iii
Introduction ........................................................................... iv

Chapter

I. Solzhenitsyn's Artistic Medium ........................................... 1
II. The Prison Experience ....................................................... 7
III. The Political Prisoners ..................................................... 17
IV. The Socially-Friendly ....................................................... 25
V. The Loyalists ................................................................. 31
VI. The Russian Intelligentsia ................................................ 38
VII. Ascent or Corruption? .................................................... 47

Conclusion ........................................................................... 54

Selected Bibliography ........................................................... 58
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INTRODUCTION

As man addresses himself to the moral and ethical challenges the world confronts him with, he must ultimately ask himself what it means to be human. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn explores the concept of being and becoming through a startling expose of Russian society. His writing, from the beginning, has been motivated by a sense of duty to the millions of innocent victims who perished under Stalin's rule and by the belief that the miracle of self-healing and resurrection can take place only when Russia clears her conscience by telling the truth about the past. On the creative level, Solzhenitsyn is uniquely capable of revealing the Soviet world from within, of creatively explaining it, and finally overcoming it.

_The Gulag Archipelago_, volumes I-III, and _The First Circle_ are representative examples of Solzhenitsyn's unparalleled force in the realm of values, thought, action and conscience. These two mediums of art become the principal expression of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's human conviction: that great souls are formed by the contest of courage with intense suffering. His artistic power, demonstrated in these works, supplies the world with the painful, clear awareness of truth. The precise nature of the relationship between _The First Circle_ and the rest of country, being _The Gulag Archipelago_, lies in the study of the Soviet judicial and penal systems. Both are supreme examples of Russian incarceration and both involve the ultimate decision of humanity.

_The Gulag Archipelago_ provides the reader with an extensive inventory
of prisoners within the camp system. As each of these prisoners responds to the prison experience, Solzhenitsyn illustrates the moral and ethical choices involved. The prison experience is described explicitly in *The Gulag Archipelago* - we sense the horror and torment of inhumanity on a phenomenal scale. The reader is treated to the preliminary phases of the life of a victim in the Archipelago: arrest, the first days of interrogation, including all the various forms of pressure and torture; the death cells. But Solzhenitsyn goes well beyond that, describing in detail the results of incarceration, the effect that it has on the human being and the consequences produced by such a system.

Solzhenitsyn challenges the victims of the Archipelago, tests each of them for their spiritual capacity to resist evil. Through an examination of these victims' response to the prison experience, we are able to judge whether they attain redemption or remain fundamentally depraved.
SOLZHENITSYN'S ARTISTIC MEDIUM

The Gulag Archipelago is not merely a history of the repressive apparatus of Russia, but an experiment in literary investigation which suggests a different epistemological status. The Gulag Archipelago does not investigate a "literature" but a very concrete and precise reality; it is, in essence, an artistic exploration into the entire repertoire of the atrocities in the amazing country of the Gulag. Solzhenitsyn's intention is not only to record the facts and inform the reader, but also to recreate the atmosphere, infecting the reader with his own feeling of horror at what he is describing. By attempting to transform a detailed account of history into an artistic exploration, Solzhenitsyn combines the objectivity of history with the subjectivity of artistry. The approach, or means, he utilizes is not of a dispassionate historian - he is motivated by a quest for the creative, aesthetically-inspired presentation in order to invoke the reader not only to read, but also to feel. It would be different if he categorically recited the ruins of millions of innocent victims, much too easy for us to turn our heads. Solzhenitsyn is, above all, an author whose first duty is to art and we are consistently reminded of that fact.

Thus it is that Solzhenitsyn has combined social concern with intense creativity. His artistic power rests on his role as spokesman for the conscience of the nation. "Solzhenitsyn takes for granted an absolutely direct and open connection between literature and morality, art and life. He
believes our responsibilities in one to be inseparable from our responsibilities in the other; indeed, to be all but identical with one another.\(^1\)

By restoring conscience as the power which unites investigation and art, he returns to us the power to know and to possess the whole truth.

Both art and investigation are employed in Solzhenitsyn's passionate attempt to know, to understand, and to reveal Soviet reality. What ultimately makes investigation fail is precisely its divorce from art, from the power to transform information into life, data into experience, truth into whole truth. And what ultimately makes art fail is its rejection of investigation, and thus, also any obedience to truth and of a genuine encounter with reality. Solzhenitsyn challenges this double divorce - the source of tragedies beyond expression - in his subtitle and attempts to overcome it in his own artistic analysis. The organic unity of "investigation" and "literature" governs the Gulag Archipelago; all of it is focused on the one reality of that "amazing country." The Gulag consists not merely of facts but of a certain spiritual perspective.

Solzhenitsyn's language is "Soviet" which expresses and embodies the fall not only of literature, but of Russia herself. This language became in Solzhenitsyn clearly and completely the language of truth. He is not enticed or tempted to deviate into linguistic innovation. Solzhenitsyn transformed the "Soviet" language into his own, into the language of his art and his creative truth - this is his linguistic achievement. "He restores the creative spoken language and the subtly expressive written language, which, since the 1930s, have been buried under layers of bureaucratese and falsifying euphemisms - buried and also ossified into reactionary

syntactic forms strongly influenced by Stalin's literary style." The use of prison slang serves to alienate the reader from any established social order. It may be interpreted as a symbolic protest against the status quo and as a tactic by which the prisoners unite themselves in separation from the normal world. It demands the reader enter the world of the Gulag on a linguistic level, constituting a barrier between the prison-camp world and the "outside."

Both the technological and natural images employed in The Gulag Archipelago testify to the operations hostile to humanity and independent of human agency or control.

His idea of history resides in two major groups of organizing images: technological images which figure history as a process imaginable in terms of machine-like mechanisms which may be understood to have certain definable structures and perhaps even to operate in accordance with historical laws; and organic images which feed a view of history as a natural process, given, and detached from human volition or responsibility. The pervasive clusters of images that dominate the description and the history of the Soviet penal and forced-labor camp systems displays the artistry of Solzhenitsyn's investigation.

The view which inheres in these images is one which sees the repression as a vast anonymous mechanism, processing prisoners like a packing factory. The repressive apparatus, described as a "meat grinder" is a great machine whose "engine room" is the special courts where "the machine stamped out sentences." The process of interrogation is "the grinding of our souls in the gears of the great Nighttime Institution."

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The interrogator is "an anonymous cog in the whole machine."

Side by side with the mechanical are Solzhenitsyn's organic images of history. He refers to the prison camps as the "spellbound archipelago" which amplifies the natural image of the book's title. The mass arrests he pictures as "waves" which rush through the pipes of the sewage disposal system. And the victims of the "waves" form "vast dense gray shoals like ocean herring." The naturalness of Stalinism seems to be stressed in supplementary images: mass arrests were "epidemics," the apparatus is imagined as a "dragon," a "tapeworm," and even as the circulatory system of the human body.

Through the sewer pipes the flow pulsed. Sometimes the pressure was higher than had been projected, sometimes lower. But the prison sewers were never empty. The blood, the sweat, and the urine into which we were pulped pulsed through them continuously. The history of this sewage system is the history of an endless swallow and flow; flood alternating with ebb and ebb again with flood; waves pouring in, some big, some small; brooks and rivulets flowing in from all sides; trickles oozing in through gutters; and then just plain individually scooped-up droplets. (The Gulag Archipelago I, p.25)

Solzhenitsyn shifts techniques in The First Circle to allow the reader another angle of the "accursed History." While The Gulag Archipelago because of it's density focuses on generalities, The First Circle moves to specific characters in a special environment. "Just as in his fiction, Solzhenitsyn demonstrates his ability to hear, understand, and imitate the voices of his characters, so in actual life he has proved himself an artist capable of absorbing different artistic 'voices'." Thus while dealing with the same theme and ideas, Solzhenitsyn can create a new medium for expression. The First Circle and The Gulag Archipelago are explicitly related, not through literary devices, but ultimately

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through the concept of incarceration and the character dilemma of enlightenment through suffering.

The First Circle, as a polyphonic novel, is distinguished by the strong presence of consciousnesses and voices other than the author's. "The characters are subjects coexisting as autonomous worlds with the world of the author; they are no longer objects manipulated by the author. The author expresses himself, then, not so much through one character or another, but chiefly through the structure of the novel." The First Circle is composed of a series of separate narrative centers, held together by characters moving from one to another. The result is a kind of literary mosaic, given cohesion by consistent themes binding the various parts into a whole.

There are frequent shifts from one dominant viewpoint to another; the novel is structured from many competing centers of attention. A polyphonic novel is without a main hero, but each person becomes the main hero as soon as the action reverts to him. If a novel has a main hero the author inevitably pays more attention and devotes more space to him. In this setting, the author feels responsibility for as many as thirty-five heroes. He does not accord preferential treatment to any one. He must understand every character as representatives of differing world views; it will respect the integrity of each.

The life histories of the characters, their biographies in The First Circle, reveal in terms of firsthand experiences the overwhelming tragedy of Russian life. Nearly every one of Solzhenitsyn's novels contains representatives of the dispirited Russian liberal intelligentsia—characters whose moral sensitivity, contemplative temperament, and preference for

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5 Krasnov, Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky, p. 2-3.
abstract thought over practical action makes them incapable of coping successfully with the hard demands of reality. The senseless horror of collectivization is given to us in the peasant Spiridon, the second World War with its heroism and frustration in the biographies of the prisoners Nerzhin and Rubin. There are characters such as Klara Makarygina who are just becoming aware that their world is out of joint.

The essence of these biographies is that they reveal every level of Soviet life: student life and the University in the story of Nadya; artists and art in the experience of Nadelashin; the dull workdays of policemen and jailers: Shikin and Myshin at the job of reading and hearing denunciations; the plush apartments and ambience of those who have "made it" in Soviet life. Because the characters are placed in a situation of unnatural confinement, the author is able to assemble people of widely diverse origins and reduce them to a common level. The chapters are selected so as to form a picture of Soviet life from the leadership to its most humble citizens. The action alternates between prison and the outside Moscow world enabling Solzhenitsyn to draw subtle and illuminating comparisons: life in Moscow is no more agreeable than in prison.

Solzhenitsyn treats the world views of his characters as basic human attitudes that have been observed throughout the history of mankind. Their ideologies are not time- or place-bound which forces the reader to think of them in terms of universal history rather than in those of the social makeup of the USSR. Solzhenitsyn associates the novel's characters with major figures of world culture. Vologdin Innokenty is referred to as a "disciple of Epictetus." Rubin is a "biblical fanatic," who ironically likes to quote the German iconoclast Martin Luther. Nerzhin is known as the "disciple of Socrates" and Sologdin's nickname is "Pythia of Mavrino."
II
THE PRISON EXPERIENCE

A deeper and more scientific analysis of the network of Russia's colossal apparatus of control reveals a gigantic police system, a variety of camps, prisons and facilities. "GULag" is the acronym for the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps. Solzhenitsyn asserts that its reign is the first occasion in human history that the systematic torture of millions was undertaken. From transit jails prisoners were distributed to a vast network of mines and construction sites, usually in remote areas of the country. Throughout their long shunting across the country, what awaited them was the taiga and the tundra. The complete organizational structuring of the camp network throughout Soviet Russia coincided rigidly with the decrees of VTsIK (All-Russian Central Executive Committee.) Under their provisions, camps for forced labor were obligatorily created in "each provincial capital" (if convenient, within the city limits, or in a monastery or on a nearby country estate) and also in "several counties" as well. The camps were required to accommodate no fewer than three hundred persons each, so that the cost of the guard and the administration should be paid for by the prisoners' labor. Year after year other forms of existence for prisoners were also tried, in search of something better; for those who were not dangerous and not politically hostile there were labor colonies, corrective-labor homes, reformatories; and for the politically hostile prisoners there were detention prisons and Special Purpose Isolators.

Of the assortment of camps, there remains three representative examples.
Kolyma camps, katorga camps, and corrective/destructive labor camps. The Kolyma constitutes only one section of the Archipelago of the penal empire, scattered throughout the vast territories of the Soviet North and East; but Kolyma remains fixed as the great archetype of the sinister system. Solzhenitsyn, in The Gulag Archipelago, calls Kolyma the "pole of cold and cruelty" of Stalin's labor-camp system. Kolyma is a vast area in the North-East of arctic Siberia and could only be reached by sea, during the ice-free summer months. Its sinister reputation is due to the fact that, of all the mass-imprisonment areas, it was the deadliest. Its three million odd victims perished not in gas chambers, but predominantly by cold and hunger, and as a result of a policy of extermination. Kolyma is a word of horror wholly comparable to Auschwitz. The frightfulness of Kolyma was due not to geographical or climatic reasons, but to conscious decisions taken in Moscow. "The isolation from the mainland, coupled with the fact that the area is in the furtherest corner of the enormous Soviet territory contributed greatly to the prisoners' feeling of having been removed irrevocably from the normal world - an effect especially powerful for inhabitants of the great land mass." It produced characteristics hardly to be found in the rest of the Archipelago.

The katorga, or hard-labor camps, were shaped by a combination of all that was worst in the camps with all that was worst in the prisons, and is best understood in its original sense - forced labor of a slave chained to the oar of a gallery. It is important to note that the word "katorga"

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6 Robert Conquest, Kolyma, the Artic Death Camps (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)

7 Ibid. p. 14.
had come to stand for a specifically Tsarist-type of punishment; it summoned to mind images of idealistic revolutionaries toiling in Siberian mines. Solzhenitsyn identifies it as "the polar death house." Little attempt was made to conceal the purpose of the katorga: the "katorzhane" (prisoners of the katorga) were to be done to death. These were, undisguisedly, murder camps; but in the gulag the doomed were made to suffer longer and put a little work in before they died. As the war was drawing to an end there was no need for such a savage deterrent and thus the line between katorga and the ordinary camps became blurred (1946-1947). Stalin's katorga grew into the Special Camps.

Corrective/destructive labor camps began as the origin of the archipelago, under the necessity of forced labor by prisoners in order to teach the Communist spirit of collective labor and to paralyze any disintegrating influence. In the Republic of the Soviets there can be no place for forced idleness. The Soviets arrived at the conclusion that prisoners must not waste their time in moral contemplation ("the purpose of Soviet corrective labor policy is not at all individual correction in it's traditional meaning") but must labor, and at the same time be given severe, almost unbearable work norms to achieve. Correction through labor was understood to mean destruction through labor. The first great construction project of the Archipelago was the Belomor Canal because Stalin simply needed a great construction project somewhere which would devour many working hands and many lives. The norm here was to break up two and a half cubic yards of granite and to move it a distance of a hundred yards in a wheelbarrow. At the end of the workday there were corpses left on the work site. The camp's motto was: "From us everything, to us nothing." And in accordance with the Soviet Constitution, whoever does not work does eat.
In contrast to the camps that Stalin created were exceptional prisons, known as sharashkas. The sharashka of The First Circle, known as an island of paradise, was a scientific research institute for prisoners. The word "sharashka" derives from Soviet slang meaning "a sinister enterprise based on bluff or deceit." Most of the action of The First Circle takes place in Mavriino, a special technical prison situated in an old house on the outskirts of Moscow. Mavriino was set up in July 1946 as an institute to exploit the talents of some of the highly qualified scientists and technologists who were among the millions sentenced to the labor camps. Mavriino was lavishly equipped, from Soviet resources and materials requisitioned from Germany, to develop a special apparatus for the M.G.B. and Stalin himself. It is a place where prisoners with scientific and technological expertise are brought together to do experimental work for state authorities. The sharashka was both ironic and highly precise, for here the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) obtained creative research cheaply. It cost them only food and hostel-type lodgings for the scientists they had incarcerated.

The inhabitants of the Mavriino Institute are all imprisoned in the "first circle" of hell: they are prisoners and yet as scientists they are free - still in hell but ascended to its best and highest circle. Solzhenitsyn draws the image from Dante's Inferno - the parallel between the sharashka and the first circle of hell, which Dante invented as the place for putting enlightened pagans. When a new zek arrives at the sharashka from a camp, he is amazed at the contrast between environments. He marvels, "Maybe this is a dream? Perhaps I'm in heaven." But Lev Rubin sets him straight: "No, dear sir, you are, just as you were previously, in hell. But you have risen to its best and highest circle - the first circle." (The First Circle, p. 8) Its ironic sting is aimed at the
Communist promise of paradise on earth.

The scientific institute outside of Moscow is very much a part of the Gulag Archipelago except that the state allows these zeks a few comforts unheard of in the camps in order to get from them a more valuable service. While the prisoners in Mavrino enjoy privileges unheard of in the further rings of the Gulag, they are aware that they are poised on the brink of an abyss where a single false move could send them plummeting back to the lowest circle of Stalin's inferno. Noting the availability of bread and books, the freedom to shave, the freedom from beatings the sharashka is explained: "It has been proven that a high yield of wool from sheep depends on the animals' care and feeding." (The First Circle, p. 9) Whoever has experienced imprisonment knows how relative luxury is: in the desert of a 100,000-man prison camp a piece of soap and a bowl of water are more real pleasure - far more than the man who gambles away a few thousand because he feels nothing. Hunger was stilled by a good diet which included unlimited quantities of black rye bread, still rationed in Moscow shops and unavailable in the countryside. Prisoners were allowed to maintain accounts, although not cash, and, for those who could afford it, groceries were delivered from Moscow's best shops. And in comparison with the cold, packed barracks and suffocating, teeming jails, these new living conditions were actually pleasant. In contrast to the camps, each prisoner had his own bunk without sharing, and slept on sheets instead of filthy mattresses. Physical safety was ensured and the option of death by overwork and undernourishment or survival by collaboration had been removed: it was as good a prison life as one could hope for.

Upon examination of the various types of prisons and camps that had
been established, it becomes apparent that the prison camp is a micro-
cosm of life in Russia; camp life becomes a symbol of everyday life under
Stalin. Its inmates are Russian, Ukranian, Estonian, Latvian and even
gypsy in background. The majority were not peasants like Ivan Denisovich.
Intellectuals, artists, scientists, philosophers, politicians, as well
as priests - all leaders in the old order were washed up on the shore of
the Gulag Archipelago. The history of the Archipelago becomes the his-
tory of a state which felt compelled to establish a prison-camp empire,
the need for mass terror. The history of its inhabitants becomes the
history of the citizens of that state. The transformation of the country's
citizens into the habitants and potential habitants of the Archipelago
takes place quite readily. It was a gradual process, one stream after
another: "Today's executioner becomes tomorrow's victim."

The Russia of involuntary confinement and servitude developed ulti-
mately into an empire with a specific culture, complete with language,
customs and legends. The vast systems of islands ranging from a tiny de-
tention cell to the wastes of Siberia, which, though widely scattered is
"fused into a continent - an almost invisible, almost imperceptible
country inhabited by the zek people." It is the culture of a territory
populated by people of the most disparate origins, tastes and natures,
united only by their common obligation, to live in it. The prison camps
as Solzhenitsyn describes them are a total institution set within a larger
society which is also a total institution. Outside the camp as much as
in them, Soviet officials twist the law as they wish. The secret country
is within, but distant from, the rest of society; its natives like a
strange, foreign people. The zeks constitute a class of society: for
this group of millions has a single (common to them all) relationship to
production (namely, subordinate). The zeks constitute a special separate nation because they live totally isolated on their islands, and their life passes in communication solely with one another. "A nation is an historically formed community of people, possessing a common territory, a common language, and a commonly shared economic life, a community of psychological outlook which is manifested in a community of culture."¹ They eat food which no one else on earth eats any more. They wear clothes which no one else on earth wears any more. And even their daily schedule is identical on all the islands and obligatory for every zek. They have their own folklore and their own hero images. The language of the natives of the Archipelago is quite as incomprehensible to the outsider as any foreign language, i.e. "skin the rag!" "I'm still clicking!"

The life of the natives consists of work, starvation, cold and cunning; the zek is continually thinking how to dodge and twist his way through the next day. The classic portrait done by Solzhenitsyn in One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich explains that while work drained the the prisoners' strength, hunger and exposure threatened their health. It was impossible to try to keep nourished on Gulag norms anyone who worked out in the bitter cold for thirteen or even ten hours a day. As for the Archipelago, it was eternally covered with snow and the blizzards eternally raged over it. Winds blew constantly over the naked steppe, intensifying both heat and cold to near the limits of tolerance. The inmates' thick cotton jackets provided scant protection, and the thin-walled wooden barracks were also unable to battle the cold. Some of the

barracks were so infested with insects that even four days' of fumigation would not clear them. Because rations were distributed not to individuals but to groups of ten, if one died, "the others shoved his corpse under the bunks and kept it there until it started to stink. They got the corpse's ration." (The Gulag Archipelago I, p. 535) The zek is always expecting his life in camp to be worse. That is how he lives, constantly awaiting the blows of fate and stings of evil spirit. Entire families - women and children included - were piled one on top of the other in deep barges. They were carried across the country, often with no shelter at all, and dumped on the wastes of the North. Millions perished in this way.

The prison experience is, above all, a denial of man's spiritual nature, a drive to reduce men to mere matter, to objects in a process where the undesirable can be isolated from society. "Throughout the extensive cataloguing of horrors, Solzhenitsyn consistently strives to show, by imagery and by simple narration, that the Soviet system diabolically intended to dehumanize people, stripping them of any vestiges of human dignity, reducing them to the level of animals."9 The Gulag itself illustrates the soul-destroying potential of any exercise of authority within the Soviet system. Justified by ideology, the evildoer has the necessary steadfastness and determination to "cleanse" Russia of a population unfit for any socialism. The most prevalent world outlook among them is fatalism. All the zek's feelings are dulled, and his nerves coarsened. "In the camp situation human beings never remain human beings - the camps were created to this end. All human emotions - love, friendship, mercy, honesty - fell away from us along with the meat of our muscles..." (Gulag II, p.618)

Camp life was organized in such a way that envy pecked at your soul from all sides, even the best defended soul.

Prison strips life and man to bare bones and from that moment on a man must depend on his inner resources alone. It is the moment when worldly riches, rank and status suddenly cease to have any meaning; it is the great leveller. The tortures to which man was subjected on the Archipelago were of monstrous proportions. Under Stalin, there was neither the intent nor the facilities to treat prisoners humanely. Class enemies were going to be destroyed. Focused on the physical aspect of the Stalinist hell, the Gulag Archipelago portrays the barbarous treatment of human beings. It categorically exhibits the soul-destroying techniques of authority within the Soviet system. Even if the Soviet officials pledge to faith in Man's glorious nature by exclaiming Gorky (The Lower Depths): "Man! This has a proud ring!", it has never prevented the inhuman treatment of Soviet citizens. The intolerably hard labor, the terrible starvation, the tyranny of camp authorities and thieves, and death translate into abasement of a race of people. There is no correspondence between the measurement of punishment and the measure of humanity. There are no guidelines for human rights, basically because no rights exist. The Soviet people were only a statistic, and it was quite hopeless that one could hold on to their own "humanness."

One can hardly expect that Stalin's madness would result in a humane prison system, rather it illustrates the internal savagery that dehumanizes man's nature. "The greedy machine had to be fed, the swollen policy corps had to justify its existence and demonstrate its vigilance by dumping down the 'stinking pipes' ever-increasing numbers of random victims." The indiscriminate savagery leaves little of the "man" in

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humanity. The camps are virtually a hell on earth. They torture people by starvation and for punishment tie them naked to trees, or strap them to a log and set them rolling down a staircase 365 steps high. Man can only remain a human being on the Archipelago by the spiritual capacity to resist the forces of evil. Few people have the strength in a system which totally devastates their humanness. Few, because the torments were of proportions previously unknown to man.
III

THE POLITICAL PRISONERS

The Criminal Code starts by refusing to recognize anyone as a political offender, all are simply criminals and ironically enough, Article 58 was nowhere categorized as "political." Article 58 consisted of fourteen sections. In Section 1 we find that any action (and, according to Article 6 of the Criminal Code, any absence of action) directed toward the weakening of state power was considered to be counter-revolutionary. Thus it could be interpreted that the refusal of a prisoner in camp to work when in a state of starvation and exhaustion was a "weakening of state power," punished by execution. When soldiers were sentenced to only ten years as a result of being prisoners of war, this was to punish all actions directed against the military might of the USSR. There was no section in Article 58 which was interpreted as broadly and with so ardent a revolutionary conscience as Section 10. "Its definition was: Propaganda or agitation, containing an appeal for the overthrow, subverting, or weakening of the Soviet power...and equally, the dissemination or preparation or possession of literary materials of similar content." (The Gulag Archipelago I, p. 66) "Subverting and weakening" the government took into account any view which ran contrary to the official view as expressed by the newspapers. What thought did not fit in to the previously established pattern must indeed be considered "subvertive." "Agitation containing an appeal" referred to conversations between husbands, wives, and friends where "appeal" became personal advice. One could extend the term "preparation of literary material" to admit any
thought which merely existed, whether spoken aloud or yet in the mind of an individual. As we review the all-encompassing Article we come to understand: "where the law is, crime can be found."

There were no politicals in the Archipelago, and there will be none for Article 58 was simply a durable dragnet, a place for those whom no criminal article had been chosen. The Article swiftly expanded to include the engineering and technical intelligentsia. What absurd accusations were not manufactured in order to provide a foundation for the arrest of random or marked individuals. Fantastic accusations were not really required, there existed a simple standardized collection of charges such as a negative attitude toward the Stalinist construction; a negative attitude toward the collective-farm structure; discrediting the Leader; and a negative attitude toward whatever was the immediate particular measure being carried out by the Party. The victims were selected on the basis of arrest quotas by Security chiefs of local administrative districts, military units and educational institutions. Section 10 of Article 58 was universally accessible - from old women to twelve-year olds.

One can earn one's sentence via Section 10 just as readily in the winter as in the summer, on a weekday as on a Sunday, early morning and late at night, at work or at home, on a stair landing, at a Metro station, in a dense forest, in a intermission at the theater, or during the course of a solar eclipse. (The Gulag Archipelago II, p. 298)

Every act of the all-penetrating 'Organs' was based solely on this one article of the 140 articles of the Criminal Code, beneficial through the extended dialectical interpretations of its sections. In all truth, there is no step, thought, action, or lack of action which could not be punished by the heavy hand of Article 58. The article itself could not be worded in broad terms, but it proved possible to interpret it in
extremely broad terms. Half of the prisoners in the Archipelago were sentenced under Article 58. And there were not any politicals. To put a person into 58 was the simplest of all methods of getting rid of him, to remove him quickly and forever.

Arbitrary political arrests, interrogations, exile and death have continued in Russia for over half a century; Russia settled into a tyranny worse than that of the Tsars. For several decades political arrests were distinguished by the fact that people were arrested who were guilty of nothing and were therefore unprepared to put up any resistance whatsoever. The 'Organs' merely had over-all assignments, quotas for a specific number of arrests; they did not have profound reasons for their choices. A person marked for arrest by virtue of chance circumstances, such as a neighbor's denunciation, could be easily replaced by another neighbor. One of the significant characteristics of Soviet political courts is the lack of ambiguity in their work, due to predetermined verdicts. Sentences might be made out ahead of time with the prisoner's name added later. The OSO, a three-man board of People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, had the power to sentence "socially dangerous" persons without trial. Theirs was not a sentence, but an administrative penalty. The categories—similar to the articles of the Code—were not applied uniformly and equally among different groups.

The heart of the matter is not personal guilt, but social danger; one can imprison an innocent person if he is socially hostile—just as easily as one can release a guilty person if he is socially friendly. Intent and action were synonymous. "Should we wrap it all up and simply say that they arrested the innocent? But we omitted saying that the very concept of guilt had been repealed by the proletarian revolution and, at the beginning of the thirties, was defined as rightist opportunism!
So we can't even discuss these out-of-date concepts, guilt and innocence." (The Gulag Archipelago I, p.76) The Soviet officials seek to make political the human reality which is fundamentally moral. The theory that there is no "guilt" and no "punishment" but that there is "social danger" and "social defense" remained the dominant course of action. Such a theory made it possible to arrest anyone as a "doubtful person." Whether a man was guilty or not, he could be virtually certain that he would be disposed of as one.

Wherever the law is, crime can be found; all the articles of the Code had become encrusted with interpretations, directions, instructions. And if the actions of the accused are not covered by the Code, he can still be convicted by 1.) analogy, 2.) simply because of origins, 3.) for contacts with dangerous persons. Solzhenitsyn demonstrates how the law from the very beginning, has striven to become lawless. Parallel and independent of the courts, extrajudicial reprisal allowed for numerous executions and arrests. Even the All-Russian Central Executive Committee had the right to intervene in any judicial proceeding. The court was at one and the same time both the "creator of the law" and a "political weapon." Fine points of jurisprudence are unnecessary because there was no need to ascertain whether the defendant was guilty or not. People are "carriers of specific ideas," and are evaluated by means of class expediency. The courts are not actually guided by articles of the law, but on the basis of expediency.

Soviet officials twist the law as much as they wish - the various dialectical extensions of the Soviet penal code transformed the instruments of Soviet law into the formal rationale for repression. The cases were fabricated and the fate of an individual was already decided
upon. "If it is necessary to shoot you, then you will be shot even if you are altogether innocent." The choice of whom to arrest was based on human greed and vengefulness in an overwhelming majority of the cases; another significant number were the result of material self-interest.

There were no bounds to the evil-doing of the Soviet authority, no limits to their proletarian punishment. Anyone could become a "political" prisoner for an indiscreet word, or less. They represented every segment of the Soviet population. It was necessary the authorities recognize as actual what was possible. People were not imprisoned and executed for having done something. The Soviets imprisoned and executed them to keep them from doing something.

There was no minimum age for incarceration of political prisoners. Solzhenitsyn reveals that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. By 1927, forty-eight percent of all prisoners were between sixteen and twenty-four. Article 12 of the Criminal Code allowed for children from the age of twelve to be sentenced for theft, assault, mutilation, and murder, with the application of all measures of punishment. Six year olds could be imprisoned for up to eight years for stealing a pocketful of potatoes. If the camps debased the adults, they had an even more devastating effect on children, who "accepted the Archipelago with the divine impressionability of childhood. And in a few days children became beasts there! And the worst kind of beast, with no ethical concepts whatever...." (The Gulag Archipelago II, p. 452) The children were arrested not only in cases where crime was actually committed un-intentionally but also as a result of carelessness. Thus it evolved

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that twelve year olds were equated with adults in terms of prison sentences and prison survival; "minor" became an obsolete word in the Russian language. The juveniles readily adopted the philosophy of the Archipelago - which was naturally the philosophy of the thieves - and were indoctrinated into the most inhumane nature of life.

The zek nation was never populated primarily by common criminals, the principle of arbitrariness in sending people - women and children alike - allowed for the "implicitly" political. People were arrested and consigned to the world of the Gulag not as individuals - not, as a rule, for anything they themselves had individually done - but as members of categories. Only a tiny percentage of those who were made victims of the system can be said to have been in any sense political opponents of the regime. Precautionary considerations - the reflection that certain categories of people might be theoretically more capable of making trouble for the regime in the future - were responsible for many of the "implicitly" political arrests. The masses of ordinary "political" prisoners were the "corpus vile" on which the other grades of society exercised their extreme oppression.

From the first years of the Revolution on, the group of 58's - polit- icals - was cut off on all sides: by the prison regime and by jur- idical formulations. "You can be arrested for nothing; and it is pur- poseless to try to correct you." Re-education was only possible for the strata friendliest to the proletariat, namely the thieves. "Re- education was impossible without kindling political passions" and thus this means that it was not even attempted on the 58's. The crowd of political prisoners, possessing no conformity in their convictions were not strengthened by the consciousness that they were innocent. Harsh
measures of repression were to be applied to hostile-class elements and the "socially friendly elements" (thieves) were not to be given terms at all. The political prisoners were the lowliest group in the social order; their treatment reflects the ostentatious hatred and contempt prevailing within the camp.

Correction of convicted "hostile-class enemies" was regarded as impotent and purposeless; for that reason they were placed in an oppressed position in camp to be finished off through class struggle. The function of interrogation under Article 58 was to crush the human once and for all, to cut him off from all others once and for all. The administration kept incessant pressure on the politicals, creating unbearable conditions for them in camp. Camp management easily accomplished oppressing the 58's by harassment and humiliation, along with more severe measures. It becomes clear that correction was not for everyone. The political prisoners were not seen as "corrigible" to be sure, and thus they were the elements that could not be re-educated. It was virtually impossible to correct socially-hostile prisoners because they were so rooted in their class corruption. The politicals could only be corrected by the grave. If it happened that any political could even possibly reach rehabilitation, it was through hard physical labor—nothing else. The politicals were the dregs of the Soviet race, people unworthy of speaking the Russian language.

The camp administration deprived the politicals of the right to be held apart from the nonpolitical criminals so as to have the criminals on their backs. All prisoners were not equal in camp; the thieves had to be used against the 58's to prevent possible political unity or political protest. The lives of the politicals were put totally in the
power of the thieves. The 58's were kept constantly mixed with the
thieves and the nonpolitical offenders and were never allowed to be alone
together - "so they wouldn't look into each other's eyes and realize
who they were." Persons condemned under Article 58 could not occupy any
privileged positions in the camp compound. The regime's tenderness
toward the criminal was a significant measure of its utter scorn for
the "politicals." The "political" offender, or anyone who was remotely and perhaps fraudently understood as one, was considered an outcast, a pariah; they were placed far beyond the limit of the "Soviet" race.
The articles of the Code dealing with thieves and bandits did not oppress the thief; he was, in fact, proud of his convictions under the system. The thief was supported in this pride by all the prison administration as well. Their interrogation consisted only of two sessions, an easy trial, followed by an easy sentence which the thieves would not have to serve out. Normally the thieves were released ahead of time: either they would receive amnesty from the Soviet government or they would escape. "Through its laws the Stalinist power said to the thieves clearly: do not steal from me! Steal from private persons! You see, private property is a belch from the past." (The Gulag Archipelago II, p. 429) The Soviet officials tried to justify the "socially-friendly" as those who would plunder the rich and share with the poor; but the thieves were not Robin Hoods! It was impossible to steal from the true rich, the state, to halt the limousines or to ravage special villas because they were well-defended. Those stores and warehouses were shielded by the law. But how simple it was for the thieves to turn on the defenseless.

Even though the thief was a bandit and a murderer, he was not considered a traitor of the Motherland; he was one of the Motherland's "own" people and he would reform. Organization was not forbidden the thieves - perhaps it would help to cultivate the feelings of collectivism that "society yearned for." The term "social ally" was widely used and accepted
these prisoners were not truly capable of counterrevolutionary designs. The "lumpenproletariat" was criticized only for a certain lack of discipline, instability, and fickleness of mood. There was the usual despoilment of all possessions by the thieves. Stalin attempted to make it clear that the thieves were still not lost to the homeland. They were prodigal but nevertheless, sons. The thieves were the allies in the building of Communism and this was set forth in the regulations guiding the training of camp officials. Since the thieves were not property owners, they were unable to align with the hostile-class elements and much more inclined to ally with the proletariat. That is why in official terminology of the Gulag they are known as "socially-friendly" elements. The thieves were proud that they were not traitors or betrayers.

Because it was felt that crimes presented less danger to the existence of the Republic, Stalin was always partial to the thieves. Officialdom made it clear to the "urka" (thieves in Russian) that they were a privileged stratum in the social hierarchial structure within the camps. The urkas ranked only directly below the free specialists in the camp — far above the lowest of the low, the "politicals." The social system reflected the nexus of privilege, power and exploitation throughout the archipelago. The thieves were given all the "commanding heights" in camp. The thieves became just like an internal camp police, camp storm troopers. Essentially the urki were more effective than the custodial staffs in the camps because there was no prohibition against their beating of other prisoners.

The Russian thieves were not just plain, ordinary thieves, but constituted a whole underground subculture and with the approval of the administration, the thieves' law was respected. The urka world consisted of a strange subhuman culture. Their speech was a strange jargon,
with an amazingly continuous stream of obscenity (found among the administration as well.) Their physical characteristics were easily distinguishable by the thick tattooing that covered their bodies. Even the women were disfigured in this manner, often in an incredibly obscene manner. The tattoos satisfied their artistic, erotic and moral needs.

In order to intensify their experiences which were generally on the physical, sensual plane, they would use drugs — primarily marijuana, but also any other stimulant they could get ahold of. Everything the thieves come across they take as their own, believing that their existence alone justified anything they should desire in life. The only weakness of the urki was their love for stories which they preferred to have read by an "educated" voice, primarily found among the intelligentsia that were incarcerated as politicals. This was the one exception to their animosity toward the politicals, yet it was an honor that need only be bestowed on the very few.

Within the camps themselves, there was a dominance by a hierarchy of thieves who looted for themselves as well as the guards. Whatever the thieves did not bother to steal the jailers would, adding justification that the specific item was forbidden to prisoners. Every escapade of the thieves was so astonishing and unusual that their fellow prisoners could only stare at them in amazement. After dinner, the urki would begin their yelling and their dramatic numbers; some making the rounds by jumping from bunk to bunk roaring out to the prisoners, and destroying any possibility of sleep. "The most confirmed and hardened thieves were given unbridled power on the islands of the Archipelago — power over the population of their own country, over the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia, power they had never
before had in history, never in any state in all the world, power which
they couldn't even dream of out in freedom." (The Gulag Archipelago II,
p. 435) The thieves were simply handed people to command, to dominate,
and to rule. What is inherently demonstrated is the entire reversal of
any ethical arrangement.

The whole reason the main reliance was on the socially-friendly
elements (thieves) was to set the criminals on the backs of the politicals,
a plan devised to reduce possible political unity. The thieves who were
able to talk smoothly lectured the politicals on how to live, while at
the same time living off the things they stole from their "pupils." The
thieves imposed a reign of terror in the camps. Anything they wanted
they would take, and if they encountered resistance the victim was bat-
tered and beaten. "Without wasting any time they about terrorizing and
bullying the politicals, delighted to find that the 'enemies of the
people' were creatures even more despised and outcast than themselves."12
The politicals had a complete induction to the "law of the jungle."
The thief was basically a Soviet citizen who had run afoul of the law
and who during his prison interlude was encouraged to use his substant-
tial resources to scourge the "unredeemable enemies of the people." The
most vicious forms of criminal activity were practiced on the only
available subjects - most often the politicals - with the connivance of
the camps' administrations.

The thieves were part of the incessant administrative pressure on
hostile-class enemies; it was the camp's attempt to annihilate the pol-
iticals with the hands of the thieves. One of the best known traditions

12Conquest, Kolyma, the Artic Death Camps, p. 30.
was robbing the 58's of their work output, stealing timber or coal to turn over to the foreman at the work site. Since the prisoners who did not fulfill the norm were punished (the production of the 58's was always "stolen" by the thieves) by the chief of camp, the piracy of production was an effective throttle on the 58's. The thieves would plunder a prisoner to death. Tightly organized on the principle of all for one and one for all, professional criminals mercilessly exploited and terrorized the atomized mass of socially-hostile elements. They forced others to fulfill their own work quotas, leaving them prey to death by exhaustion, hunger, and cold. Death was all the more likely because the urki had also confiscated the warmest clothing, food parcels, and sometimes half the rations of other prisoners.

Camp was the "native home" for the thieves; in camp they did not starve, they did not work - their example demonstrates that there is an easy way to live in prison conditions. The urki flourished because they were encouraged. At work, they could lie around as they wished - warming themselves in the sun during the summer or by the fire in the winter. The thieves did not like work, labor was repulsive to them - naturally, considering they are rewarded with food, drink, and clothing without it. The retching, the wild cries, the dancing and stamping, the brawling, fornicating and fighting went on continually. The thieves lived in hell with the devil as their brother. The thieves were given the lighter work - appointed as foremen, cooks, orderlies and tent seniors. Authorities, at times, went out of their way to choose men with particularly bad records for overseer jobs. Criminals were favored by early release, as well; few ever served out their entire term. "No matter how fondly the government treats them, no matter how it softens their punishments, no matter how often it amnesties them, their
inner destiny brings them back again and again." (The Gulag Archipelago I, p. 516)

The universally human world, with its morals, customs and mutual relationships was the thing most hateful to the thieves, most subject to their ridicule and counterposed most sharply to their own antisocial, antipublic clan. The bestial behavior of the common convicts attests to their denial of humanity. One had the impression that they were some half-human belonging to a different world and a different age. The thieves really had no conception of the "we" element in camps, except perhaps in their own brotherhood. The thieves' morality was essentially no morality at all. Their theory of life was diametrically opposed to any aches of conscience. Their transgressions were no dishonor, no disgrace in their own eyes, but a mark of valor. "They have nothing to repent." The thieves' weakness, depravity in the Christian notion was a strength in their own concept of life. The urki were attached only to the underworld, a world where their evils were rewarded.

The thieves defile absolutely everything that pertains to the natural sphere of humanity. The urki have actually despoiled their being to such an extent that they are no longer "human." Totally self-centered, the "socially-friendly" had abandoned all norms of morality. They deny any connection to the human race, having already established a world of their own. The thieves had never been enriched by any morality at all, nor by any spiritual upbringing and it could hardly have been discovered and developed in the camps. So they remained the insensitive creatures that they had always been. The thieves' one mission in life was to survive but that did not include searching for meaning in one's life; it meant basically to exist by any means possible. The thieves depart downward from the rest of humanity.
V

THE LOYALISTS

The belief that even their own arrest and possible execution was in some mysterious way furthering the cause of socialism in the Soviet Union led even party militants to cooperate fully in their own destruction. Basically there exists two classes of orthodox Communists: those who retained their convictions because Communism was the sole meaning of life to them, and those who used their Communist "faith" only as a means to survive. There were Communists whose beliefs were an "inner" thing - Solzhenitsyn can sympathetize with these people because their faith was from their hearts. In 1937 a crushing blow was dealt to the upper ranks of the Party, the government, the military command, and the GPU-NKVD itself: there was hardly one province of the Soviet Union in which the first secretary of the Party Committee or the Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee survived.\(^{13}\) This was according to the law of "historical development." The tremendous intoxication with historical rightness provided a warrant for the destruction of the Russian people.

The unshakable Communists, who despite their personal arrest remained devoted to the "one-and-only" were firm in their convictions but did not know what they were serving time for. The loyalists could not

\(^{13}\)Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago I, p. 68.
be associated with "politicals" because they were unable to renounce their beliefs, beliefs that were synonymous with the Party's directives. They firmly believed that in Russia people were not arrested for nothing. The greatest fear of the loyalists was being deprived of the Party! Of being left to live but outside the Party. A Communist had no special, individual views so he had to be sentenced for self-denunciation. Generally the loyalists believed that they were jailed by mistake, but that the Party would sort things out and release them in due time. The laws were not to blame, it was the divergences from them that constituted the misfortunes. The murderers of millions could simply not imagine that Stalin would not, at the last moment, stand up and save them. True Communists even after having spent many years in the camps did not lose their faith in the Party.

The loyalists had been guilty of nothing as far as the Party was concerned - nothing at all; but that is the price man pays for entrusting his soul to human dogma. Incarceration was the most painful for the loyalist - they were unable to absorb the shock, the downfall of their position. The greatest difficulty was tolerating the blow from their "dear Party." One could hardly ask a loyalist the reason for his imprisonment. "It was more than the human heart could bear: to fall beneath the beloved ax - then to have to justify its wisdom." (The Gulag Archipelago II, p. 327) The Communists did not struggle at all, for how could one struggle against one's own government? Having understood nothing from the beginning, neither about their arrest, interrogation, nor events in general, out of loyalty they would proclaim themselves the "bearers of the Soviet light," the only ones who truly understood the crux of the matter. The loyalists committed their whole being to
the Communist ideology, even so far as to sacrifice their soul in the name of these doctrines.

These orthodox Communists made a display of their ideological orthodoxy first to the interrogator, then in the prison cells, and then in camp to all and everyone. In this group belonged the former interrogators, prosecutors, judges and camp officials. Ironically while living on the "outside" they remained calm while society was being imprisoned and as they helped the process along. Their outrage began only when they themselves were taken prisoners. The loyalists served the Party, and this was an important distinction whether in freedom or in camp. Their sentences did not break their will in the struggle for the Soviet government. The Communists made a show of their convictions in order to say: "Those who arrested me can now see the proofs of my orthodoxy."

In camp they found it hardest of all to reconcile themselves to extinction, and they fought fiercely to rise above the "universal zero." The Party leaders who were on trial in the 1930s had known in their revolutionary past, short, easy imprisonment and had never experienced hard labor. In comparison with the natives of the Archipelago, the loyalists did not know what prison was like. The Communists considering themselves more pure than all the rest, despised and hated the other prisoners, especially the politicals. They were given jobs in the privileged sector of the camps. The chiefs arranged things for the loyalists, made things easier for them. The belief "you today, me tomorrow" compelled many of the administrators to look after the true believers. The chiefs kept the orthodox Communists as their right-hand men in order to establish a privileged social class in the camps.

The loyalists needed ideological arguments in order to hold on to
a sense of their own rightness. It was not for attention nor out of hypocrisy that they argued in defense of all the government's operations. They did not want to renounce a single one of their former values or accept a single new one. Let life gush over them, surge over them, and even roll over them with wheels — still they won't let it into their heads. They won't accept it, as though it weren't happening at all! (The Gulag Archipelago, II, p. 336)

The loyalists knew what they were and what they stood for; imprisonment was not going to alter their world views. Since they believed their arrest was by chance, there was actually no need to adjust their Communist convictions. The arguments were in a sense a past-time for anyone who engaged in them, for the dogmatists were impenetrable. The disputer was simply wasting his breath because the loyalists would not concede under any circumstances. It was not so much the actual content of the ideology as the absolute value attached to it.

In order to cope with this ordeal, to make sense of an historical event not previously explained, the loyalists offered profound explanations of their arrest and imprisonment. In their inability to indict the Party, the Communists had to devise an interpretation, not only for the sake of others but for themselves as well. They sought justification for their arrest in order to exonerate the State of any speculated sins. The invincible Communists continued to keep the sacred faith. Some believed that a foreign intelligence service had ensnared them. Or that German agents had taken over the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. Whatever the cause, it was always the enemy (external or internal) of the State. Not one of the loyalists tried to fight back. As Communists they were against violating the Soviet law so they marched to their death alongside all the others.

They believed that these repressions were an historical necessity
for the development of the Soviet society; the Party would not arrest an innocent man. The loyalists were willing to endure the greatest trials and tribulations for the sake of the Soviet goal. It was their irrevocable duty. If their arrest contributed to the advancement of the Communist state - and it must have or they surely would not have been apprehended - then all the better. Perhaps one day they would be redressed by the Party for their steadfast heroics. The loyalist's guilt, though not evident to themselves, was a product of their faithfulness. They must have been guilty of some offense to the "one-and-only" philosophy. The message was invariably the same: "that we ourselves are to blame for relaxing our vigilance!" The attitude was fundamental: if they were to be shot, then they most certainly deserved to be.

The loyalists did not accuse Stalin, it was themselves they had to blame - Stalin did not know about these arrests. There may have been a possibility of attributing the blame to the lower ranks of the Party - a plot, for instance, by local NKVD men - but the "almighty" mover was inconceivable. For Stalin was the saviour, the promised salvation of the Communist kingdom. He had not forsaken them; they were the sheep of his flock. The loyalists maintained that as more people were arrested, the quicker those "angels on high" would realize their mistake. Thus it was completely natural that they felt obliged to help the Party. The Communists felt they had to name as many names as possible, give testimony against innocents to hasten the process. After all, "they won't arrest the entire Party!" It was fear more than anything else that moved them to give false testimony against themselves and others. But, as always, their theories enabled them to disguise their weakness.
The complete picture of the loyalists is only achieved through observing their conduct in the basic areas of camp life, their attitudes toward the prison experience which were manifestations of their ideological explanations. Having decided not to notice anything around them, the Communists attempted to ignore the worst of the experiences they encountered. Basically, the orthodox Communists were committed to the work ethic because it was necessary to the foundation of Communism and without it, they were undeserving of food. They considered it quite reasonable that persons who refused to work should be beaten or shot. It was certainly not immoral to be a work assigner, a brigadier, or whip cracker. As for themselves, the significance of work was entirely different — "it would be wrong to use them on general camp work, since it would then be difficult for them to preserve themselves for the future fertile leadership of the Soviet people." (The Gulag Archipelago II, p. 348) The loyalists never mingled with the 58's and attempted to retrieve their own "purity" in the Party by holding themselves apart. After all, it was only themselves that were unjustly imprisoned.

Since the camp regime had been established by themselves, the Soviet government, it must be observed not only willingly but conscientiously; the spirit of the regimen had to be acknowledged. Their jailers were representatives of Soviet power, they could not rebel against them. The camp's administration was Party members, carrying out the Party's directives, and they could not be blamed for the imprisonment of the loyalists. The orthodox Communists knew that if they had been in the same position — they would have done exactly the same thing. Consequently, the loyalists were respectful and friendly toward the camp chiefs — they wanted to "serve" them in their best capacity, observing the spirit before it is even demanded of them. Not only must
the loyalists revere the camp bosses, but the bosses must adore them as well. This is essentially why they declared themselves to be Communists - the bosses had to understand that they both were one in the same spirit. The loyalists seriously believed in the strength of the all-conquering doctrine of the Communist regime.

The orthodox Communists represented a group who did not want to struggle and could not even if they had wanted; their preceding life had prepared them only for an artificially conditioned environment. It was impossible for the loyalists not to cooperate with the camp chiefs; it was their way of serving the State and the Party. Besides the fact that it was beneficial to them in terms of survival. Whereas the orthodox Communists could understand the establishment of the camp system, even justify it as historically necessary - they could not cope within the environment themselves, not without a great deal of help from their Communist friends, the administration. They had participated in the creation of the means for their own destruction, but they were blind to this fact. The loyalists were Communist fanatics, their view of life so narrow and exclusive that their ultimate fate is ironically tragic.
VI

THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA

The biographies involved in the sharashka reveal in terms of first-hand experiences the overwhelming tragedy of Russian life, the metaphysical or ideological contents of the Stalinist hell. The picture which emerges from Solzhenitsyn's narrative is a bureaucratic spiral of fear: everyone, from the director of the secret police down to the imprisoned scientists and engineers are terrorized, for everyone's career and life are literally "on the line." The novel offers a large collection of characters which presents a cross section of Soviet society from top to bottom, demonstrating that the germ of dehumanization had infected all of Soviet life. Characterization is achieved by individuals responding diversely to the challenge of a common environment or circumstance - there is a sense of the universal in the experience of Stalinism. The sharashka becomes a leveller - it breaks down the artificial hierarchies of the outside world and replaces them with a more fundamental set of values. The transformation brings new perspectives and the close interaction of characters with various social, occupational, political, cultural and ethnic backgrounds produces the effect of a microcosm. Because the prisoners are released from the struggle for existence, Solzhenitsyn can deal with them on a higher, intellectual plane.

The author of The First Circle treats the world views of his as basic human attitudes. Solzhenitsyn is writing through viewpoints, rather than through thoughts.
The First Circle is a novel about ideas as they are embodied in people. The stress is on the entire viewpoints embraced by the hero-ideologist, and the characters Nerzhin, Rubin, Sologdin and Vologdin are truly committed to their viewpoints. Men in the sharashka are neither cold nor hungry, but they are psychologically demeaned and emotionally starved, and their true intellectual bent is warped to the purposes of the regime. Consequently, the problems of survival at Mavrino are different from those in camp: one must be concerned not only with physical survival, but with remaining intellectually and emotionally intact. As Solzhenitsyn links the characters with major figures of world culture - his connection with "men of ideas" becomes a portrayal of the character's ideas.

In the society portrayed in The First Circle a man's chances of success or even of survival are in direct inverse proportion to the extent to which he heeds the voice of conscience; the principal character's dilemmas of conscience are the crux of the story. Unlike the laborers in the camps who have sunk as low as they can go, the prisoners of the sharashka have an opportunity for real moral choice. For Solzhenitsyn, the keynote of morality is conscience. Conscience grants man the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. In return for the humane conditions at Mavrino, the prisoners must work on projects which they know will inevitably be used to repress their fellow countrymen - those who cooperate will stay on, those who will not are returned to the camps. Thus, the prisoner's moral dilemma is particularly daunting.

Lev Grigoryevich Rubin is a Communist imprisoned in Mavrino who believes that among all the prisoners of the "first circle" he is the
best spokesman for the "progressive ideology" of Marxism-Leninism; he is however, a different man behind this ideological facade. Rubin, the ever loyal Marxist, propounds a consistently collectivist position: the individual must always be subordinate to the social whole. Rubin's attitude is that "of a philosophic materialist, rationalist, positivist, collectivist, internationalist and atheist, all combined, however with an idealist's faith in Stalin the Man-god." Rubin, as a former Communist, was caught tightly in the net of loyalty by Major Myshin: "If you are a Soviet, then you will help us. If you don't help us, then you are not a Soviet. If you are not a Soviet, then you are anti-Soviet and deserve an additional term." Lev refuses to make denunciations, refuses to become an informer and these acts demonstrate his lack of personal compliance with the motto "the ends justify the means." But to serve one's country and its progressive idea is still of primary importance to Lev - he participates in the phonoscopic hunt of those he feels are innocent because "Our ends are the first in all human history which are so lofty that we can say they justify the means by which they've been attained." (The First Circle, p. 404) Though Rubin detests the people who give him the task of identifying Volodin through phonoscopy, they objectively represent the "positive forces" of history, so he must rise above his personal feelings and his own fate to help them find the man and make another victim.

Though the name of Communist has been denied Rubin from the moment of his arrest, Lev is a true hero of the Communist idea - he is virtually

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14 Krasnov, Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky, p. 90.

possessed by the idea and strongly committed to it. Lev Rubin is a Russian Jew who remains loyal to Communism, although he realizes that the Soviet system has ("unintentionally in its circumspect nature") unjustly treated him as an enemy. Rubin expects his fellow inmates to be more patient and to place their future in Stalin's hands. He has never allowed himself to doubt the Party ends, nor the means employed to actualize them. Rubin attempts to justify his predicament under Stalin allegorically:

The ballad told how Moses has led the Jews through the wilderness for forty years, in deprivation, thirst and famine, and how the people became delirious and rebelled; but they were wrong and Moses was right, knowing that in the end they would reach the promised land. (The First Circle, p. 172.)

Rubin's "Moses" is Stalin, "the Jews" are the Russians, and "the promised land" is the foreseeable triumph of world Communism. In the country where Lev Rubin lives, everything is permitted to Stalin - "that was Stalin's signature - that magnificent equating of friends and enemies which made him unique in all human history." (The First Circle, p.159)

The conflict between the humanity and ideology of Rubin become a major concern, the genuineness of Rubin's efforts to fuse his humane instincts and ideological loyalty is recognized. How does a compassionate man explain "numbers on human beings?" This is Rubin's principal challenge. And his plight is, indeed, tragic:

He had been dealt the blow by the hands of those he loved the most. He had been imprisoned by unfeeling bureaucrats because he loved the common cause to an improper degree. And as a result of that tragic contradiction, in order to defend his own dignity and that of his comrades, Rubin found himself compelled to stand up daily against the prison officers and guards whose actions, according to his view of the world, were determined by a totally true, correct, and progressive law. (The First Circle, p. 409)
In Rubin, faith in Marxism's laws of history always overwhelms personal urges toward human solidarity: "objectivity that man who wanted to do what seemed to him the right thing had in fact attacked the positive forces of history." (The First Circle, p. 196) Rubin manages to rationalize his own complicity in a rather interesting way. When the MVD's General Oskolupov impatiently calls for arresting all the suspects instead of trying to identify the single culprit from the tapes, Rubin is able to reassure himself that "the speed of Oskolupov's decisions proved that all the men would have been arrested without Rubin's complicity and without phonoscopy (the method of identifying the voice prints). So, in fact, he had saved three men." (The First Circle, p. 508)

Dimitri Sologdin's views are sharply different from Lev Rubin's. Dimitri Aleksandrovich Sologdin, an ideological antagonist to Rubin, considered to be the main proponent of metaphysics and idealism at the sharashka, is emphasized as an anti-Stalin ideologist. Sologdin, in a reaction against the collectivism of Rubin, prefers the individualistic view; he asserts that great individuals make human history and that collectivism is a delusion. He delights in relating the evils of the Soviet system to Rubin, ending in arguments which Rubin "couldn't allow himself to lose." Sologdin has spent the best part of his life in prison, and thus develops the thought that "one can't give in to external conditions." He realized that man must develop an unwavering willpower subject only to his reason. Dimitri emerges victorious in his ideological battles with his Stalinist opponent Rubin, effectively destroying the credibility of Marxist dialectics. Sologdin, as Lev Rubin, is equally certain that he has the absolute truth in his hands. Solzhenitsyn creates Dimitri as a man who looks out only for himself. At times, Sologdin
becomes the spokesman for Solzhenitsyn's own view:

Morality shouldn't lose its force as it increases its scope! That would mean that it's villainy if you personally kill and betray someone; but if the One-and-Only and Infallible knocks off five or ten million, then that's according to natural law and must be appraised in a progressive sense. *(The First Circle, p. 404)*

Sologdin's ideological preeminence at the Mavrino prison is emphasized by his nickname, "Pythia of Mavrino," and by the influence he exerts on other prisoners; he embarks on a campaign of self-perfection. There is something enigmatic and ambiguous about Dimitri, he appears different to different people at different moments. "His chief quirk was to utter some nonsensical, utterly wild opinion on every question, such as that prostitution is a moral good or that D'Anthes was in the right in his duel with Pushkin." *(The First Circle, p. 135)* Sologdin was a major influence on the character of Gleb Nerzhin. A major lesson for Nerzhin is the lesson of growth through suffering, and he comes to recognize that he has "acquired some of Sologdin's unhurried comprehension of life; how in particular it was Sologdin who had first nudged him into thinking that a person shouldn't regard prison solely as a curse, but also as a blessing." *(The First Circle, p. 136)* Having analyzed the system, Sologdin coldly and shrewdly plots to obtain his own freedom, proud that his intellect had endured malnutrition and deprivation and still remained creative.

Sologdin acts only in accordance with precepts of his own devising, taking pride in his individualism, and yet in spite of his admirable qualities, his conscience is untroubled by moral scruples about his actions. Dimitri personifies the idea of a strong individual who stands above the mediocrity of human multitudes and "beyond Good and Evil." Once he rejects Rubin's philosophy of collectivism and class struggle, Sologdin
adopts the opposite extreme of self-centered individualism and spiritual elitism which permits "strong" individuals to set themselves above the rest of humanity and to excuse themselves from any moral law. "And Sologdin knew equally well that the people is an over-all term for a totality of persons of slight interest, gray, crude, preoccupied in their unenlightened way with daily existence. The Colossus of Spirit does not rest on their multitudes." (The First Circle, p. 387) Dimitri undertakes the superhuman task of obtaining release from prison. The production of the solution to encoding becomes Sologdin's personal triumph over his captors, but at the same time it is a moral defeat for him, because to achieve the triumph he has to make a moral compromise. As he explains: "There is very little significance in it, but a great deal that relates to the palace. When I think of the customer who will pick up our transmitter..." (The First Circle, p. 176) The moral question implies that the transmitter will be used against Sologdin's fellow countrymen. However, Sologdin's attitude allows him to disregard the fate of "human multitudes." His triumph, though brilliantly achieved, nevertheless degrades him in his struggle against Stalin's dehumanizing dictatorship. Sologdin wins personal freedom, but the price he must pay is very high. Sologdin is aware of the immorality of his collaboration with the MGB, and he knows that such compromise is spiritually destructive. His brilliant victory is thus the utter spiritual defeat of submission to Stalin's system. To conquer the external resistance of prison, Dimitri decides to eliminate all the internal resistance of a moral nature in himself.

Gleb Nerzhin offers another approach to Stalinism. Gleb Vikentyevich Nerzhin, known at the sharashka as an inveterate skeptic and a "disciple
of Socrates" is in quest of a more affirmative attitude toward life, searching for the meaning of his experiences. Nerzhin's own prison experience made him reject the Communist goals of Stalin and a materialistic philosophy of life. "Through some strange inward sense, he had since adolescence been hearing a mute bell— all the groans, cries, shouts" of Stalin's victims, and an "inviolable decision took root in him: to learn and understand." (The First Circle, p. 202) Gleb strove for simplicity, to rid himself of the intelligentsia's habits of extreme politeness and intellectual extravagance. For the protagonist, Nerzhin, the passion to understand his world takes precedence over his love for his wife and his concern for her welfare. Nerzhin's love for Nadya seems "fated, predestined to be trampled", and Nerzhin, even in prison, is secretly happy in his unhappiness, because "from his youth on, Gleb Nerzhin had dreaded more than anything else wallowing in daily living. As the proverb says: It's not the sea that drowns you, it's the puddle." (The First Circle, p. 157) Of all the zeks in The First Circle, Gleb seemed the happiest; his life had meaning in big and small things. Where others saw it as an unhappy life, Nerzhin made the best of it.

Nerzhin is a quester who believes that the men around him have something to offer; he senses a great urgency about the duty to think things out and the patterns of thought of Rubin and Sologdin are the primary ones with which he must come to grips. Gleb finds in his imprisonment time to think for himself. He cannot adopt Rubin's collectivism nor Sologdin's elitism and thus his only choice is to "be himself," to develop his own "personal point of view, more precious than life itself." In Nerzhin's rejection of Rubin's doctrine of collectivism, what emerges is not individualism but a process in which he would "thereby become a
tiny particle of one's own people." Gleb struggled to find "an alternative to the wisdom of his intellectual friends." He attains a level of spiritual independence which allows him to assert: "Everyone forges his inner self year after year. One must try to temper, to cut, to polish one's soul so as to become a human being." (The First Circle, p. 389)

Individual dignity and a sense of community are not to be seen as conflicting values in Gleb's mind. Gleb suggests that when one comes to know himself, he will understand that he is a social being and that compassion and community are a result of fulfillment of self.

Gleb becomes a hero as he wins his victories with a clear conscience; he will not cling to the sharashka at the cost of a moral compromise with evil and thus he is Christ-like in his development. Nerzhin demonstrates how far he has developed as a human being when he faces the test that trips Sologdin. Gleb knows the special assignment would mean the arrest of innocent men - to accept would mean to corrupt his true self and inevitably to impede his search for the true meaning of life. When Gleb rejects the offer of collaboration, he tells his superiors: "You're beginning at the wrong end. Let them admit first that it's not right to put people in prison for their way of thinking, and then we will decide whether we will forgive them." (The First Circle, p. 43) Not unlike Christ before the crucifixion, Nerzhin thinks of his uncompromising decision as a turning point in his whole life. He believes, as Christ did, in the possibility of a "victory over death" and the beginning of a new life. As he departs from camp, there is "peace in his soul." Gleb is at peace with his inner self because he has acquired "the fearlessness of those who have lost everything."
For Solzhenitsyn, every person must ask what it means to be a human being; the meaning of earthly existence lies in the development of the soul. The Soviet people stepped onto the Archipelago spiritually disarmed; the camps were calculated and intended to corrupt but they did not succeed in defeating everyone. In camp, there exists both corruption and ascent side by side. Because "the universe has as many different centers as there are living beings in it; each of us is a center of the Universe." The individual is expected to exercise moral responsibility which ultimately is found in the soul. Solzhenitsyn's commitment is to the worth of the human individual and he insists that persons cannot surrender their inner freedom. It is in the soulless background of the camps that people are called upon to make themselves truly human. "That many fail is no surprise. The wonder is that any succeed." A zek must appropriate for himself that moral energy required to be human.

As a prophet, Solzhenitsyn calls for collective repentance but this has to begin with oneself, in the organic and tragic communion with one's whole generation. This does not mean the self-indulgent individualism that Dimitri Sologdin adopted, but a sense of a common bond with all humanity, with the entire Russia. It is perhaps a Christ-like request that Solzhenitsyn makes - asking for universal redemption. Its basis is not simply punishment for the evildoers, although they must too be "conscious sinners;" rather all men must recognize their inherent potential for evil and rise above fundamental condemnation. For humans, it
is not difficult to chastise others; the true test for the Russian people is to recognize that this tragedy belongs to all of them. Russia must clear her conscience by telling the truth about the past, by confessing her sins and then start anew by restoring faith in her ideals. When Solzhenitsyn speaks of Russia, he means the whole of the Russian people - from the peasant to the head of the MVD. If silent about evil, then Russia will bury it deep within so that no sign of it appears on the surface and evil will become implanted. Russia must condemn the very idea that some people have the right to repress others.

The line separating good and evil passes right through every human heart - through all human hearts - and inside us, it oscillates with the years. During the life of any heart this line shifts positions; sometimes it is squeezed in one direction by evil and sometimes it changes places to allow space for good. "One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being. At times he is close to being a devil, at times to sainthood." (The Gulag Archipelago, I, p. 168) To do evil a human being must believe that he is actually doing good, or that it is an act conforming to natural law. It is in the nature of man to seek justification for his actions. And in Russia, having the possession of ideology, the evil had found its justification. The ideology made man's acts appear good in his eyes and in the eyes of fellow believers, allowing for praise and honor of the deeds performed. Expediency was the primary explanation for the evildoing. Based on the social theory, almost any act could be construed to assist the Republic and consequently the most blatant malefices could be explained as supporting the ideology. It is not hard for us to locate an explanation of the hyperbolic evil which characterizes the Gulag.
The experience of prison is the moment when worldly riches, rank, and status cease to have any meaning, it is the great leveller and from that moment on a man must learn to depend on his inner resources alone. The State could not deprive man of his family and his property - they had already been taken from him. The authorities cannot deprive man of anything more once they have placed him in prison. And once a man has everything taken from him, he is no longer in the power of the State. Thus by imprisonment, man essentially becomes free. Difficulties must be viewed as a hidden treasure. "Overcoming the increased difficulties is all the more valuable because in failure the growth of the person performing the task takes place in proportion to the difficulty encountered." (The First Circle, p. 139) It is in difficulties that the human being emerges. The zeks are filled with the fearlessness of those who have lost everything. When man has nothing, it is finally possible for the soul to be open and free.

Prison camp is the great proving grounds in which the worth of a man's soul is determined; in the camp situation human beings never remain beings - but ascent is still possible. It takes a great deal of skill and strength of will to stay alive in camp. There are two paths from which to choose in the journey through camp life: losing your life or losing your conscience. At this great divide, the majority chose, above all, to preserve their lives at the cost of their conscience. There is a voice deep inside the human being which was once stifled in the vanity and surfeit of the outside world. All human emotions fall away from the person - the camp is the negative school of life, composed of the worst possible circumstances a person could endure. The grief that a person is faced with has to be digested; man
has to learn to live with it. This, for Solzhenitsyn, is the highest form of moral effort and it tends to ennoble human beings.

It is a good thing to think in prison, and this results in a sensation of freedom of great magnitude. What does exist is a basic freedom, man's head is free for thought. Time does not pass quickly in the Archipelago, there is much time for prisoners to think. The camp authorities cannot take a man's mind and fasten it in place - this is one freedom that man has over them. There is freedom in the exchange of free thoughts without fear, without concealment. Ironically in Russia, it is in freedom that "freedom" is lacking. As time goes on, man must draw some conclusions from misfortune. "Freedom spoils, and lack of freedom teaches." The lack of freedom permits man to value the things generally taken for granted. It is enough that one does not freeze in the cold, that one can walk and talk, see and hear. There is no room for envy.

The prisoner, because his will has been taken from him and he has been freed by deprivation from material concerns, can enter life with a new enlightenment. People on the outside do not realize the value of things. There is no better place than prison to spiritually understand the role of good and evil in human life. Prison allows for man to become acquainted with people and events that could not be learned anywhere else on earth. Only a zek has an immortal soul; in freedom few people are entitled to one because of the vain lives they lead.

Those who were free lacked the immortal soul the zeks had earned in their endless prison terms. Those on the outside made stupid use of the freedom they were allowed to enjoy. Man is able to enter into a kingdom of the liberated spirit, free to follow his spiritual values.
As man's commitment to material values declines, his devotion to spiritual worth grows.

What confronts us is a seemingly moral paradox: only in prison can one be really free. Freedom essentially derives from a sense of being liberated from all things, especially material concerns in Solzhenitsyn's case. Only the powerless have the real power, a spiritual force stronger than their oppressors. Those who have nothing to lose since they have already lost everything - influence, power, material possessions, often loved ones - can maintain their basic humanity, their personal dignity, their ability to act upon the dictates of their consciences.

Prison causes the profound rebirth of a human being; imprisonment begins to transform the former character in an astonishing way once "survival at any price" is renounced. Descriptions of prisons have always stressed their horrors. But the true horror lies in the gray methodology of years, in sitting in prison and not learning anything. The way a person lives determines the way that person thinks. The years in prison come to mean something. A person learns a great deal about people and much about themselves, for this is a place of reflection. Whoever opts for survival "at any price" allows his own misfortune to overshadow the entire common tragedy of imprisonment. For "at any price" necessarily means at the price of someone else. It is understandable that a person wants to survive, but not at the price of losing one's human countenance. Once man understands his own weaknesses - he can understand the weakness of others. No longer does he judge people without mercy. In a situation of fear and betrayal people survive unharmed only in a superficial, physical sense - inside their soul becomes torn.

The strength of character is undistinguishable from the strength of
principle: great souls are formed by the contest of courage with intense suffering. Suffering gives perspective. For those who understand, human happiness is suffering. Happiness does not depend on how many external blessings life has given man, it depends only on man's attitude toward them. When life is incessant victory, fulfilled desire and total satiety—man has reached "spiritual death." Suffering gives man spiritual superiority over certain people. Man greet his first moral awakening in camp; the experience of suffering allows a free reflection on the habitual reign of fear. Man's conscience forged in suffering enables him to weigh everything anew, to become painfully aware of the truth.

The soul is ripened from suffering; through intense suffering there is achieved a spiritual development of profound intensity. An individual needs suffering and misfortune: they compel the deepening of the inner life and generate a spiritual upsurge. What does a soul live by? Everyone must seek a philosophy of life which allows him to attain a higher spirituality.

The individual's moral development is never easy, and continuous collective efforts to dehumanize take their deadly toll. Since, however, growth comes through suffering, for the overcomers those efforts have the effect of a trainer's hand: And thus it is that we have to keep getting banged on flank and snout again and again so as to become, in time at least, human beings, yes, human beings.

(The Gulag Archipelago I, p. 549)

According to Solzhenitsyn, it is impossible to expel evil from the world in its entirety, but it is possible to constrict it within each person. A human being moves back and forth between good and evil all his life. He slips, falls back, awkwardly climbs back up, repents, and then things begin to darken again. But evildoing also has a "threshold magnitude." As long as the threshold of evildoing is not crossed, the potential for returning to good survives, the individual
is within reach of hope. But when, through the density of evil actions, man crosses that threshold, he leaves humanity behind - possibly without return. The individual's moral development does not come in a social vacuum but in an awareness of community, rooted in the universality of human nature. As Solzhenitsyn himself said: "Camp life strips Communism bare in a drastic way. Their ideology disappears completely. First comes the fight for survival, then the discovery of life, then God."
Although *The First Circle* and *The Gulag Archipelago* depict quite different circumstances of imprisonment, the two books are inextricably tied together, for it is only with the intimidation of the camps in the background do the decisions and lives of the characters in *The First Circle* take on meaning and perspective. Conjointly, in *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn extends the scope of *The First Circle* to include Stalin's entire regime. If one thinks of the whole country as the Inferno, the sharashka is the first circle and the camps are the outermost rings. Through this study of Solzhenitsyn, we are aware of the "best" and the "worst," the tortures on the physical plane and the horns of dilemma on the intellectual sphere. Both works are peopled with a multitude of characters: *The Gulag Archipelago* engaged in the generic presentation of the different classifications; *The First Circle* dealing with specific individual personalities.

The central theme is the quest for human values; that is, man's search for an answer as to whether it is possible for one to remain a Human Being in the Archipelago. Can man retain that which is human while subjected to the dehumanizing and torturous aspects of life in camp? We have come to understand the nature of the camps - the brutality that brings death to many, the twisted social hierarchy which gives the thieves command. The arbitrary arrests and factitious accusations that were manufactured stand out obtrusively. But most importantly, Solzhenitsyn has presented us with the truth. And it is in that truth that the dilemma
emerges, the spiritual conflict of attempting to transcend the physical difficulties, resist evil temptations, and preserve one's humanity.

The prison experience was different for every individual and each responded to the ordeal in a manner unique to one's personality. Each response was based on a number of things; for some, it was the indoctrination of an ideology, for others it was a matter of personal conscience. As individuals react to the experience, their nature is, in turn, transformed. For Solzhenitsyn, this transformation has two distinct possibilities: either ascent or corruption. Ascent takes place when the human spirit rises above circumstances. Ascent occurs when men struggle to retain some humanity in an experience that is intended "to suppress mercilessly... all feelings of right and legality in man (and) did not allow the convicts to forget even for a moment that they were deprived of rights, and that arbitrariness was the only judge."

In *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The First Circle*, Solzhenitsyn maintains that it is the very experience in prison which gives man the faith he needs to resist evil, the necessary strength to relinquish his life when the need arises. When a man ceases to set store by earthly things or by his life, he acquires an inner freedom and with it the power to vanquish evil. The torments and the sufferings are seen by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as a trial of the human spirit, a necessary part of its purification and strengthening. And so it is that Solzhenitsyn tests the individuals in prison for their spiritual capacity to resist the forces of evil.

The majority of the prisoners (thieves excluded) are compelled to try to make sense of their lives and to make sense of what has happened in the Soviet Union in their lifetimes. The loyalists' commitment to Marxism severely limits their ability to find the ultimate answer, to rise above the omnipotent ideology for an explanation. The ideology is
the facade and falsehood covering reality and truth. Because the orthodox Communists never deal with reality, in a sense, they are unable to make any transcendence. Even Lev Rubin, who exhibits some moral scruples, falls into the trap of ideology. Rubin is "morally defective" because he is able to destroy the lives of two innocent people for the sake of a lofty and humane end. Thus, Rubin representative of the loyalists' rationale, sacrifices his human values for human dogma.

Corruption is best seen in the urki of the camps. Since the thieves defile that which pertains to the natural sphere of humanity, they are in themselves subhuman and incapable of redemption. The thieves, deprived of any enrichment of morality or spiritual upbringing, live completely on the physical level in camp - surviving without pursuing meaning of their existence. The thieves' theory of life was diametrically opposed to any aches of conscience. The bestial behavior of the common convicts attests to their denial of humanity. The thieves did not suffer and thus they were not entitled to the wisdom gained from affliction. The spiritual insight gained from suffering could not be achieved by the thieves.

Solzhenitsyn admires those who risk their comfort and well-being, even their safety and their lives, for principle. The basis for that principle must be found within the heart, the conscience. For the prisoners of the Gulag, there is an inner freedom within that heart waiting to be found. Our inner freedom is our sole possession which no one can take from us and it is that which ultimately determines our being and becoming. Gleb Nerzhin realizes the essential liberty he has gained through his incarceration; it is a liberated spirit which cannot be attained on the "outside." The prisoner, because he has been freed from material
concerns, can approach life with a new illumination. Everything takes
on a new value in camp; in the midst of the most blatant form of dehuman-
ization, humanitarian concerns become paramount. As the authorities of
the Archipelago divest man of human qualities, the striving for human
values is the spiritual sanctuary through which man survives.

Solzhenitsyn calls for "collective" repentence. As an individual
excellst in the spiritual realm, he becomes aware of his relationship to
the universe as a whole which includes all of mankind. It is only through
a common bond with all humanity which makes us truly "human." Sologdin
in The First Circle is the primary antagonist to this premise. Dimitri
adopts a self-centered individualism and spiritual elitism which precludes
him from redemption. By setting himself above the rest of humanity,
Sologdin rejects any connection with the "human multitude." But this
attitude is incomplete for Solzhenitsyn because it does not embody the
shared or the common union of all mankind.

In the final analysis, Solzhenitsyn appears as a Christ-like figure.
What emerges from The Gulag Archipelago and The First Circle is the ex-
pression of character consequences as a result of the prison experience.
The gallery of characters is presented as a test for the quest for truth
in the spiritual value of life. By demonstrating the power of goodness
and the power of evil, Solzhenitsyn shows us that an individual can
either triumph or fail in a totalitarian regime.
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