

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

**This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.**

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.**

**In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.**

**Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.**

**Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.**

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0800**

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**



**ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN IN AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY:  
A CHRISTIAN CRITIC AND HIS SECULAR AUDIENCE**

by

**Danielle Alexandra Townley**

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
through the Department of History  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1998

© 1998 Danielle Alexandra Townley



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services  
  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques  
  
395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-52486-8

Canadâ

## ABSTRACT

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has been one of the most-studied figures of the twentieth century in Western scholarship. At the time of his exile from the Soviet Union in February 1974, Solzhenitsyn was largely celebrated among the American press and intellectual community as one of the world's premier novelists, a courageous Soviet dissident, and as a great thinker. By 1980 he was virtually silent, an intellectual obscurity in the United States. The cause of this sudden and drastic turning point in Solzhenitsyn's relationship with his American critics was his Harvard commencement address of June 1978, entitled '*A World Split Apart: The Harvard Address*'. The theme of that speech was Western decline, and his criticisms of Western values and institutions provoked an intellectual backlash against him. Solzhenitsyn was, in consequence, ultimately dismissed as a viable thinker in the West.

This thesis takes as its first aim the critical examination of both the early and later responses to the *Harvard Address* to determine the patterns and trends of American opinions and evaluations of Solzhenitsyn and his thought at that time. Second, this thesis argues that generally the efforts of Solzhenitsyn's American critics to understand and contextualise him and the *Harvard Address* were unsatisfactory, as they approached the problem of Solzhenitsyn from a Western perspective and therefore inappropriately based their evaluations of him on current Western political and social ideals. Finally, this thesis is intended to contribute to the ongoing trend of recontextualising Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in the 1990s by asserting that Solzhenitsyn is first and foremost a Christian, and that his personal Christianity forms an essential component of his thought. Therefore, efforts must be made to view Solzhenitsyn and his work more properly within the context of Christian principles and beliefs. This is accomplished primarily, but not exclusively,

**through a detailed study of the *Harvard Address* and an examination of its thematic concurrence with the basic tenets of Christianity.**

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the following people, without whom it would never have been written:

My supervisor Dr. Bruce Tucker, whose aid in the planning and writing of this was invaluable. Due to his efforts, this thesis has indeed gone from being a millstone to a milestone. Thank you, Bruce.

My committee, Dr. Christina Simmons and Dr. Tonya Basok, whose editing skills far surpass my own! Thank you.

My parents Peter and Cherry Townley, for the pride they take in my work. Dad, please note that I spelled like a bloody Brit wherever I could.

My grandmother Muriel Armour, for giving me a home while I wrote this. Thank you, Gran.

My grandmother Alice Townley, for showing me that shopping can save your sanity. Long live the Gap!

My fellow graduate students and partners in angst: Natalie Forget, Anne Kasprzak, Catherine Rule and Gordon Marshall. Thank you for your support. Cheers! It's over!

And finally Mary Ann Van Meenen, for her tea and her friendship. Mary Ann, I want to be just like you when I grow up, only taller. Thanks so much for everything you've done for me in the last few years.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	iii
<b>DEDICATION</b>	iv
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER:</b>	
I. <b>EARLY PERCEPTIONS OF SOLZHENITSYN: EXILE AND THE          LETTER TO SOVIET LEADERS</b>	10
II. <b>THE HARVARD ADDRESS AND THE EARLY RESPONSES</b>	23
III. <b>LATER RESPONSES TO THE HARVARD ADDRESS</b>	45
IV. <b>SOLZHENITSYN AS A CHRISTIAN AND THE HARVARD          ADDRESS AS EVIDENCE</b>	68
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	106
<b>APPENDIX A: BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF SOLZHENITSYN'S LIFE,          1917-1976</b>	112
<b>WORKS CITED</b>	129
<b>VITA AUCTORIS</b>	136

**It was the Devil himself who had me born, intelligent and talented, in Russia.**

—Pushkin (c.1826)

**The slaves of today are the insurrectionists of tomorrow.**

—Konstantin Aksakov (1832)

**What use to herds the gift of freedom?  
The scourge, and a yoke with tinkling bells  
—this is their heritage, bequeathed to every generation.**

—Pushkin, *Freedom's Desert Flower* (1823)

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has been one of the most studied men of the twentieth century, particularly among Western scholars. Literary critics have been fascinated by his novels and short stories; political scientists and analysts by his programmes for the future of Russia and his views on the West, and historians by the complex philosophical and thematic roots of his ideas in Russian intellectual history. Western presses were electrified by his personal struggles as a dissident writer in Soviet Russia and his sudden and forced exile from his homeland in 1974, and then outraged by his shocking criticisms of Western life in the years which followed. Over the seventy-nine years of his life, Solzhenitsyn has been a Marxist-Leninist student, a World War Two artillery captain, a political prisoner, a prisoner-exile, a survivor of cancer, a secret author, a public dissident, a strategist, an author-exile, a critic of the West and finally, in 1994, a repatriated Russian citizen. Solzhenitsyn is many things: he is a writer of literature, a political theorist, a historian, a poet and publicist. All of these aspects of his life have been studied extensively in the West by academics and members of the press. He has been, as historian Daniel Singer observed, the "subject of endless controversies, in the form of theses, studies, essays and innumerable articles."<sup>1</sup> For nearly forty years Solzhenitsyn has interested the West in his life, works and thought.

These years have witnessed several dramatic and important shifts in American study of Solzhenitsyn. In the early 1960s he was known as the first Russian novelist to publish a novel about Stalin's prisoner labour camps in the Soviet Union, a feat made even more notable by the fact that the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962 was authorised by Nikita Khrushchev himself. American studies of Solzhenitsyn at that time reflected an interest primarily in his personal biography and his literary artistry. By the late 1960s Solzhenitsyn was celebrated in the West as a courageous Soviet dissident, a writer engaged in a public battle of wits with the Soviet authorities while he wrote and tried to publish novels and short stories which exposed the

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Singer, *The Road to Gdansk: Poland and the USSR* (New York: Monthly Review Press,

brutality and oppressiveness of life in the Soviet Union. Western intellectuals began to extend their interest in the author toward his political thought, based on his opposition to Soviet Communism and his increasingly precarious position in his homeland.

The early 1970s witnessed the acclamation of Solzhenitsyn as a Nobel Prize-winner, a freedom fighter, the author of the landmark work *Gulag Archipelago* and as a victim of forced exile to the West; by the mid-1970s Solzhenitsyn had begun to unnerve his American audience with his public support for Russian authoritarianism, his public criticisms of Western democracy, and his scathing denunciations of American-Soviet détente. Intellectual assessments of the author in this period were characterised by the small but growing number of American intellectuals who began to doubt Solzhenitsyn's compatibility with Western life and values. By 1980 Solzhenitsyn was a virtual non-entity, largely dismissed as a political thinker whose ideas were clearly irrelevant to the modern world; an author whose most recent works of literature were uninspiring, a didactical public speaker whose only goal seemed to be to criticise the West and, in particular, the United States. He faded from public view and American intellectuals lost interest in him. As Anthony James in the *Contemporary Review* observed in 1993, "[f]rom the late 1970s, cultural and political journalists, speechwriters, politicians, ideologists, analysts and dogmatists, mentioned him less and less, not wishing to remind themselves or to remind the public of their own misapprehensions and delusions."<sup>2</sup> Solzhenitsyn was not deemed academically interesting or newsworthy again until the fall of Soviet Communism in 1991, and then in 1994 when he finally returned to Russia at the invitation of Boris Yeltsin. In these years Western commentators preferred to speculate on his role in the reshaping of Russia rather than his later essays. Since his return, Solzhenitsyn has remained out of the world spotlight, living quietly with his wife Natalya in Moscow.

---

1981), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony James, "The Ikon and the Latrine Bucket: The World of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," *Contemporary Review* 263:1530 (1993), 17.

Despite his almost complete absence from the public eye, the 1990s may be characterised as the decade when Western intellectuals began to take a second look at Solzhenitsyn.<sup>3</sup> This process has not been, by any means, an easy one; his works present a complex and often confusing mix of politics, social theory, theology, history and autobiography. Western scholars and popular presses have never been quite sure how to approach his ideas, thus the multidisciplinary interest in him. As bibliographer Bryn Geffert commented,

Solzhenitsyn is anything but simple. He has, in fact, had the West confused for quite a long time....The popular press has fits trying to make sense of this brave Russian man who endured years of imprisonment in Soviet labor camps, found sanctuary in the West, and then began to condemn the West with vitriolic language. Western scholars still face the daunting challenge of explaining a man who combines talk of politics with spiritual renewal, individual responsibility with history, and absolutism with liberalism.<sup>4</sup>

As Western scholars in the 1990s began to reassess Solzhenitsyn they came to realise that he could not be analysed in Western terms, using Western concepts as had been done before, and that "it [was] only fair to try to understand Solzhenitsyn within his own tradition."<sup>5</sup> Thus they turned toward examinations of the author as a man to be studied within his own context as a Russian, with an eye to Russia's history and literary traditions, to traditional Russian philosophies, values and beliefs.

This thesis is intended to contribute to this general trend of the contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn in the 1990s. However, examinations of his place within the specifically Russian traditions of intellectual and literary thought are eschewed for a subject which has been consistently neglected from the very beginning of Western study of Solzhenitsyn: his Christianity. Although analyses of his Russian roots are indeed important for Western understandings of the author, most American commentators and

<sup>3</sup> Bryn Geffert, "Western Reaction to Solzhenitsyn: A Bibliography," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 49:4 (1992), 289.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

critics have been reluctant to examine the role of his personal religiosity on his thought and works. This constitutes a serious oversight; it is the contention here that to ignore Solzhenitsyn's Christianity is to fail to reach any meaningful understanding of him in any context, for it informs all that he has written. This thesis, therefore, seeks to supplement current efforts to contextualise Solzhenitsyn with an examination of his Christian world-view as it is explicated in his works, and in particular its impact on his *Harvard Address* of 1978.

The decision to use one of Solzhenitsyn's speeches to clarify his Christian world-view in lieu of, for example, one of his novels was made for several reasons. Although the collected works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn are extensive,<sup>6</sup> those speeches and essays which comprised the basis for much of Solzhenitsyn's notoriety in the United States during the 1970s account for—at most—only a few hundred of those several thousand pages. The rest are his works of literature, including the six-volume *Gulag Archipelago*, the four-volume *Red Wheel* and numerous novels, plays, speeches, poems, essays and short stories. In comparison, the *Harvard Address*, which is argued here as having effectively destroyed Solzhenitsyn's intellectual credibility among his American critics by 1980, is only twenty pages long. Although Solzhenitsyn is primarily a writer of literature (and should be studied first as such), a survey of the relevant American literature reveals a disproportional fascination with only a fragment of his corpus: his controversial analyses of the decline of the West, including the weakening of the United States in the modern era. Although his novels and other Russian-themed scholarship are undoubtedly what earned him his place in historical and intellectual posterity,<sup>7</sup> the breadth and intensity

<sup>5</sup> Geffert, 290.

<sup>6</sup> As of 1985, his *sobranie sochinenii* numbered twelve volumes, and four more were scheduled to be published by the end of 1987. See Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 977. The current total of English-language volumes is as yet undetermined; however, it is the author's opinion that an estimate of twenty volumes would be reasonable.

<sup>7</sup> For those interested in academic treatments of Solzhenitsyn's literature, I would recommend the following as excellent introductory reading: N.J. Anning, "Solzhenitsyn," in Richard Freeborn ed., *Russian Literary Attitudes from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 120-140; Lawrence L. Langer, *The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature* (Boston: Beacon Press,

of the media and academic responses generated by such works as the *Harvard Address* validate an examination of Solzhenitsyn's public, as opposed to literary, reputation in the United States.

The *Address* itself was selected as the emphasis for this study for several important reasons. It is certainly Solzhenitsyn's most famous speech; during the 1970s it and the *Gulag Archipelago* secured his place in the public eye. Given at Harvard University on 9 June 1978, it has received more English-language press and academic notice than have the rest of his works combined. As Edward E. Ericson observed, "[s]eldom, if ever, has a commencement speech met with such wide and clamorous attention."<sup>8</sup> Although it is certainly his best-known work, likely second only to the *Gulag Archipelago*, its significance to Solzhenitsyn's time in the United States went beyond mere name recognition. *A World Split Apart: The Harvard Address* represents the climax of Solzhenitsyn's American career; after 9 June he retreated into seclusion at his Vermont estate while his critics attacked his personal and intellectual credibility first in the press, and then in scholarly print. It was the *Harvard Address*, and not the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* as literary critic Edward E. Ericson contended, which effectively ruined Solzhenitsyn's reputation in the United States. Newspaper headlines such as "The Obsession of Solzhenitsyn," "Solzhenitsyn Doesn't Love Us," and "Solzhenitsyn at

1978), 163-200; Vladimir I Grebenshchikov, "The Infernal Circles of Dante and Solzhenitsyn," *Transactions* 6 (1972), 7-20; the special Solzhenitsyn-themed volume of *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8:2-3 (1971); N. V. Pervushin, "The Soviet Writer Solzhenitsyn, His Critics and the Classical Russian Literature," *Slavic and East European Studies* 9:3-4 (1965), 3-18; Raymond Williams, "On Solzhenitsyn," in Williams, *What I came to Say* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 240-253; Dorothy G. Atkinson, "Solzhenitsyn's Heroes as Russian Historical Types," *Russian Review* 30:1 (1971), 1-16; Paul N. Siegel, "The Political Implications of Solzhenitsyn's Novels," *Clio* 12:3 (1983), 211-232; Katherine Feuer, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976); Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980); Helen Muchnic, "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," in Muchnic, *Russian Writers: Notes and Essays* (New York: Random House, 1963), 400-450; Christopher Moody, *Solzhenitsyn* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1973); Nicholas Zisserman, "The Righteous Ones: A Study in Figural Interpretation," *Landfall* 18:2 (1964); and Thompson Bradley, "Alexander Isaevich Solzhenitsyn," in George W. Simmons, ed., *Soviet Leaders* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), 329-339.

<sup>8</sup> Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993), 100.

"Harvard: Misspent Rage" abounded in major American newspapers. It is hardly surprising that after Harvard Solzhenitsyn spoke only rarely in public and published little, finally returning to Russia in 1991 with almost no American fanfare.

The *Harvard Address* is important for other reasons as well. It is, first and foremost, Solzhenitsyn's most comprehensive and detailed analysis of the decline of the West. This theme had surfaced in several other works, notably the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, but the *Address* concentrates exclusively on the plight of the West, forgoing Solzhenitsyn's usual authorial concerns such as the future of Russia and the nature and truth about Soviet Communism. And though Solzhenitsyn refers only to 'the West' in the speech, the nature of his comments and its presentation in Harvard Yard indicate that Americans were his primary audience. This is unusual as well; few of Solzhenitsyn's works can realistically be regarded as anything but directed at the Russian people. This was certainly true of the *Letter*, *Gulag* and all of his novels: the West was only infrequently his intended audience, and Americans only once, at Harvard.

Of primary significance for this thesis, however, is that the *Address* is a Christian document and that it was not generally explored as such. It is an excellent example of the primacy which Christian values and themes assume in Solzhenitsyn's works and how they form the essential basis of his thought. Although American critics usually recognised the *Address* as inspired by the tenets of Christianity, this rarely provided the focus for those articles and books which studied it. The *Address*, then, was a crucial component of Solzhenitsyn's public career in the West and in the United States; its fame and significance with his American critics as well as its only cursorily examined roots in Christian thought lend the *Address* a stature which his other works do not have. Thus, this thesis will document the early and later responses to the *Harvard Address* in an effort to determine the differing ways in which American critics sought to understand, defame, dismiss and contextualise Solzhenitsyn and the *Address* during primarily the 1970s and, to a certain extent, the 1980s. Second, this thesis takes as its aim the exploration of the

Christian roots of his thought and to argue for the necessity of recognising Solzhenitsyn as a Christian artist and thinker based primarily, but not exclusively, on an analysis of the *Harvard Address*.

As such, the first chapter explores Solzhenitsyn's generally positive early reputation with his American critics in the early 1970s to establish how they perceived the author in the days immediately following his forced exile from the Soviet Union. It then documents the first stirrings of American dissatisfaction with Solzhenitsyn after the publication of his *Letter to Soviet Leaders* in 1974, when critics began to regret their unqualified admiration of him in earlier years. The second chapter provides a summary of the major points of the *Harvard Address* of 9 June 1978 and studies the ways in which his American critics, primarily the press, analysed and attempted to contextualise the *Address* immediately after its presentation. The third chapter is an examination of later responses to the *Address*, meaning those which followed it by weeks or years. This chapter focuses on the efforts of American academic intellectuals to understand the *Address* and to explain it, to dismiss it or to contextualise it. The later responses are particularly important, because it was American academics who determined the final evaluation of Solzhenitsyn and his thought in American historiography. Finally, the fourth chapter provides an overview of Solzhenitsyn's Christian-derived theory of art and its relevance to all of his works, and then examines in detail the predominantly Christian themes of the *Harvard Address*. In recognition of their subtle representation, Solzhenitsyn's other works have been used to clarify further the impact of his personal religiosity on his work.

This thesis also has definite limits. Christianity is a broad topic, complicated by the existence of its many categories. Study of Solzhenitsyn inevitably leads to questions of his own specific determination within the Christian tradition. For example, we know that he is a Russian Orthodox Christian, but is he a conservative Orthodox Christian? A radical one? Or a liberal one? How well do Solzhenitsyn's ideas and views conform to

the precepts of Russian Orthodoxy? Are there elements of his thought which are characteristic of other traditions, for example, Roman Catholicism or the various Protestantisms? These are all valid questions which should be considered in evaluations of Solzhenitsyn's specific religiosity. However, they are beyond the scope of this work. This thesis is intended to establish the viability of studying Solzhenitsyn as a Christian thinker, based on the basic Christian tenets which are represented in his thought. These beliefs and values are, it will be argued, common to all religions which derive from the basic framework of Christianity, and Solzhenitsyn's own care to speak in universalist Christian terms validates this approach. Determination of his specific place within the various dogmas of Christianity is a project which would be important for overall study of him, but this thesis seeks only to establish the need for study of Solzhenitsyn as a Christian man and artist; in other words, to lay the foundation for those who wish to pursue this path of analysis in the future in more detail.

Solzhenitsyn is much more than a famous, Nobel Prize-winning Russian author. He is more than a victim of Soviet Communism, more than an artist and certainly more than a mere critic of the West. He has been and remains a prominent figure of our troubled century; the significance of his thought extends beyond geographical boundaries and ideological differences to touch instead on the very fundamentals of our lives as human beings in an age where our essential humanity is in question. Solzhenitsyn is not irrelevant to the modern world, but he speaks in a language the secular West finds difficult to understand. Thus his years in the United States were dissatisfying ones, marked by perceptual and intellectual incomprehension on all sides. Solzhenitsyn's thought is not impossible to understand if those who choose to study him accept the impact of Christianity on his ideas and explore it; and the vast majority were not inclined to do this. If we in the 1990s are to be successful in contextualising the complexities of Solzhenitsyn's thought, then we must transcend the superficial efforts of the 1970s and

1980s and begin with the premise that Solzhenitsyn is more than a writer of literature, more than a political theorist, historian, poet and critic: he is also a Christian.

## **CHAPTER ONE: EARLY PERCEPTIONS OF SOLZHENITSYN—EXILE AND THE LETTER TO SOVIET LEADERS**

History is so monotonous it's repulsive to read.  
The nobler and more honest a man is, the more  
despicably his compatriots treat him!

—Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*

This hooligan Solzhenitsyn is out of control.

—Brezhnev (1973)

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's relationship with his American audience underwent several significant changes during the 1970s. Initially heralded as a courageous dissident, by 1980 he was a virtual outcast in the United States, his adopted country while in exile. The progressive deterioration of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual reputation among his American critics is best examined within the chronological context of three particularly important landmarks in his life, which in turn greatly influenced Western evaluations of him. The first was his exile from the Soviet Union in 1974, and thus a brief examination of Solzhenitsyn's early reputation in the United States in the periods immediately preceding and following his exile provide important insights into how American intellectuals perceived him when the bulk of his political thought was as yet unknown to them. The second landmark was the publication of his *Letter to Soviet Leaders* only days after his exile, and the predominantly negative American reactions to this pamphlet illustrate the beginnings of intellectual dissatisfaction with Solzhenitsyn's political views. This brief but important chapter will focus on the impact of these first two events on Solzhenitsyn's relationship with his American critics. The third and most crucial turning point, the *Harvard Address* of June 1978, forms the subject of the second and third chapters; of primary concern here are the initial reactions to Solzhenitsyn and the early shifts in critical opinion of him after the publication of the *Letter*, which was the first example of his political thought viewed by the West.

Solzhenitsyn was famous in the West long before the *Harvard Address*. By that time he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature (1970), and the failure of his struggle with the Soviet authorities to attend the ceremony in Stockholm had been well-publicised.<sup>1</sup> His novels *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962), *Cancer Ward* (1968), *The First Circle* (1968) and *August 1914* (1972) were available in English and were well-known,<sup>2</sup> as

---

<sup>1</sup> See Leopold Labedz ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), 241-264. For a complete chronology of Solzhenitsyn's life until he settled in Vermont in 1976, see Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> For example, *One Day* went through eighteen printings by Bantam between February 1963 and May 1972; The Bodley Head, in conjunction with Penguin Books, ran *Cancer Ward* through eight

were several of his short stories including *Matryona's House* (1973) and *For the Good of the Cause* (1973). In addition, he was only the second Soviet to be exiled since 1917 (the first was Trotsky in 1929)<sup>3</sup> and only the third foreigner to be offered honorary American citizenship (after the Marquis de Lafayette and Winston Churchill).<sup>4</sup> It was, however, the 1973 release of the first two of the six-volume *Gulag Archipelago*, his extraordinary and ground-breaking history of Stalin's work camps and the realities of life under Soviet communism, which catapulted Solzhenitsyn even more prominently into the Western public eye.<sup>5</sup> The Russian-language publication rights were given to the YMCA Press in Paris, but the English translation was available from Harper & Row by late 1974.<sup>6</sup> When Solzhenitsyn was exiled in February of 1974, he was already well-known and certainly admired; he was widely regarded in America as a man worthy of respect. He had waged a war, single-handedly it seemed, against the monolithic Soviet state and had won. An

printings between 1968 and 1974; Harper & Row supported four printings of *The First Circle* between September 1968 and January 1969 before Bantam continued with seven more before October 1969; and Farrar, Straus and Giroux ran five printings of *August 1914* between August and December 1972 before Bantam was permitted to put the novel through six more by March 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Astrachan, "Trotsky Last to be Expelled," *The Washington Post* (14 February 1974), A21.

<sup>4</sup> Six days after Solzhenitsyn's exile to West Germany, Republican Senator Jesse Helms brought a resolution to the American Congress which proposed that the dissident author should be made an honorary citizen of the United States of America. The resolution was supported by twenty-four co-sponsors, including Senator Bob Dole of Kansas. In October of 1974, the resolution was passed unanimously in the Senate, but was blocked in the House of Representatives two months later by Robert McCloskey, the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. McCloskey protested the proposal on the grounds that Churchill and Lafayette had demonstrated a "commitment to aid and effect America's destiny," but that there was "no evidence that Solzhenitsyn...has made such a commitment or even desires to do so." Helms and his co-sponsors were furious, but McCloskey succeeded in having the resolution 'killed' in the House. See John B. Dunlop, "Solzhenitsyn's Reception in the United States," in John B. Dunlop (et al) ed. *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 25, 34.

<sup>5</sup> *Gulag* was released illegally (as all Russian works published outside the Soviet Union were) in the West after the KGB located and tortured a friend of Solzhenitsyn's who had been hiding a copy of the manuscript. She then either committed suicide or was murdered (this is unknown), and Solzhenitsyn smuggled the manuscript to France for publication. See Aleksandr I.

Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 347.

<sup>6</sup> The YMCA Press was an organisation sponsored by the Russian Student Christian Movement or Russkoye studencheskoye Khristianskoye dvizheniye. It was founded in Paris in 1924 and its

exile, true, but an exiled *hero*. As such, the West was certainly more familiar with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in 1974 than he was with them.

However, the evidence which demonstrates the extent to which some American intellectuals were already mistaken about Solzhenitsyn and his views, especially those political in nature, may be found even in the early pieces published at that time. For example, Joseph Alsop of *The Washington Post* lauded him in January 1974 as a "great man," and "the Soviet dissident who is also the last truly great prose writer in the grand tradition of Western letters."<sup>7</sup> *Time* described him as "one of the world's great writers, an authentic hero in an age sorely lacking in them," then told its readers that while in the Soviet Union Solzhenitsyn had been "the spiritual leader of Russia's dissident democratic movement."<sup>8</sup> The presumptions that Solzhenitsyn was both pro-democracy and the heir of the *Western* literary tradition were equally misleading, and Alsop and Blake exemplified the characteristic haste with which some American writers were ready to adopt the embattled author as one of their own. Very few commentators thought to examine Solzhenitsyn's thought in detail, preferring to impose their own unsubstantiated (and extraordinarily simplistic) vision of him on the general public. Thus in the immediate post-exile period Solzhenitsyn was most commonly identified as a Nobel Prize-winner, an acclaimed author, and a courageous dissident who had been exiled from his cherished homeland for advancing the cause of liberalism, democracy and freedom in the oppressive Soviet Union. When Solzhenitsyn shared the full extent of his thought with them (and particularly his views of Western decline) beginning with his 1974 essay *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, the reality of his beliefs was shocked all but those who had cautioned against wholesale veneration of the writer from the beginning.

As early as 1973, some commentators noticed that Solzhenitsyn's views would likely disappoint all but his most ardent American fans. For example, in a review of

---

press established in 1925, specialising in works by Russian Orthodox Christians. See Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 693 and 872.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Alsop, "Solzhenitsyn's Warning," *The Washington Post*, (2 January 1974), A19.

August 1914, literary critic Edward E. Ericson observed that "so far Solzhenitsyn, as a dissenter against totalitarianism, has received almost uniformly good press from American liberals. Yet with each passing work and pronouncement of his, it becomes increasingly clear that he is at odds with them."<sup>8</sup> Ericson's comment did not provoke a defensive response from any of Solzhenitsyn's fans; however, in the days after Solzhenitsyn's deportation, those who expressed doubts about the famous Russian did not go unnoticed by the American press.

A case in point was the publication of an article by William Safire in *The New York Times* five days after Solzhenitsyn's exile. Safire declared that "I am the first on my block to feel misgivings about Alexander Solzhenitsyn." He accused Solzhenitsyn of seeking martyred status in the West and predicted that "cracks will appear in the pedestal we have built for him. Politicians who praise him now for his opposition to oppression may discover, to their dismay, that their chosen symbol does not share their admiration for democratic principles....the adversary of our adversary is not always our ally."<sup>10</sup> Safire was, at least initially, one of the very few who were willing to doubt openly Solzhenitsyn's compatibility with life in the West. The prevailing tendency in the period immediately after Solzhenitsyn's expulsion was to defend him, regardless of the uneasiness his critics were beginning to feel about his politics. John Leonard, also of *The New York Times*, roundly upbraided Safire; while he conceded that Safire's doubts were "reasonable enough," he likened Safire's critique to "Dennis the Menace badmouthing St. Francis of Assisi." Furthermore, Leonard wrote that "[a] West expansive enough to permit the fiction of Spiro Agnew to be published by *Ladies Home Journal* and *Playboy Press* is surely permissive enough to swallow the witness of Solzhenitsyn."<sup>11</sup> Thus the mainstream American press made its first foray into the gradually escalating, though still vague, debate regarding

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Blake, "Solzhenitsyn: An Artist Becomes an Exile," *Time* 103:8 (1974), 28.

<sup>9</sup> Edward E. Ericson, "Solzhenitsyn and the Truth of History," *The Intercollegiate Review: A Journal of Scholarship and Opinion* 18 (1973), 181-182.

<sup>10</sup> William Safire, "Solzhenitsyn Without Tears," *The New York Times* (18 February 1974), 25.

Solzhenitsyn. Not until the publication of the *Letter* were Solzhenitsyn's critics given concrete material for their critiques.

Many American intellectuals first began to suspect that Solzhenitsyn in the West would prove more difficult than envisioned when, mere weeks after his expulsion from the Soviet Union in February of 1974, he authorised the publication of his pamphlet *Letter to Soviet Leaders* in the original Russian in the West, quickly followed by several English translations. The *Letter* was labelled by *Time* (which published excerpts from it, as did *The New York Times*) as "apocalyptic"<sup>12</sup> and as "an act of audacity unequalled in recorded history" by William F. Buckley, Jr.<sup>13</sup> Originally sent privately to the members of Leonid Brezhnev's inner circle in September of 1973, the *Letter* was ignored by the Soviet government. When it was released in the West following his exile, it became Solzhenitsyn's first post-expulsion publication.<sup>14</sup> As his program for the future of Russia it was not written for the West, and the first English copies used in the press were almost certainly published without Solzhenitsyn's authorisation.<sup>15</sup> From the content and tone of the *Letter* it seems clear that the neither the West in general nor the United States of America in particular were, at least initially, the intended audience of his words. Why Solzhenitsyn released it in the West at all is unknown; a likely explanation is that he sincerely believed that it would be well-received.<sup>16</sup>

The bulk of the *Letter* is concerned with the problems which faced Russia in the 1970s and Solzhenitsyn's ideas regarding "how to avoid the catastrophe with which [Russia] as a nation is threatened."<sup>17</sup> However, Solzhenitsyn's proposals for the future of Russia are not of concern here; rather, our focus is on a small portion of the *Letter* which

<sup>11</sup> John Leonard, "Solzhenitsyn as a Media Creature," *The New York Times Book Review* (3 March 1974), 39.

<sup>12</sup> Editorial, "Words of Advice from the Exile," *Time* 103:10 (1974), 44.

<sup>13</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., "Solzhenitsyn's Modest Proposal," *National Review* 26:13 (1974), 390.

<sup>14</sup> Harry Schwartz, "Solzhenitsyn Without Stereotype," *Saturday Review* (20 April 1974), 24.

<sup>15</sup> See Scammell, 869.

<sup>16</sup> The only likely place where Solzhenitsyn might have explained is in his autobiography, *The Oak and the Calf*, yet he makes no effort to do so.

assumed great significance to his reputation in the United States. Specifically, a brief glance at Solzhenitsyn's earliest published views on the reality, manifestations and cause of Western decline serve as a helpful introduction to an analysis of the *Harvard Address*, where he articulated this theme in greater detail. The initial American reactions to this first evidence of Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of specifically the United States are also useful for preliminary observations on the larger patterns of popular opinion which evolved over and around Solzhenitsyn during the next few years. Here the intent is simply to introduce those controversial sections of the *Letter* and various American reactions to it.

After several introductory comments to the Soviet leaders, Solzhenitsyn leapt immediately into the body of the *Letter*. In the first chapter, entitled "The West on Its Knees," Solzhenitsyn delivered compliment after backhanded compliment to the Soviet government concerning its enviable position as a world power. He compared the Soviet Union favourably to the "Western world, [which] as a single, clearly united force, no longer counterbalances the Soviet Union, indeed has almost ceased to exist...For no external reasons, the victorious powers [of World War Two] have grown weak and effete."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps this observation alone would have resulted in some American hostility, but Solzhenitsyn continued on to write that

the catastrophic weakening of the Western world and the whole of Western civilization is by no means due solely to the success of an irresistible, persistent Soviet foreign policy. It is, rather, the result of a historical, psychological and moral crisis, affecting the entire culture and world outlook which were conceived at the time of the Renaissance and attained their peak of their expression with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.<sup>19</sup>

The assertion that the West was both weaker than the Soviet Union coupled with the contention that its vaunted legacy of the Enlightenment was responsible for this weakness was a nasty surprise for those American intellectuals such as Blake and Alsop

<sup>17</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, trans. Hilary Sternberg (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 11.

who had assumed that Solzhenitsyn valued the West as much as they presumably did. Solzhenitsyn's view of the decline of the West (though the dominant theme of the *Harvard Address*) was quickly abandoned in the *Letter* in favour of the analysis of what Solzhenitsyn perceived to be the critical issues facing Russia (such as war with China). In 1974, Solzhenitsyn was far more concerned with Russia's domestic crises than the fate of the West, and the most important problem, in his view, was that of ideology—the destructiveness and futility of Marxism. Yet, although his assertion of the weakening of Western society represented only a very small part of this work, it received most of the attention which the *Letter* generated in the American press, at the expense of its primary theme, the future of Russia.

Solzhenitsyn's condemnation of Marxism was noted and generally approved of in the United States; no one objected when he called it a "decrepit," "hopelessly antiquated" and "primitive economic theory"; nor was there any discernibly negative response to his urgings for the Soviet leaders to "[c]ast off this cracked Ideology....[to] pull off and shake off from all of us this filthy sweaty shirt of Ideology which is now so stained with the blood of those 66 million that it prevents the living body of the nation from breathing."<sup>20</sup> It was, rather, the form of government that Solzhenitsyn proposed to replace Marxist totalitarianism which caused irreversible damage to his reputation in the United States. He did not present democracy as the alternative to communist totalitarianism as many in the West doubtless expected him to, thus effectively dispelling "the notion that if a Soviet dissident intellectual is against the Government, he is automatically for the West and democracy."<sup>21</sup> Instead, Solzhenitsyn mocked the "turbulent 'democracy run riot'" of the West and a political system which forces politicians and citizens to "nearly kill themselves

<sup>19</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>21</sup> Nan Robertson, "A Russian Nationalist Looks to the Past," *The New York Times* (3 March 1974), 26.

over an electoral campaign, trying to gratify the masses."<sup>22</sup> He also criticised the efficacy of the electoral process:

[E]ven in an established democracy we can see many instances when a fatal course of action is chosen as a result of self-deception, or of a random majority caused by the swing of a small and unpopular party between two big ones—and it is this insignificant swing, which in no way expresses the will of the majority (and even the will of the majority is not immune to misdirection), which decides vitally important questions in national and sometimes even world politics.<sup>23</sup>

If this was not sufficiently damaging to Solzhenitsyn's reputation among those Americans who took great pride in their democratic system—a system which, in 1974, was struggling at great cost to win a bloody war against Communism in Vietnam—the revelations of Nan Robertson in the *New York Times* two days after the *Letters* publication certainly were. In an article entitled "Letter Softened By Solzhenitsyn," Robertson announced that the author had "deleted and softened some denunciations of Western democracy" in the Russian version made available to Western publishers. In the original version, Solzhenitsyn had referred explicitly to the United States as an example of inefficient democracy and stated that it "has always been ungovernable." This was replaced in the second version with the comment cited above regarding the hysteria of election campaigns.<sup>24</sup> Missing too from the second version was Solzhenitsyn's contention that the main flaw of Western democracy was "its lack of an ethical base." In Solzhenitsyn's view, a democratic society whose highest law is that of the Constitution is premised on an amoral legality: such a society is reduced to governing solely through a set of common rules. This eliminates any moral imperative of political parties to improve government, thus reducing their purpose to only "[engaging] in a conflict of interests, interests and nothing higher."<sup>25</sup> Solzhenitsyn had not publicised his decision to edit the

<sup>22</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 50-51.

<sup>23</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 50-51.

<sup>24</sup> Nan Robertson, "Letter Softened By Solzhenitsyn," *The New York Times*, (3 March 1974), 9.

<sup>25</sup> As quoted in Theodore Shabad, "Solzhenitsyn Asks Kremlin To Abandon Communism And Split Up Soviet Union," *The New York Times* (3 March 1974), 26.

*Letter for his Western audience, and the reason is not known. What seems clear, however, was that Americans were angry at what seemed to be a clear-cut case of literary backstabbing.*<sup>26</sup>

Even worse (considering his American audience) was that Solzhenitsyn did not recommend democracy as an alternative to totalitarianism, regardless of how flawed the former appeared. Instead, he proposed the institution of an authoritarian order vaguely reminiscent of pre-1917 Russia. Despite Solzhenitsyn's belief that authoritarian rule was the most credible system of government in a post-Communist era, and perhaps was Russia's destiny,<sup>27</sup> he was quick to point out that, *if* authoritarianism was the best system for Russia, the type of authoritarianism was of crucial concern. Arguing that "it is not authoritarianism itself that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted upon us," Solzhenitsyn proposed a benevolent authoritarian order with actual adherence to a very much revised Constitution, the renunciation of Marxism, Communism and the Communist Party, among numerous other reforms.<sup>28</sup> An "ethical authoritarian" system, he thought, would decimate the Soviet inheritance of lawlessness and totalitarianism.<sup>29</sup> A moral system guided by strong leadership would nevertheless decentralise its power among local levels of government, thereby avoiding the corruption inherent to the possession of sole, arbitrary power. Finally, it was to be based on the precepts of Christian love: "Let it be an authoritarian order, but one founded not on an inexhaustible 'class hatred' but on love of your fellow men—not of your immediate entourage but sincere love for your whole people."<sup>30</sup> The differences between Solzhenitsyn's concept of 'ethical authoritarianism' and the Western understanding of 'totalitarianism' were likely clear enough to the author, but proved too subtle to be appreciated by his American

<sup>26</sup> Scammell, 869.

<sup>27</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 54. A Soviet Constitution had been enacted by Stalin in 1936, however it "has not been observed for a single day, and for that reason does not appear to be viable." See *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> John B. Dunlop, "Solzhenitsyn in Exile," *Survey* 21:3 (1975), 141.

<sup>30</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Letter*, 56.

critics, some of whom promptly denounced him as a reactionary throwback to tsarist Russia.<sup>31</sup>

The *Letter to Soviet Leaders* laid the foundation of Solzhenitsyn's public career in the United States. On the whole the American critics, some angrier than others, expressed their dissatisfaction with the famous Russian exile who disparaged democracy and favoured authoritarianism, leading one observer to lament that the *Letter* "did more damage to Solzhenitsyn's reputation in the West than did all the rest of his writings put together."<sup>32</sup> This is an exaggeration; it is clear that it was in fact the *Harvard Address*, and not the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, which ruined Solzhenitsyn's credibility in the United States. Nevertheless, the *Letter* represented the first opportunity for those suspicious of the exiled writer's politics to excoriate him publicly, and thus to set a precedent for the future.

The *Letter* was almost universally dismissed in the United States as a text not worthy of serious consideration by intellectuals of any calibre. Indeed, the most common inclination was to attack Solzhenitsyn the man in lieu of prolonged examination of his ideas. For example, literary critic Francis Barker called the *Letter* "absurdly idealist" and wrote that "to follow the development of the writing of Alexander Solzhenitsyn is to record a process; it is to chart the degeneration of a radical opposition to the Soviet bureaucratic regime into an authoritarian moralizing."<sup>33</sup> Historian Abbott Gleason dismissed Solzhenitsyn as a "nine-day wonder" and reported that "he has been called reactionary, crazy, utopian. One friend, with whom I discussed the *Letter* over lunch, observed that if the Russian leadership had been smarter, they would have shipped him out long before

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Jeri Laber, "The Real Solzhenitsyn," *Commentary* 57:5 (1974), 35.

<sup>32</sup> As quoted in Donald W. Treadgold, "Solzhenitsyn's Intellectual Antecedents," in John B. Dunlop et al., eds., *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 262.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Barker, *Solzhenitsyn: Politics and Form* (London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1977), 66.

they did, so that he could fully discredit himself before the world.<sup>34</sup> One of the more extensive dissections of Solzhenitsyn's faults was published by political columnist Jeri Laber in *Commentary*. In addition to accusing him of seeking "martyrdom" and of writing "dull and ponderous" books, Laber painted the author of the *Letter* as an xenophobic Russian chauvinist, a reactionary authoritarian longing for an "idealized Russia, a Russia purified, turned inward away from the West."<sup>35</sup> Many writers dismissed the *Letter* entirely and attacked Solzhenitsyn on personal terms. This tendency marked the beginning of the period when the American press (and, to a certain extent, its academics) felt compelled to defend themselves against the words of Solzhenitsyn.

The backlash against Solzhenitsyn after the publication of the *Letter* proved mild when later compared to that after he presented his *Harvard Address*. Some critics in 1974 tended to be more forgiving of his political views on the basis that he was a great writer and/or that he was a great man. Denounced in some publications, still others tried to counteract the impact of his distasteful political views with their admiration of Solzhenitsyn the Author or Solzhenitsyn the Dissident; even Laber, clearly derisive of the *Letter* as well as its author, conceded Solzhenitsyn's personal courage.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, a trend developed to a certain extent in some American intellectual circles: to defend Solzhenitsyn. The *Letter* posed the first serious problem for those inclined to defend Solzhenitsyn in the United States. Generally, those intellectuals seemed to reconcile their original perceptions of Solzhenitsyn with the ideas of the *Letter*, to convey their disapproval of the document itself, and still to support the author despite it. Eventually a satisfactory path was found: the answer was to 'rationalise' or make excuses for the more unfortunate aspects of Solzhenitsyn's thought.

The most common method through which to put Solzhenitsyn in the 'proper' perspective was to cite his nationality and therefore his obviously Russian prejudices. A

---

<sup>34</sup> Abbott Gleason, "Solzhenitsyn and the Slavophiles," *The Yale Review: A National Quarterly* 65:1 (1975), 62.

<sup>35</sup> Laber, 35.

classic example of this defence was used by political analyst Harry Schwartz, who warned those who read the *Letter* to remember that Solzhenitsyn was "after all, a Russian, formed and molded by the very different and extraordinarily harsh conditions of his motherland. And his political views reflect his life experiences in Russia and his hopes and fears for the future of his beloved land."<sup>37</sup> Conservative *National Review* political columnist William F. Buckley, Jr. agreed with Schwartz, pointing out that the *Letter* "[was] composed, for all that it is sublime in its impact, of Russian earth....It could not have been written except by a Russian who had experienced Soviet history in every pore, and felt in his soul the great weight of Russian history."<sup>38</sup> As a final example of this method, *Time* magazine informed its readers that the *Letter* had obviously been "written more in sorrow than in anger," and so presented Solzhenitsyn's proposals and opinions within the context of a man deeply fearful of the future of his country, a patriotic fear many Americans would likely have comprehended.<sup>39</sup> Schwartz, Buckley and the editors of *Time* were thus able to proffer Solzhenitsyn's unsavoury ideas as by-products of his 'Russian-ness,' effectively eliminating any need to deal with the *Letter* further on its own terms. The necessary perspective from which to understand it and its author seemed clear.

If American intellectuals were now wary of venerating Solzhenitsyn (having been led astray by their own assumptions once before), some were certainly inclined to wait him out, to reserve their final judgements, perhaps in the hope that the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* was an aberration. Their attempts to 'rationalise' Solzhenitsyn accomplished two things: they diminished the damage done to his reputation from the *Letter*, and they began to separate Solzhenitsyn from the mainstream Western political consciousness to which he had never belonged anyway. Solzhenitsyn's thought was not made any more comprehensible to the American public; it was merely presented as 'foreign' and quite removed from American experience. Here was the first opportunity for these intellectuals

<sup>36</sup> Laber, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Schwartz, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Buckley, 390.

to explore the roots of Solzhenitsyn's thought and to alleviate the sudden confusion surrounding his ideas, and it was ignored.

The *Letter to Soviet Leaders* is an important component in the study of Solzhenitsyn's relations with his American audiences. It previewed his thoughts on the West which assumed a more complex form four years later; it also provoked the first reactions of American media and academia, laying the foundation for their reactions to the *Harvard Address* in 1978. Solzhenitsyn distracted his American audiences from his views regarding the decline of the West in the intervening years by involving himself in controversies surrounding the wisdom and workability of American-Soviet détente, and by speaking repeatedly and passionately of the dangerous reality of Soviet Communism. However, his return to the theme of Western deterioration in the *Address* had the effect of almost turning back the clock; his thoughts and the responses of his critics were very similar to those of four years earlier.

---

<sup>39</sup> "Words of Advice from the Exile," 44.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE HARVARD ADDRESS AND THE EARLY RESPONSES**

The best thing to be found in the world is a vision.

—Ivan Kireevsky (1827)

Tell me what you think of Solzhenitsyn and I'll tell  
you who you are.

—Stephen F. Cohen (1977)

The *Harvard Address* was the single-most important document in the reshaping of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual reputation in the United States. As was stated above, it is the contention of this thesis that the *Address* was the crucial turning point in Solzhenitsyn's relationship with his American critics. This chapter provides an overview of the most pertinent and controversial sections of that speech and then examines the patterns and trends of the early responses to it. The aim here is not necessarily to prove or disprove the validity of those responses presented here; rather, what follows is intended to illustrate the various reactions of primarily members of the American press to the *Address* in an effort to demonstrate its significant role in the deterioration of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual relationship with his American critics.

Solzhenitsyn prefaced his remarks in Harvard Yard by stating that although his speech contained "a measure of bitter truth," it was offered by "a friend, not...an adversary."<sup>1</sup> His reassurances were wasted; critics of the speech were not distracted by his declaration of friendly intent. It is hardly surprising, as Solzhenitsyn chose as his theme the decline of the West and provided specific American examples as illustrations of this phenomenon. Although he referred throughout the speech generally to 'the West,' those specific remarks, his audience and the fact that his American critics interpreted the speech to be an unmistakable attack on the United States makes its examination within an *American*, and not a *Western*, context a worthwhile endeavour. There was little in the speech which American intellectuals felt was not directed at the United States, and they reacted accordingly.

Solzhenitsyn's overall theme of Western decline was not immediately apparent. He began with the observation that "the split in today's world is perceptible even to a hasty glance," and continued through the introductory sections of the speech to comment on the divisions among the world's nations. It was not until the fourth section, entitled

---

<sup>1</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart: The Harvard Address," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections* (Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 3.

'Well-Being', that Solzhenitsyn began to develop his critique of the West. He opened with an accounting of the major examples of the "fragility"<sup>2</sup> of Western society, and then proceeded through his analysis of the roots of that fragility. He concluded with a vague yet revealing proposal for the future path of Western rehabilitation. The symptoms of Western decline which Solzhenitsyn chose to discuss are diverse; the most controversial and therefore most relevant are his views on Western materialism, legalism and freedom, including freedom of the press.

Solzhenitsyn identified the first important indication of the weakening of the West as its preoccupation with material needs, and he established as his basis for this criticism that article of the American Declaration of Independence which guarantees the right of every citizen to life, liberty and happiness. In Solzhenitsyn's view, 'happiness' in Western society has become "debased," its achievement dependent upon the ever-increasing drive to accumulate material possessions. Western-style constitutional freedom, as he understood it, ensures the possession of material goods, and with material goods comes the fulfilment of the right to happiness. Solzhenitsyn disapproved of 'happiness' as a central goal in life, and he reminded his audience of a psychological aspect of materialism which he felt had been "overlooked;" the ever-increasing desire for further material gratification in the race for "a better life" often results in anxiety and depression, "though it is customary to conceal such feelings."<sup>3</sup>

Solzhenitsyn argued that excessive materialism also leads individuals into intense competition with each other, which "comes to dominate all human thought and does not in the least open a way to free spiritual development." Solzhenitsyn's perception of the West as spiritually weak informs the rest of his thought presented in the *Address*, and its first manifestation appeared in his opposition to materialism as the ruling arbiter of 'happiness'. Solzhenitsyn thought that spiritual development should be the first order of life, not the ceaseless accumulation of material goods. If material well-being is the

---

<sup>2</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 3-4.

primary goal, how then, he asked, are individuals to transcend such banal ambitions in order to, if needed, "risk one's life for the greater good and particularly in the nebulous case when the security of one's nation must be defended in an as yet distant land?"<sup>4</sup> Solzhenitsyn clearly believed that selfish individualism, rooted in a materialistic interpretation of 'happiness', is one of the primary self-destructive characteristics of modern Western societies.

Solzhenitsyn contended that legalism represented another ill-conceived and overvalued concept in Western societies. Western societies are based on the rule of law, and in theory, he heartily endorsed this. A major theme of the *Gulag Archipelago* is the misery, suffering and corruption which inevitably results in lawless societies. Solzhenitsyn admitted in Harvard Yard that "a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed." However, he also argued that "a society with no other scale but the legal one is also less than worthy of man" because

a society based on the letter of the law and never reaching any higher fails to take advantage of the full range of human possibilities. The letter of the law is too cold and formal to have a beneficial influence on society. Whenever the tissue of life is woven of legalistic relationships, this creates an atmosphere of spiritual mediocrity that paralyzes man's noblest impulses.<sup>5</sup>

As with materialism, Solzhenitsyn objected to 'excessive' legalism on the grounds that it represses man's inherent spirituality by presenting itself as the sole determinant of human behaviour. He concluded his remarks on legalism with the observation that Western legalism is fundamentally ineffective, an ironic but direct result of the constraint which it places on popular morality. For example, the determination of what is 'right' and 'wrong' rests with the law, and yet the laws which set "the limits of human rights and rightness...are very broad." Thus individuals have become adroit at "using, interpreting and manipulating" the law at the expense of the collective—an unmistakable reference to

<sup>3</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 8.

lawyers—as he noted that laws “tend to be too complicated for an average person to understand without the help of an expert.” Furthermore, the process of conflict resolution is naïvely simplistic: whoever is judged to be in the ‘right’ before the law wins, with no imposition of moral categories or judgement. One is not required to ponder whether or not the victor (or loser) was *morally* in the ‘right’ (or ‘wrong’), nor is there is counsel of “self-restraint or a renunciation of these rights, no call for sacrifice and selfless risk: this would simply sound absurd. Voluntary self-restraint is almost unheard of.”<sup>6</sup> Here Solzhenitsyn’s primary area of criticism was that the Western legal system has divorced itself from moral standards in the assessment and punishment of crime. Not only are Western laws virtually incomprehensible to the laymen which they purport to guide and protect, but legal determination of innocence or guilt rests on a system which ignores moral laws and refuses to educate the people in the value of self-restraint.

Solzhenitsyn believed that morality teaches such restraint, but as long as formal, codified legalism supplants it as the primary arbiter of human behaviour it is powerless to affect the course of Western societies. This bothered him greatly; Solzhenitsyn believed that moral considerations must inform all social systems, and therefore legalism alone is an unacceptable and ultimately impotent basis for human government and life. To illustrate this conviction, he pointed to the manipulation of law possible only in the absence of co-existing moral standards: “An oil company is blameless when it buys up an invention of a new type of energy in order to prevent its use. A food product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his produce to make it last longer: after all, people are free not to purchase it.”<sup>7</sup> Solzhenitsyn’s argument was that as Western systems of government and social structures derive freedom from legality, they must develop, maintain and protect it in conjunction with moral principles.

The conventional Western concept of ‘freedom’ also points to the certain demise of its civilisation. Solzhenitsyn held that “administrative power” in the West had proven

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

easy to circumvent, and he blamed the constant abuse of freedom and manipulation of the law on the endless pursuit of individual rights. He lamented that the "defense of individual rights has reached such extremes as to make society as a whole defenseless against certain individuals," and he spoke of the need for a shift from the current Western emphasis on human 'rights' to human 'obligations'. His preference for a morally-based socio-political consciousness is clear; he was greatly concerned with the almost limitless vista of 'freedom' available to Western individuals. As an example of the abuse of freedom he cited "the misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, such as motion pictures full of pornography, crime and horror." Although Solzhenitsyn was well aware of the contention that such immorality, permissible by constitutional freedom, is theoretically "counterbalanced" by the right of the individual not to expose him- or herself to such films, he did not agree with it, and it is clear that this argument merely reinforced his view that a society which is solely based on legalism is unable "to defend itself against the corrosion of evil."<sup>8</sup>

Another target of Solzhenitsyn's criticism was the virtually unlimited freedom of the press in the West. (Solzhenitsyn was careful to explain that by 'press' he meant all forms of media). Here his primary complaint was that the press is extremely powerful but irresponsible with its power, and that it appeared to be unencumbered by any sense of morality or "responsibility for distortion or disproportion." He pointed out that if a member of the press is responsible for printing inaccurate information, and thereby "misleading public opinion," he or she is not obliged or even encouraged to correct the mistake or to apologise, because "this would damage sales." In the technological world, accurate information is demanded and expected by the public, and quickly. Solzhenitsyn contended that "to fill the voids," the Western journalist relies on "guesswork, rumors and suppositions," and that when faulty information is presented as fact, it is accepted as such by the reading public. It is then extraordinarily difficult to supplant the first erroneous 'fact'

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

with a later 'truth'. Thus the press has a unique power; it "can act the role of public opinion or miseducate it." In short, he accused the media of sensationalism, greed and, above all, of being irresponsible with the enormous power entitled to it by law—which cannot be rescinded. He judged the power of the press to exceed that of "the legislature, the executive and the judiciary," and asked, "According to what law has it been elected, and to whom is it responsible?"<sup>9</sup>

Solzhenitsyn concluded his overview of these serious problems in Western societies by informing his audience that he could not "propose the West, such as it is today, as a model for my country." He contended that Russia, as a result of its terrible suffering over the course of the twentieth century, was far superior spiritually than the West, and he told those in Harvard Yard that "the Western system in its present state of spiritual exhaustion does not look attractive." Solzhenitsyn argued that a Russian's sense of humanity was far stronger than that of a Western person, and that he feared that Russia's adoption of the Western system would provoke the same pattern of spiritual decline. Despite the tyranny and lawlessness of the Soviet Union, the implementation of a system premised on "such a soulless and smooth plane of legalism" would not be an improvement. Russia needed more:

After the suffering of decades of violence and oppression, the human soul longs for things higher, warmer, and purer than those offered by today's mass living habits, introduced as by a calling card by the revolting invasion of commercial advertising, by TV stupor, and by intolerable music.<sup>10</sup>

That the West was in decline was obvious to Solzhenitsyn and, he said, should be equally obvious to anyone who had studied history. Western societies possess all of the "tell-tale symptoms by which history gives warning to a threatened or perishing society," such as a diminishing in the quality of artistic life and a decline in "great

<sup>8</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

statesmen". Often, he counselled, the signs are much more overt: a clear signal of social decline in the United States was the fact that after only a few hours without electric power its citizens began "looting and creating havoc. The smooth surface film must be very thin, then, the social system quite unstable and unhealthy."<sup>11</sup>

Solzhenitsyn characterised the overall malaise resulting from the West's social and political problems as "a decline in courage". He commented that this phenomenon "may be the most striking feature than an outside observer notices in the West today," and he charged the West with losing its civic courage. Solzhenitsyn blamed the "ruling and intellectual elites" for this loss of courage but exonerated the general public, whom he felt was sufficiently "courageous" but, unfortunately, lacking in any "determining influence on public life." He accused Western political elites with the creation of increasingly "self-serving rationales" in order to intellectually and morally justify "state policies on weakness and cowardice." At times, he conceded, they were capable of acting with "boldness and inflexibility" but only when facing "weak governments" or "doomed currents which clearly cannot offer any resistance." In contrast, these same elites usually withdrew weakly from any forceful challenge, growing "tongue-tied and paralyzed" when faced with strong governments, dedicated terrorists or relentless aggressors. He concluded by asking "[m]ust one point out that from ancient times a decline in courage has been considered the first symptom of the end?"<sup>12</sup>

Solzhenitsyn turned to recent American history to demonstrate an example of the West's loss of courage. After refuting George Kennan's famous dictum that "we cannot apply moral criteria to politics" with the argument that when "we mix good and evil, right and wrong, [we] make space for the absolute triumph of absolute evil in the world," Solzhenitsyn chose to focus on the failure of the United States to liberate Vietnam from Communism. He told his audience that the members of the American anti-war movement

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 5-6.

were "accomplices in the betrayal of Far Eastern nations, in the genocide and the suffering today imposed on thirty million people there."

Do these convinced pacifists now hear the moans coming from there? Do they understand their responsibility today? Or do they prefer not to hear?<sup>13</sup>

For the United States, then, Vietnam clearly represented a "failure of nerve" with grave implications even beyond the devastation and enslavement of the Vietnamese; those who had succeeded in their campaign to abandon the tiny battle with Communism far from home had in fact succeeded only in bringing the still-imminent larger war that much closer to their own shores. Vietnam, Solzhenitsyn said, had been the first shot fired in what promised to be a war with global implications, but it had failed "to mobilize the [United States'] courage." If, he asked, America could not win a small skirmish against Communism, how could it hope to prevail in the future?<sup>14</sup>

Solzhenitsyn portrayed the West as socially, spiritually and *psychologically* weak, its nations unsuitable models for the eventual metamorphosis of the Soviet Union. They had lost their will power and were each, therefore, missing what Solzhenitsyn regarded to be the only true defence a nation has: the willingness of its citizens to die for its cause. Commenting that "there is little such readiness in a society raised in the cult of well-being," Solzhenitsyn presented Americans with the only options left to them; delaying tactics, "concessions [and] betrayal." Because the West had, in the decades following the second World War, allowed its international influence to wane in favour of stability and the maintenance of the status quo, its self-imposed inertia and loss of courage became its most obvious "symptom of a society [which] has ceased to develop."<sup>15</sup>

Solzhenitsyn then turned his analysis to the cause of Western decline, the root of its contemporary weakness in the face of Soviet Communism, and the heart of the *Harvard Address*. To answer the question "how did the West decline from its triumphal

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>14</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 14-15.

march to its present debility?" Solzhenitsyn told his audience that since there had been no discernible "fatal turns and losses of direction" in Western development which would explain the Western decline, the answer to this crucial problem must therefore lie "at the root, at the very foundation of thought in modern times":

I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was born in the Renaissance and has found political expression since the Age of Enlightenment. It became the basis for political and social doctrine and could be called rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy: the proclaimed and practiced autonomy of man from any higher force above him. It could also be called anthropocentricity, with man seen as the center of all.<sup>15</sup>

Solzhenitsyn thus placed the blame for the weakened state of the West unequivocally on the shoulders of the Enlightenment and humanistic, rationalistic thought. This section of the *Harvard Address* formed the central basis on which Solzhenitsyn evaluated Western societies. All other criticisms, as detailed above, stemmed from one monumental mistake: the adoption of the precepts of the Enlightenment—with its emphasis on "man" as the highest being in the universe as opposed to God—as the basic stricture upon which to build society. He conceded that this 'mistake' was probably inevitable; the Middle Ages had clearly come to its end, "having become an intolerable despotic repression of man's physical nature in favor of the spiritual one." Regrettably, Western societies had then retreated to the other extreme, effecting the repression of human spirituality in favour of materialism. Humanism refused to admit to the intrinsic presence of human evil, and earthly gratification in the name of 'happiness' became the order of the day: Western peoples learned to worship themselves and "everything beyond physical well-being and the accumulation of material goods, all other human requirements and characteristics of a subtler and higher nature, were left outside the area

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 16.

of attention of state and social systems, as if human life did not have any higher meaning."<sup>17</sup>

But, Solzhenitsyn admonished, early democracies, and notably "American democracy at the time of its birth," placed at the centre of political and social life the belief that all human rights derive from God, as humanity is God's creation. Freedom "was given to the individual conditionally, in the assumption of his constant religious responsibility." Such was the basis of the American experiment. Furthermore, those early founders would never have accepted that freedom should be given "with no purpose, simply for the satisfaction of his whims." Yet this is precisely what happened, and thus "a total emancipation occurred from the moral heritage of Christian centuries with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice." Humanity gradually came to choose materialism over God and forgot its ultimate debt to divinity: responsibility. Finally, Solzhenitsyn lamented that all of the progress of the twentieth century could not eradicate or replace the accumulated moral poverty of the West.<sup>18</sup>

This was the great "calamity" of our century, this "autonomous irreligious humanistic consciousness." Humans, imperfect beings riddled with the sins of "pride, self-interest, envy" and others became the predominant entity in the universe. This mistake, committed innocently enough two hundred years earlier, is now exacting a heavy price. "We have enriched our experience," Solzhenitsyn admitted, but

We have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in politics and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. It is trampled by the party mob in the East, by the commercial one in the West.<sup>19</sup>

He firmly believed that the attainment and furthering of spirituality should be the primary goal of the individual, not 'happiness'. After all, "if, as claimed by humanism, man

<sup>17</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 16-17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

were born only to be happy, he would not be born to die." Humans have only limited time on earth and limitless time beyond it; therefore, it should be our task to try to achieve in our lifetimes moral growth, not moral decline, so as to "leave life a better human being than one found it." The scale of values in the West must be re-evaluated to place greater emphasis on the development of the human spirit, on morality and on selflessness. This re-evaluation is as unavoidable and vital as the questions this century has raised: "Is it true that man is above everything? Is there no Superior Spirit above him? Is it right that man's life and society's activities should be ruled by material expansion above all? Is it permissible to promote such expansion to the detriment of our integral spiritual life?"<sup>20</sup>

Solzhenitsyn ended the *Harvard Address* on a note of hope. Despite the gravity of the world situation, he believed that humanity was capable of struggling out of the crisis of the modern age to create a better, more moral world. He envisioned societies which would not stifle human physicality as in the Middle Ages, nor deny or repress innate human spirituality as does our contemporary life. Solzhenitsyn compared this struggle to an "ascension...similar to climbing onto the next anthropological stage. No one on earth has any other way left but—upward."<sup>21</sup> Thus the predicament of the West, he believed, was not insurmountable; as will be demonstrated in the fourth chapter, Solzhenitsyn places great faith in the human spirit and its capacity to triumph over adversity. Although the decline of the West was the necessary effect of its self-imposed irreligiosity, Western civilisation could reverse its downward spiral through a reaffirmation of the primacy of God over Humanity. Salvation of the West, then, was not a mere matter of changing politics or shifting governments, but a social and moral regeneration possible only through Christianity.

---

<sup>19</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>21</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 20.

The *Harvard Address* is Solzhenitsyn's most comprehensive analysis of the decline of the West. This theme was not a new one; nor was it unprecedented in Solzhenitsyn's works, as evidenced by excerpts from the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*. And yet his American critics, especially members of the press, expressed surprise and dismay at Solzhenitsyn's words. It is evident that the majority of those who took umbrage at the *Address* had forgotten the controversial *Letter* altogether; it is rarely mentioned despite its clear intellectual relationship with the *Address*. It has been previously asserted that, had American intellectuals sought to explore the roots of Solzhenitsyn's thought in 1974, the reaction to the *Harvard Address* would have been considerably less severe. The early reactions to the *Address*, represented here by selected members of the press, demonstrate quite clearly the antipathy directed toward Solzhenitsyn in the days and weeks following the speech. He remained misunderstood and wrongly contextualised, and his public reputation in the United States suffered irrevocably as a result.

As literary critic Edward E. Ericson observed, the clearest pattern in the early responses to the *Address*<sup>22</sup> was to first honour Solzhenitsyn himself and then "move to a rejection of one or more of his points."<sup>23</sup> For example, political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau wrote that "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's greatness as a man and as a writer is not open to doubt, but he has put into question...his competence as a political philosopher."<sup>24</sup> Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and former Assistant Secretary of State Archibald MacLeish evaluated Solzhenitsyn as "one of the most admirable men alive...a man of noble spirit and unrivaled courage—a truly heroic figure who has suffered something close to martyrdom for his convictions,"<sup>25</sup> and then accused him of abject ignorance of the realities of American life. Finally, an excellent illustration of this trend was a *New York Times* editorial which began with the statement that "If anyone has

---

<sup>22</sup> 'Early responses' are defined here as those published within a month of the *Harvard Address*.

<sup>23</sup> Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993), 100.

<sup>24</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, "What Solzhenitsyn Doesn't Understand," *The New Leader* LXI:14 (1978), 12.

earned the right to call the West to a moral reckoning, it is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," and then labelled Solzhenitsyn's world-view as "far more dangerous than the easygoing [American] spirit which he finds so exasperating."<sup>26</sup> Approbation of Solzhenitsyn as a man worthy of personal admiration coupled with criticism of his ideas was common in the immediate post-Address period. Although doubtful of Solzhenitsyn's ultimate relevance and applicability to the West and the United States in particular, some American commentators were certainly willing to affirm his stature as a compelling voice worthy of a hearing, if nothing else.

Concomitantly, purely personal attacks on Solzhenitsyn after the Address were rare, and in this the reception of the Address differs significantly from the earlier reaction to the *Letter to Soviet Leaders*. An exception was James Reston's column in *The New York Times* published on 11 June, in which he played on the title of the Address, 'A World Split Apart,' by writing that the speech "sounded like the wanderings of a mind split apart."<sup>27</sup> Another was Colman McCarthy of *The Washington Post*, who also made a few personal comments, but only that Solzhenitsyn was a "negativist" who "[came] on as a grouch."<sup>28</sup> Aside from Reston and McCarthy, the majority of commentators chose to focus more on the speech than the man; this is also in marked contrast to the stereotypical responses after the *Letter*—indicating a shift in Solzhenitsyn's intellectual relationship with his American critics in 1978.

The press, whose opinions formed the bulk of the early responses, did not react altogether predictably in the pattern of attention its members chose to pay to certain parts of the speech in lieu of others. Surprisingly, Solzhenitsyn's charges of American cowardice in Vietnam did not, among the early responses, provoke much anger. Once again, James Reston was an exception; he castigated Solzhenitsyn for terming the

<sup>25</sup> Archibald MacLeish, "Our Will Endures," in Berman, 57.

<sup>26</sup> Editorial, "Solzhenitsyn," *The New York Times* (13 June 1978), A18.

<sup>27</sup> James Reston, "A Russian at Harvard," *The New York Times* (11 June 1978), E21.

<sup>28</sup> Colman McCarthy, "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Misspent Rage," *The Washington Post* (21 June 1978), A25.

American withdrawal from Vietnam a "hasty capitulation,"<sup>29</sup> with the exclamations "Hasty? After a generation of slaughter? Lack of courage? It was precisely because the American people still heard some echo of their spiritual heritage and belief in the sanctity of individual life that they rose up against the genocide Mr. Solzhenitsyn condemns."<sup>30</sup> Another was *The Washington Post*, whose editor accused Solzhenitsyn of speaking "for boundless cold war."<sup>31</sup> However, a more typical response was one similar to that of Mary McGrory of *The Washington Star*, who claimed not to be surprised by Solzhenitsyn's views on American failures in Vietnam because she had recognised early on that he "would fight the Communists on every front."<sup>32</sup> On the whole, the press did not appear to consider Solzhenitsyn's comments on American cowardice in Vietnam as particularly significant; one suspects that by 1978 the well-debated issue of American involvement there had ceased to be truly newsworthy.

Nor did Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of the American press cause any real consternation. Again, there were exceptions such as Russian-American publisher Olga Carlisle, who reported in *Newsweek* that Solzhenitsyn "was scornful of our free press, a legacy from the age of the Founding Fathers which has been perverted by our godlessness."<sup>33</sup> A characteristically hostile Reston contributed, pointing out snippily that "at least [Solzhenitsyn] was allowed to say all these things. On commencement day at Moscow University, if they have one, the 'spiritual superiority' of the Soviet Union probably wouldn't have allowed it."<sup>34</sup> Other comments were much milder; for example, the *National Review* offered only a half-hearted response, protesting that the charge that the Western press was more powerful than the government "cannot simply be asserted."<sup>35</sup> Some commentators even accepted the criticisms as valid; one was McGrory, who found that

<sup>29</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Reston, E21.

<sup>31</sup> Editorial, "Mr. Solzhenitsyn as Witness," *The Washington Post*, in Berman, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Mary McGrory, "Solzhenitsyn Doesn't Love Us," *The Washington Star*, in Berman, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Olga Carlisle, "Solzhenitsyn's Invisible Audience," *Newsweek*, in Berman, 39.

<sup>34</sup> Reston, E21.

<sup>35</sup> Editorial, "Thoughts on Solzhenitsyn," *National Review*, in Berman, 32.

she could not refute the charges because "at any one time, all of [the criticisms] are true about...our trade."<sup>36</sup> Most, however, ignored Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of the press altogether, preferring to focus on other, presumably less time-worn issues.

A prevailing sentiment was one of disappointment. Colman McCarthy of *The Washington Post* complained that "[r]eading the Harvard speech of Alexander Solzhenitsyn left me with the same feeling I had when I learned that Anita Bryant didn't like gays and Bob Hope was a right-wing Republican. I wanted the one to just keep on singing about oranges and the other to stick to being funny. And now I wish that Solzhenitsyn could stay in my mind as the towering writer who can rally outrage against the tyrants of the Kremlin."<sup>37</sup> The *Christian Science Monitor* acknowledged that Solzhenitsyn "is too courageous...not to be listened to when he speaks out about the West," but that it was disheartening "to realize anew that this towering Russian writer still interprets his new democratic world through the lens of the authoritarian Soviet experience."<sup>38</sup> These comments reveal important insights into the expectations which certain American intellectuals had had of Solzhenitsyn, likely based on the fact that by 1978 he had been living in the United States for two years and in the West for three. For example, McCarthy had clearly preferred to view Solzhenitsyn as a courageous fighter against an American foe of long standing, Soviet Communism. Such a persistently one-dimensional view of an obviously multidimensional man signifies a reluctance on the part of some commentators to examine the complexities of Solzhenitsyn's thought. McCarthy and like-minded others were comfortable with him as long as he fought the common enemy; when he focused on the West, they rejected him.

The editorial comment in the *Christian Science Monitor* for also useful in identifying another aspect of American media perceptions of Solzhenitsyn. Some assumed that since Solzhenitsyn had been living within the American democratic system

<sup>36</sup> McGrory, 60.

<sup>37</sup> McCarthy, A25.

<sup>38</sup> Editorial, "Solzhenitsyn: Pro and Con," *The Christian Science Monitor* (12 June 1978), A11.

for two years, he would have by then adapted to it and grown to love, perhaps even venerate the United States as a matter of course. There is a certain inherent arrogance in the expectation that a Russian exile would necessarily come to prefer a free democratic society over his own, that he would be able or even willing to move easily from the culture which had informed everything he lived, thought and wrote for fifty-five years to adopt the views and beliefs of his host country in two. The American media underestimated the impact of Solzhenitsyn's 'Russian-ness' on his thought and received an unpleasant shock. McGrory documented this herself: writing about Solzhenitsyn's "negative view of our society," she wrote that "the unspoken expectation was that after three years in our midst, he would have to say we are superior, that our way is not only better, but best....We were, whether we admit it or not, waiting to hear him say it."<sup>39</sup> Critical understandings of Solzhenitsyn as 'ungrateful' to the United States for the freedom which he enjoyed while its guest formed a significant refrain among the early responses to the *Address*, and his perceived denigrations of the West further strengthened some critics' convictions that Solzhenitsyn was fundamentally incompatible with Americans and American life.

As in the aftermath of the *Letter*, the days and weeks following the *Address* saw very few attempts to defend Solzhenitsyn from his critics. No longer was his 'Russian-ness' a means by which to rationalise his thought, becoming instead an excellent method by which to censure it. The only discernible attempt to garner open approval for the speech was made by *Washington Post* columnist George F. Will, who likened Solzhenitsyn to "both the dove in Genesis that found no rest, and the prophets who allowed no rest. As a prophet should, he has...stirred a reaction that reveals the complacency of society."<sup>40</sup> Although Solzhenitsyn has never used the term 'prophet' to refer to himself, several American intellectuals seemed eager to apply it to him either favourably or unfavourably, depending on their point of view. For example, a July 21 editorial in the *National Review* criticised certain parts of the speech enthusiastically, but

---

<sup>39</sup> McGrory, 61.

credited Solzhenitsyn with being “a prophet willing to split the twentieth century like an old tin can, reopening the enduring questions of political and religious thought.”<sup>41</sup> Arthur Schlesinger Jr. helped to historicise Solzhenitsyn’s religious beliefs in light of those of the Founding Fathers, but also succeeded in belittling and deliberately overdramatising the message of the *Address*, writing that Solzhenitsyn had

renewed an ancient and, in those precincts, forgotten tradition of apocalyptic prophesy. Not only looking but sounding like a figure from the Old Testament, he preached an impassioned sermon, warning America of the progress of evil and the imminence of judgement, urging Americans to repent their sins, forsake their idols and prostrate themselves before the ‘Supreme Complete Deity’.<sup>42</sup>

Although Schlesinger seemed to accept Solzhenitsyn’s status as a prophet without question, he did warn his readers that despite the fact that “when Solzhenitsyn speaks, the world has a duty to listen, [it] must listen with care, understanding that prophecy has its own dogma and that prophets are fallible.”<sup>43</sup> In contrast, Coleman McCarthy angrily refuted any claims that Solzhenitsyn was a prophet. He argued that “although [Solzhenitsyn’s] beard and finger-waving may be in the tradition of prophets, that is about all.” McCarthy preferred ‘true’ prophets like “Teresa, Francis, Martin Buber and others” who understood that human beings are imperfect and remained nicely non-judgemental. Prophets such as these had believed in helping humankind and stood in sharp contrast to Solzhenitsyn, who “appears more intent on kicking us into the ground than offering us any ideas on raising ourselves up.”<sup>44</sup> As is evident, positing Solzhenitsyn as a prophet did not deter his critics significantly.

Efforts to find a way to reject the speech were entirely more prevalent. The deeply religious basis of the speech was particularly difficult for American commentators,

<sup>40</sup> George F. Will, “Solzhenitsyn’s Critics,” *The Washington Post*, (18 June 1978), B7.

<sup>41</sup> Editorial, *National Review*, in Berman, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “The Solzhenitsyn We Refuse to See,” *The Washington Post*, in Berman, 63.

<sup>43</sup> Schlesinger, 63.

who were clearly uneasy about being "forced to defend that secular humanism which was for them an article of faith in the modern American gospel."<sup>45</sup> Others decried Solzhenitsyn's obvious ignorance of the United States, arguing that if he had truly understood it and its people he would never have said the things he had. Most were simply disappointed that he had not said what they had expected he would, and that he was clearly not what they had thought he was. Overall, the reactions to the *Address* were defensive; it is clear that his American critics felt strongly provoked to defend their country on various bases. It is telling, however, that few openly denied Solzhenitsyn's charges of Western decline.

Some chose to reject the speech as unoriginal; for example, Frank Getlein dismissed Solzhenitsyn's thought as "mostly standard conservative, occasionally reactionary claptrap that many of the graduates, one imagines, have been hearing from their older male relatives all their lives and that can be heard any day here in the public rooms of the Army-Navy Club."<sup>46</sup> Others vehemently denied that the West was in decline at all. Hans J. Morgenthau contended that "one cannot help being taken aback by the flimsiness, the ignorance and the unfairness of his arguments purporting to demonstrate the moral and political decline of the West."<sup>47</sup> Another excellent example of such a view came from First Lady Rosalynn Carter, who held a press conference in Washington on 20 June to refute Solzhenitsyn herself. She asserted that "I am not a Pollyanna about the mood of my country, but I can tell you flatly: the people of this country are not weak, not cowardly and not spiritually exhausted," and she reminded readers of *The Washington Post* of the "pervasive desire among Americans to live a useful life, to correct the defects in our society and to make our nation even greater than it already is." The First Lady also rejected Solzhenitsyn's contention that "he can feel the pressure of evil across our land.

<sup>44</sup> McCarthy, A25.

<sup>45</sup> Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Frank Getlein, "Holy Russia Rises in Vermont," *Commonweal* 105:13 (1978), 422.

<sup>47</sup> Morgenthau, 12.

Well, I do not sense that pressure of evil at all.<sup>48</sup> Morgenthau and Carter were exceptions. Most critics recognised that the theory of Western decline had not originated with Solzhenitsyn and that it possibly had some credibility; however, this did not appear to dispose them to accept it from the exiled Russian who apparently could not appreciate the virtues of the West as well as he could deride its weaknesses.

One of the more common assertions made by the press in the days following the Address was that Solzhenitsyn would not have said the things he did if he had known anything about the United States at all. Therefore, he should not have taken it upon himself to criticise it as an uninformed outsider. In the *Christian Science Monitor*, Norman Cousins wrote that "the American people don't mind being told harsh things about themselves," and that "they have listened to detractors such as de Tocqueville and Burke with an attentive ear." However, he wrote pointedly, those writers "carefully studied American society before saying anything about it."<sup>49</sup> Nine days earlier an editorial in the *Monitor* had lamented that "if [Solzhenitsyn] could get on a Greyhound bus and take himself unabtrusively across the country...he might find a great deal less 'moral poverty' than he now believes is there."<sup>50</sup> Finally, Archibald MacLeish remarked that that Solzhenitsyn "reproves us for faults which would not be faults if he could talk to his neighbors in Vermont, to his fellow writers, his fellow men."<sup>51</sup> This was a common refrain. If Solzhenitsyn only knew them, he would understand that the United States had reserves of strength and moral resilience with which to ensure its national and cultural longevity.

---

<sup>48</sup> Edward Walsh, "A Rebuttal to Solzhenitsyn," *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1978, A2. It is interesting to note that at one time one of Rosalyn Carter's favoured dinner guests was the Reverend Jim Jones, "who won her approval and companionship at a private dinner, and was sitting there a single heartbeat from the President." Carter considered Jones to be a man passionately concerned with the preservation of America's greatness. After Jones had committed "one of the most lurid mini-holocausts in history" in Guyana, the First Lady was disbelieving: "Unbelievable...I can't see how anyone could do anything like that." Perhaps this sheds new light on her statement that she was unable to sense the "pressure of evil at all." See Jack Jones, "Solzhenitsyn's Warning: A Secular Reinterpretation," *Chicago Review* 32:3 (1981), 147.

<sup>49</sup> Norman Cousins, "The Verdict on Alexander Solzhenitsyn," *Christian Science Monitor*, (23 June 1978), 23.

<sup>50</sup> Editorial, *The Christian Science Monitor*, (12 June 1978), A11.

<sup>51</sup> MacLeish, 58.

Another prevalent early trend was to reject Christianity as an acceptable basis upon which to judge the West. For example, Olga Carlisle wrote in *Newsweek* that Solzhenitsyn had sounded like "a fire-and-brimstone preacher out of the Puritan era, like a latter-day Cotton Mather,"<sup>52</sup> and *The New York Times* branded him a religious "zealot" who did "the world no favor by calling up a holy war" against Communism. The latter then branded Solzhenitsyn a "True Believer," who believed himself "to be in the possession of The Truth and so sees error wherever he looks."<sup>53</sup> *The Christian Science Monitor* questioned Solzhenitsyn's grasp of theology and clearly suspected that he had it all wrong:

He seems to equate the West's enormous material progress with loss of moral and spiritual vitality. We would argue the reverse. It is the spiritual concepts of Christianity together with the political and social ideas of the Enlightenment that freed the individual and unleashed his capacities for progress in every field, including the economic one. The message of Christianity is not that mankind must do without but that it ought to seek *first* the things of the spirit.<sup>54</sup>

Charles Frankel, Lyndon Johnson's ex-Secretary of State, stated unequivocally that "[w]hat Solzhenitsyn has in his mind's eye is not simply that more of us should be religious. It is a theocracy."<sup>55</sup> And finally, Mary McGrory managed to present Solzhenitsyn's Christian beliefs as a premise by which to forgive (and, one senses, to forget) his comments in the *Harvard Address*; she suggested to the readers of her column in the *Washington Star* that "maybe we would be better off if we stopped grappling with the politics and even the morality of what Solzhenitsyn said at Harvard and look at it in a different way—as the personal statement of a conservative, religious and terribly homesick Russian."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Carlisle, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Editorial, "Solzhenitsyn," *The New York Times* (13 June 1978), A18.

<sup>54</sup> Editorial, *The Christian Science Monitor*, (12 June 1978), A11.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Frankel, "An Image of Heaven," in "Is Solzhenitsyn Right?" *Time*, 111:26 (1978), 18.

<sup>56</sup> McGrory, 61.

Solzhenitsyn's religiously-based critique of the West was not wholly rejected; he received support from, predictably, members of the clergy. One such member was Father Theodore Hesburgh, then President of Notre Dame University, who credited Solzhenitsyn with speaking "some highly unfashionable and unpopular truths...subjects for serious meditation if one is to escape the moral mediocrity of our times."<sup>57</sup> On the whole, however, Christianity, with its concomitant perceptions of good and evil, was accepted by only a few as a valid tool of social and political analysis. At best it seemed antiquated, at worst it supported growing convictions that Solzhenitsyn was nothing more than a reactionary theocrat with strong anti-Western (and by association, anti-American) convictions.

The early responses reveal several important patterns in the deterioration of critical opinion toward Solzhenitsyn. The impulse to defend the exiled author had all but vanished. In 1974 Solzhenitsyn had had his status as a great writer and a courageous dissident to deflect emerging criticism; by 1978 these popular perceptions of him had waned considerably. The period of adjustment had ended, and American intellectuals had certain expectations of Solzhenitsyn which the *Harvard Address* had clearly failed to fulfil. In addition, the bases of attack had become stronger; no longer was Solzhenitsyn 'explained' by his 'Russian-ness' but condemned for it. He had become the outsider who stubbornly refused to adapt. Solzhenitsyn's obvious Christianity provided another focus for angry intellectuals as the defenders of a predominantly secular society were able to blame his religion for his unacceptable views on the causes and nature of the decline of the West. 1978 is therefore significant as the year when Solzhenitsyn tumbled from his Western pedestal.

Those intellectuals who chose to ignore the speech proved to be the most benign. Those who criticised Solzhenitsyn's 'Russian-ness,' his religiosity and his apparent inability to understand the multifaceted and mutually balancing aspects of Western life

---

<sup>57</sup> Theodore Hesburgh, "Unpopular Truths, in "Is Solzhenitsyn Right?" *Time*, 111:26 (1978), 18.

provoked the ire of the press and propelled some members of American academic ranks toward closer inspection of the increasingly infamous author's views. In retrospect, study of the later, primarily academic responses to the *Harvard Address* are more useful in an assessment of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual relationship with his American critics than the initial (and often superficial) impressions of the press. American academics constituted Solzhenitsyn's most important audience; their opinions and studies of his thought provided the final determination of Solzhenitsyn's significance as a Russian thinker in the United States. The following examination of them suggests that Solzhenitsyn was ultimately disregarded by the West as a result of his critics' inability to contextualise him and thus to understand his thought and work.

## **CHAPTER THREE: LATER RESPONSES TO THE HARVARD ADDRESS**

The sea doesn't drown you, it's the puddle that does it.

—Russian proverb

The central aim of this thesis is both to argue and demonstrate the need for the contextualisation of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and the *Harvard Address* in Christian terms. This chapter examines the later, primarily academic responses to that speech with the goal of illuminating patterns in the ways in which American intellectuals themselves sought to contextualise Solzhenitsyn and his thought.<sup>1</sup> The intent here is not necessarily to prove or disprove the opinions and arguments presented below, but rather to establish certain patterns in American academic analyses of the author and the *Address*. The somewhat superficial criticisms of the press in the days and weeks following the *Address* gave way to efforts by intellectuals both to reconcile Solzhenitsyn's thought with their own and to either build some sort of premise for his acceptance as a legitimate thinker in the West, or to argue utter his irrelevance to the modern West. It is clear that most American critics failed to recognize Solzhenitsyn as a fundamentally Christian thinker and the *Harvard Address* as a Christian document. A full exposition of the impact of his personal religiosity on his works was never attempted; we have only the disjointed and usually disappointing attempts by unabashedly secular intellectuals to argue that the faults of Solzhenitsyn's thought were rooted in his religion. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that the later responses ultimately provide only inadequate contextualisations of Solzhenitsyn in secular terms.

Nevertheless, the critical academic analyses of the *Harvard Address* illustrate that some American intellectuals made a genuine, if ultimately unsatisfying, effort to understand Solzhenitsyn's thoughts on the West. If very few dismissed the *Address* entirely, an even fewer number accepted it as valid commentary on the state of the West without reservation. The vast majority simply sought, in differing ways, to present Solzhenitsyn as a writer of consequence, a thinker who deserved respect though his opinions of the West were often faulty. How American intellectuals approached the

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Later responses' are considered here as those which followed the *Harvard Address* by months or years.

problem of Solzhenitsyn is important because this reveals their own expectations of him, as well as making evident the wide spiritual and ideological gulf between the author and his critics. The grounds upon which they concluded that his misinterpretations could be contextualised as the product of his own circumstances, separate from true Western reality, indicate clearly that Solzhenitsyn was a virtual enigma to his intellectual audience.

Few of those who critiqued the *Harvard Address* in later months and years were openly hostile toward the speech. Soviet affairs journalist George Feifer and historian William H. McNeill are the only exceptions worthy of note, and their bases of criticism differ significantly. For example, Feifer's comments in *Harper's* have a definite personal edge to them, perhaps not surprising given his rocky personal history with Solzhenitsyn as one of his early biographers.<sup>2</sup> He declared that "Although books about the angry genius will be written for another hundred years, the hypocrisy of his moralizing against the West is now clear. His thundering Harvard address last year attacked sins of the Western Sodom he considered more evil, in subtler ways, than his spiritual home in the archipelago." He further accused Solzhenitsyn of having "a profound mistrust of the institutions vital to a free society, his fire and brimstone reveal an unwillingness to accept that free speech requires a tolerance of drivel, stupidity and opposition, including

---

<sup>2</sup> In early 1972 Solzhenitsyn had been piqued by news from his friend Veronica Stein that George Feifer and his partner David Burg, who were nearing completion with their biography of him, were venturing in to areas of Solzhenitsyn's life beyond his literature. In an interview with Western correspondents, Solzhenitsyn accused the pair of "making up fairy tales about me [and] collecting lavatory-wall gossip" for their book. In February 1972 Veronica Stein gave a copy of the Burg-Feifer manuscript which she had received from them (she had helped Feifer with his research) to Zhores Medvedev to check for errors, as his English was superior to hers. Medvedev was also a friend of Solzhenitsyn, and was in fact working on his own biography of the author, published later that year as *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovich*. Medvedev was disturbed by its apparent inaccuracies and reliance on rumours, and informed Solzhenitsyn of his misgivings. By June 1972, the Steins were travelling in the United States, and at the behest of Solzhenitsyn Veronica released a statement to the press in which she said that Burg and Feifer had relied heavily on gossip and speculation in writing the book and that they had refused pleas from her to revise it. She labelled the biography as "misleading, superficial and tactless," and said that "Its principal harm...lies in the fact that some of thesis conjectures, rumours, and riddles...can provide a pretext for a new wave of persecutions against the writer..." The book was nonetheless published in August 1972, but received mixed reviews and little fanfare. See Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 780-782.

opposition of Solzhenitsyn.<sup>3</sup> Feifer went on to write that Solzhenitsyn's much-lauded personal "ethical virtue" was in fact nothing more than megalomania, and that the author's political ideas clearly lacked "moral strength" and "practical wisdom," a sure indication that he was intellectually irrelevant to both the West and Russia.<sup>4</sup>

Feifer was not, however, prepared to analyse the *Address* itself to any significant extent, preferring instead to devote the bulk of his article, "The Dark Side of Solzhenitsyn," to a systematic appraisal of Solzhenitsyn's personal faults. For example, he cited the 'fact' that "from an early age, Solzhenitsyn had a personal despotism that frightened his friends."<sup>5</sup> Feifer's thoughts on the *Harvard Address* are noteworthy here only because his antipathy toward the author was total. He lent no credence to any of Solzhenitsyn's ideas and belonged to that small but persistent group in American intellectual circles who seemed intent on destroying Solzhenitsyn's reputation as an author and as a thinker. In this respect, Feifer's article may be regarded as a thematic continuation of the work of earlier commentators such as Francis Barker, Jeri Laber and James Reston.

Historian William H. McNeill's criticisms of the *Harvard Address* represent a second trend in the clearly hostile later responses. He simply believed, as did many discussed in the previous chapter, that Solzhenitsyn was simply wrong. Religion was not, in his opinion, an appropriate basis upon which to judge the social and political health of the West, leading him to characterise the speech as nothing more than an "Orthodox Christian's caricature of our society." Solzhenitsyn's call for the West to rehabilitate itself in religious terms was also unacceptable because the West was not an heir to a traditionally religious society as Russia had been before 1917. Therefore, Solzhenitsyn was guilty of "imposing the values of one style of civilization upon another."<sup>6</sup> McNeill contended that the exiled author did not in fact understand anything about the West, and

<sup>3</sup> George Feifer, "The Dark Side of Solzhenitsyn," *Harper's* 260:1560 (1980), 50.

<sup>4</sup> Feifer, 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

certainly not the premise on which it had been founded, as exemplified by his comments on the cowardly American withdrawal from Vietnam:

If American ideology means anything, it requires us to permit majorities in other lands to choose whatever form of government they prefer. If that chosen form turns out to be tyrannous and wicked, if it tramples on human rights, still we must continue to believe that to champion freedom and humanity does not require an armed crusade to enforce an American standard of justice and political propriety.<sup>7</sup>

McNeill's response was more obviously defensive than Feifer's, who had chosen to attack Solzhenitsyn personally. Instead, McNeill reverted to the familiar refrain of asserting Solzhenitsyn's ignorance of Western values. Of the two, only McNeill was primarily concerned with the *Harvard Address* itself. Feifer all but ignored the speech in his zeal to discredit Solzhenitsyn, zeal born almost certainly from his difficult personal history with the author. However, despite its specific focus, McNeill's article is rather superficial and does not merit a prolonged examination; nor do the others. Their inclusion here is only intended to indicate a relatively minor but persistent trend present in both the pre- and post-Harvard periods to attack Solzhenitsyn with few reservations on personal grounds, with little consideration extended to his actual thought. Those critics who involved themselves in more serious examinations of the *Address* are those who determined Solzhenitsyn's place in American historiography, and they may be categorised loosely as belonging to one or both of the following groups: those who concentrated on refuting Solzhenitsyn and the *Address* on various grounds, and those who attempted to 'explain' him.

The balance of the later responses which sought to refute the *Address* assumed a pattern of analysis which seems almost as if it were reached by consensus. Most critics opened with an affirmation of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual importance, then devoted most of

<sup>6</sup> William H. McNeill, "The Decline of the West," in Ronald Berman, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections* (Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 123.

<sup>7</sup> McNeill, 124.

their articles to refuting various aspects of his thought. After attempting to contextualise him in some way, it was customary to conclude with a reaffirmation of Solzhenitsyn's status as a worthy commentator on the West. The most popular area of dissension with the *Harvard Address* was predictably the author's views on the Enlightenment; however, criticisms of his perception of democracy and the Western conception of 'happiness' also garnered attention, and the reactions included below are intended to demonstrate two common mistakes which commentators made when studying the speech.

Harvard law professor Harold Berman refuted what he perceived to be Solzhenitsyn's conception of American 'happiness' as necessarily equated with the accumulation and possession of material goods. He admitted that this point could be regarded as "carping," but he nevertheless pointed to the obvious historical discrepancies existing between Solzhenitsyn's definition of Western happiness in the late twentieth century as opposed to what that term had meant to the Founding Fathers in the eighteenth. Berman argued that 'happiness' had been interpreted by the authors of the Declaration of Independence as "a secular form of blessedness or salvation, namely, an aspiration to the good life," which he identified as education and "improvement of social conditions".<sup>8</sup> He ended his brief examination of this small point with the argument that Solzhenitsyn's linking of American materialism and loss of courage was also inaccurate because the Founding Fathers had in fact been "prepared to defend their goals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness with "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor."<sup>9</sup>

Berman's thoughts here are intended to illustrate a common mistake on the part of American intellectuals attempting to understand the *Harvard Address*. Comprehension of the speech was hindered considerably by the fact that throughout it Solzhenitsyn referred to the 'West' in two different ways: in historical terms as "a spiritual/cultural

---

<sup>8</sup> Harold J. Berman, "The Weightier Matters of the Law," in Berman, 103.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

entity," and in modern terms as "a political entity".<sup>10</sup> This was not always recognised, and Solzhenitsyn did not indicate when he was alternating between meanings. Berman's refutation of Solzhenitsyn's interpretation of the materialistic nature of American perceptions of 'happiness' errs in several places. First, Solzhenitsyn had taken some care to distinguish between the mores of the Founding Fathers and their late twentieth-century descendants at the very end of the *Address* in his discussion of the responsibilities of freedom. This indicates that he was navigating his way, however haphazardly, between historical and contemporary analysis. In his discussion of 'happiness' he does not make this distinction clearly, and Berman wrongly attributes his linkage of materialism and 'happiness' as part of his analysis of the historical period, when Solzhenitsyn was actually targeting that trend as part of the contemporary period.

Second, although the Founding Fathers were indeed prepared to defend the precepts of life, liberty and happiness with "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor," Berman mistakenly used this dedication to refute Solzhenitsyn's perception of the *current* malaise. In fact, it can only be applied to its proper historical context, the eighteenth century, and therefore there was no basis for such a refutation. Berman's own assertion of the differences in the definition of 'happiness' in these periods is valid, but he was unable to determine when Solzhenitsyn was speaking of one and not the other.

Another common criticism focused on Solzhenitsyn's understanding of the nature of Western democracy. For example, philosopher-historian Sidney Hook found Solzhenitsyn's concept of democracy to be problematic as a cause of society's ills. He used Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of the abuses of the freedom of the press to support his contention that democracy cannot be cited as an agent of American decline, and he pointed out that freedom of the press is not as abused in other democratic countries such as England or Canada.<sup>11</sup> Hook conceded that there are fundamental weaknesses

---

<sup>10</sup> Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Sidney Hook, "Solzhenitsyn and Western Freedom," *World Literature Today* 53:4 (1979), 575.

inherent in institutionalised democracy, but he contended that the solution was not to abandon the democratic process. In addition, he charged Solzhenitsyn with failing to recognise that democratic systems, however flawed, have one crucial point in their favour: they have the ability, through the will and participation of the people, to right wrongs. Hook referred to this ability as "political faith," and argued that despite the fact that "the will of a majority...is not infallible," free democracies invest their citizens with the right to lobby for change and recognise the power of public opinion. Therefore, such systems are able to correct their own missteps, to remedy their own ills. That Solzhenitsyn missed this point led Hook to wonder if the exiled author believed, "as do all totalitarians from Plato to the present day, that most human beings in the community are either too stupid or too vicious to be trusted with self-government?"<sup>12</sup> Hook seemed to be arguing here that because Solzhenitsyn had clearly neglected to appreciate democracy's built-in capacity for self-correction, his views on good and effective government must necessarily be suspect.

Hook may have had a valid point with his observations on democracy, but his implicit association of Solzhenitsyn with past and present defenders of totalitarianism implies a grave misunderstanding of his life and works. There is no doubt that Solzhenitsyn stands firmly against totalitarianism—eight years of prison, three years of exile and nearly fifteen years of persecution by the Soviet government is more than enough proof of this. Perhaps Hook did not appreciate the very real ideological differences between totalitarianism and ethical authoritarianism (as supported by Solzhenitsyn in the *Letter*), in which case he ought not have undertaken an analysis of the *Harvard Address* at all. However, it is far more likely that Hook shared another popular though mistaken American intellectual conviction: if one is opposed to democracy, one is necessarily then for its logical extreme opposite, totalitarianism. This is a reversal of Nan Robertson's remark that Americans had assumed, in 1974, that if "the Soviet dissident

---

<sup>12</sup> Hook, 576.

intellectual is against the [Soviet] Government, he is automatically for the West and democracy,"<sup>13</sup> and this would appear to be the most likely basis for Hook's mistaken presumption of Solzhenitsyn's possible totalitarian sympathies.

Yet Solzhenitsyn did not posit, in the *Address* nor in any of his other works, wholesale rejection of democracy as a form of government. Rather, he advocated the reform of many of its abuses in order to make it more moral, and, therefore, in his eyes, more effective. Solzhenitsyn was arguing for good democracy—not its abolition. The text of the *Harvard Address* lends no credence to Hook's defensive assumption of possible totalitarian sympathies, but it does demonstrate Solzhenitsyn's real concerns regarding the impact of democracy as *it then stood* on the spiritual and moral strength of the Western peoples. Such misunderstandings regarding the nature of Solzhenitsyn's political views contributed greatly to popular perceptions of him as anti-democratic, when a close reading of the speech would have helped to disprove such suspicions almost immediately.

The emphasis which Solzhenitsyn placed on the Enlightenment as the most important cause of Western decline attracted criticisms from many American intellectuals. The general approach seemed to have been to validate that influence on the formation of Western culture, and therefore to defend formal secularism. Some commentators asserted repeatedly that religion could have no appreciable role in the political processes of the West, particularly of the United States. Others, in contrast, pointed to the acknowledged religiosity of the American Founding Fathers, and still others attributed Solzhenitsyn's urgings for a moral and religious rebirth as an unfortunate aspect of his Orthodoxy, of his 'Russian-ness'. It is striking that only one of the later responses to the *Harvard Address* (that of Michael Novak, detailed below) concurred with Solzhenitsyn's assessment of the detrimental impact of the Enlightenment on the spiritual and moral lives of the Western peoples.

---

<sup>13</sup> Nan Robertson, "A Russian Nationalist Looks to the Past," *The New York Times*, (3 March

Sidney Hook provided the most comprehensive analysis of how Solzhenitsyn had erred in his argument that Enlightenment-inspired irreligiosity was at the root of Western decline, writing on this point that he found Solzhenitsyn to be "profoundly, demonstrably and tragically wrong." He interpreted the author's meaning to be that "the basic cause of our world in crisis is the erosion of religion, the decline in the belief in the existence of a Supreme Power or Entity, and the reliance not on transcendental faith but upon human intelligence as a guide to human nature and conduct."<sup>14</sup> Hook refuted this in several ways. First, he argued that no world religion, including Judaism, Christianity or Islam has ever propounded as a central tenet that community organisation through voluntary self-rule is the best form of government, but neither do they condemn or support feudalism or slavery. Therefore, this traditional non-involvement of religious institutions in the political affairs demonstrates that religion was voluntarily separate from government. Whether or not God exists is an issue which concerns citizens, but it is irrelevant for politics "except when God is so defined that his moral attributes require the existence of a democratic system."<sup>15</sup> According to Hook, then, Western separation of church and state had been effected with the assent of religious leaders themselves. In any case, Hook argued that democracy is inherently religious in that it recognises humanity's innate capability for evil (and so safeguards society through law). What further political significance, he asked, could religion have in the West?

Second, not only is theology irrelevant to social systems, including democracy, it is also fundamentally immaterial in considerations of what constitutes morality. As "men build gods in their own moral images," humans themselves determine what constitutes morality according to their own needs, and then attribute their perceptions of good and evil to the God of their choice to legitimise their beliefs. Hook argued that religion is merely a tool, however useful, for humanity to assert its own mores on its own

<sup>14</sup> 1974), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Hook, 576.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

communities. We have decided that God is incapable of evil, thus evil must stem from us, and Hook contended that this view became part of Christian theology because we determined that it should be. Concomitantly, he explained that "what makes an action morally valid is not a command from on high or anywhere else, but the intrinsic character of the action and its consequences for human weal and woe."<sup>16</sup> Although we believe that evil is inherent in all, humans themselves decide what constitutes an 'evil' act and what does not, and what is moral and what is not. Hook believed that religion is merely the voice humanity gives to posit its own beliefs. A simple example would be the following: if a human community decides that murder constitutes a threat to its members, then murder becomes an 'evil' and is therefore 'immoral'. That community then expresses its opposition to murder in recognisably religious terms, "Thou shall not kill," to validate its mandate. Humanity fears violence and so it evokes the moral voice of God to mask that fear.

Hook presented the concept of morality in such a way that it became nothing more than a method by which the behaviour of people may be manipulated by others, a form of self-rule without any connection to a higher realm. This is a defence of secularism at its highest level; if humans determine morality and God is merely a figurehead, then, logically, humans may determine what role religion and morality should play in society as a whole. Therefore, religion can be legitimately relegated to the private, personal sphere and separated from the political life of a nation if its people choose to do so. Solzhenitsyn would undoubtedly reject Hook's argument, but it remains by far the most sophisticated defence of secularism among the later responses.

Historian Martin E. Marty refuted Solzhenitsyn's assignation of blame for Western decline to the Enlightenment by another, more predictable method; he simply cited the religiosity of the architects of the Enlightenment. He pointed to "the Christian theism of Newton, the Christian Deism of Locke, the Christian Unitarianism of Benjamin Franklin,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson," and he noted that all of the leaders of the American Enlightenment, with no exception, had believed in the existence of a 'Supreme Complete Entity', but had recognised that religious beliefs were too diverse in the infant United States to "legislate such belief into the polity."<sup>17</sup> Marty's approach represents the second way in which some American intellectuals chose to defend secularism: the multiplicity of religions and religious views prevented their inclusion in the formation of government on the basis of sheer practicality, despite the personal religious convictions of the architects themselves. However, as Howard Berman observed, the increased popularity of Protestantism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and its emphasis on the inherently sinful nature of humanity was a tradition to which the Founding Fathers belonged. This led, if not to the establishment of religious principles as the driving force of democratic government, to its very foundation. Berman argued that democracy is based on the Christian belief in man's innate capacity for evil: "they, in turn, believed in the evil in man and so created a government ruled by law, by checks and balances," to "restrain man's natural greed and lust for power."<sup>18</sup> Thus Solzhenitsyn was refuted twice on the same point by conflicting interpretations of the founding of the American experiment.

A third, less theological, approach to the problem of the role of the Enlightenment in Western decline was exemplified by historian Alain Besançon, whose refutation of Solzhenitsyn on this point stemmed from the premise that Solzhenitsyn did not understand the West because he was Russian. Besançon supported Solzhenitsyn's contentions that Americans "lack civic courage, that our lives are diminished by competitiveness and status seeking, that we treat our freedom very frivolously and irresponsibly...that communism is gaining strength at our expense, nurtured by our weakness," but he faulted the author for being a prisoner of an "overall vision which is false and misleading." The vision to which he referred is the nineteenth-century Russian

---

<sup>17</sup> Martin E. Marty, "On Hearing Solzhenitsyn in Context," in *World Literature Today* 53:4 (1979), 583.

<sup>18</sup> Berman, 105.

view, which was held most notably by the Slavophiles in the 1840s and 1850s that the West was doomed because it had adopted the Enlightenment precepts of legalism and soulless rationalism and forsaken religion as the core of life.<sup>19</sup> Assessment of the influence of the Slavophiles on Solzhenitsyn's thought is a complex problem in itself; it is sufficient to note here that by relegating Solzhenitsyn's argument to the historical Russian past, Besançon was able to question its relevance to the modern American present.<sup>20</sup> The fault for Western decline could not, in his view, lie with the Enlightenment because that concept was rooted in a non-Western intellectual tradition.

With these attempts to refute Solzhenitsyn's assertion that the responsibility for the progressive and inevitable decline of the West rested solely on the acceptance of the precepts of the Enlightenment, several trends are obvious. Critics argued that either

<sup>19</sup> Besançon, 138.

<sup>20</sup> The Slavophiles were a loosely bound group of intellectual nobles who concerned themselves with the rehabilitation of Russia in the 1840s and 1850s. They considered Russia to have been too influenced by the philosophies and politics of the West and advocated a return to traditional Russian values and institutions (such as benevolent autocracy and the Russian Orthodox Church) as the way to fulfil Russia's destiny as a unique and prominent world power. Their views on the West are well-documented and the influence of classical Slavophilic thought on Solzhenitsyn's ideas has been the topic of a number of scholarly projects and is a fascinating subject. Recommendations include the following: Jack Fruchtman, Jr., "A Voice From Russia's Past at Harvard," in Ronald Berman, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections* (Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 43-47; S. K. Carter, "Solzhenitsyn's Intellectual Antecedents," *Journal of Social and Political Studies* 3:1 (1978), 85-100; Donald W. Treadgold, "Solzhenitsyn's Intellectual Antecedents," in John B. Dunlop (et al) ed. *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 243-266; Richard Pipes, "Solzhenitsyn & the Russian Intellectual Tradition: Some Critical Remarks," *Encounter* 52:6 (1979), 52-56; Dimitry Pospielovsky, "A Comparative Enquiry into Neo-Slavophilism and its Antecedents in the Russian History of Ideas," *Soviet Studies* 31:3 (1979), 319-342; Michael Confino, "Solzhenitsyn, the West, and the New Russian Nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26:3-4 (1991), 611-636; Val Bolen, "Interpreting and Misinterpreting Solzhenitsyn," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 13:3 (1979), 295-305; and Abbot Gleason, "Solzhenitsyn and the Slavophiles," *The Yale Review* 65:1 (1975), 61-70. For more general discussion of Slavophiles, several excellent introductory works are the following: S. U. Utechin, *Russian Political Thought: A Concise History* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1963); Hans Kohn ed., *The Mind of Modern Russia: Historical and Political Thought of Russia's Great Age* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1955); Peter K. Christoff et al., *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas*, 4 vols. (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1961); Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965); N. G. O Pereira, "The Nineteenth-Century Russian Intelligentsia and the Future of Russia," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 19:4 (1979), 295-306; and Michael Florinsky, "Russian Social and Political Thought, 1825-1855," *Russian Review* 6:1 (1946), 77-85.

Solzhenitsyn had erred in arguing that morality and religion were relevant to the operation of good government, or that he was right but had underestimated the difficulties and impracticalities inherent in attempting to shape political life and institutions around a multiplicity of religious beliefs. Others argued that he had failed to recognise that the Western system of checks and balances was derived from religious assumptions of humanity's inherent evil. If not any of the above, then he was either guilty of discounting the religiosity of the Founding Fathers and the architects of Enlightenment thought or ignorant of Western political life because he was Russian. It is likely that most American critics would have accepted any or all of the above reasons as sound bases from which to refute Solzhenitsyn. His criticisms of the West were, if nothing else, generally perceived as wrong, and these examples demonstrate the various methods by which critics sought to demonstrate his errors.

The intent here is not to prove or disprove these views, but to illustrate how American commentators sought to defend their culture and history. To move further into this examination, we must turn in a slightly different direction, to the ways in which the authors of the later responses tried to *explain* Solzhenitsyn's thoughts in the *Harvard Address*. It is not enough to conclude that Solzhenitsyn was refuted and put to rest—he was not. A select group of American intellectuals chose to try to account for Solzhenitsyn's views on the West, to 'explain' the *Address*. These scholars represent the only real attempt by American members of the academic establishment to contextualise Solzhenitsyn and thus form an important component of this thesis, which has taken as its central aim the contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn's ideas.

That the driving force behind the *Harvard Address* was Solzhenitsyn's Christian beliefs did not escape many commentators. However, this realisation was rarely used as a method by which to assess the validity of Solzhenitsyn's views; it was more commonly used as an acceptable basis for the refutation of his thought. This is evident from the comments cited here. Michael Novak was thus virtually unique in using Solzhenitsyn's

personal religiosity to assess the *Address* not only for its evaluation of the West, but also to defend the author from criticisms stemming from his predominantly religious convictions. Novak described the speech as "more sharply analytical of the human condition in our century than any word from the World Council of Churches," and he noted that Solzhenitsyn believed that he had been saved by truth.<sup>21</sup> Thus "his was not solely a salvation for his soul through faith in Jesus Christ; it was also a ray of light for the entire race of men."<sup>22</sup>

Novak chose as his focus Solzhenitsyn's belief that the West had lost its will to defend itself; that it suffered from a lack of courage, provoked by materialism inherited from the Enlightenment, and exacerbated by resultant spiritual decline. He argued that the underlying argument of the *Address* was its most important aspect, even if it went virtually unrecognised by commentators. He believed that the speech in its entirety was derived from Solzhenitsyn's absolute rejection of the legitimacy of moral relativity, which he considered to be the premier stumbling block to Western moral and social regeneration. If, as Hook contended, morality is determined by individuals, then multiple standards will inevitably conflict and resolution becomes impossible. An individual can argue the strength of his or her convictions, but if all convictions are equally valid, moral relativity becomes the rule and the ethical core of society erodes. The situation is one of "[y]ou have your moral convictions, I have mine, who can tell who is right?" As a devout Christian, Solzhenitsyn clearly could not and would not accept this proposition.<sup>23</sup>

Novak believed that moral relativity translates easily into moral vagueness, which he identified as a dominant trend in modern American society. Americans "have declared themselves incompetent or unwilling to make moral judgements, or even to think in moral terms."<sup>24</sup> They are willing to formulate their own moral code, but they balk at the idea of

<sup>21</sup> This is a direct reference to Solzhenitsyn's belief that he had escaped death by stomach cancer in 1954 by the grace of God. See Scammell, 339.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Novak, "On God and Man," in Berman, 131.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-135.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

'imposing' their beliefs upon others, in support of tolerance and moral diversity. Individualism then rules at the expense of the collective well-being of society; secular dedication to self-interest, personal views and morality results in a "homogenized yet fragmented" society. This, Novak argued, is the "logical expression of a materialistic humanism." He added the observation that religious institutions in the United States have proven to be inadequate to respond to spiritual crises. He criticised the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths as having been "uncommonly intellectual, narrow, and dogmatic" and for having long prided themselves on not claiming to know all the answers. Western religions and peoples have come to accept that in a diverse and pluralistic society agreement on "fundamental principles" is far more arduous than avoidance of such principles, and that the easiest path by far is to focus on "practical courses of action" instead.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the Novak article presents the only attempt to 'explain' the *Harvard Address* through a clarification of Solzhenitsyn's moral world view and its undeniable, if vaguely represented, roots in Christianity. Novak was also unique among the later responses in that his article supports Solzhenitsyn's fundamental views. While others approved of differing particular aspects of the *Address*, Novak identified the very core of Solzhenitsyn's message and accepted it as intellectually valid. He summarised it as follows:

Every idea is not equal to every other, nor is every moral value equal to every other. There are actions that are good and actions that are evil. Dishonesty is not equal to honesty, nor cowardice to courage, nor apathy to compassion, nor degradation to dignity, nor slavery to liberty. A society that, in order to defend diversity and tolerance, permits everything equally will suffer the same fate as an individual who refuses to make moral choices....Even without a resolute enemy, such a person, like such a society, would have doomed himself. And a resolute enemy will find him thoroughly defenseless.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Novak, 138-139.

<sup>26</sup> Novak, 142.

Other critics chose to approach their 'explanations' of the views presented in the *Address* from very different directions. Whereas Novak's intention was obviously to clarify, others seemed inclined either to apologise for Solzhenitsyn's undiluted 'Russian-ness' or to justify the importance of his words (regardless of agreement or disagreement with them) as those of a prophet. The intent was clear: while American intellectuals disagreed with much of the *Address*, they were reluctant to disregard its author entirely. Their disapproval of his thought, however, had to be balanced with their estimation of his worth as an important thinker, and so Solzhenitsyn was once again separated from the mainstream West by his 'otherness'. His critics seriously questioned the validity of his thought while reconstructing the invisible intellectual barrier between East and West. He was gradually put back on his pedestal as the profound, but often ignorant, Russian prophet he had been after the publication of the *Letter*.

Sidney Hook chose to designate Solzhenitsyn as a prophet, and he declared that "despite my differences with Solzhenitsyn...I regard him as one of the great moral prophets of our time."<sup>27</sup> Hook limited his discussion to Solzhenitsyn's conviction that the West was unprepared to defend itself in the event of war. Unlike *The New York Times*, he recognised that Solzhenitsyn was clearly against war, and believed that the *Address* was primarily concerned with the West's inability or unwillingness to ready itself psychologically for the inevitable conflict with Soviet Communism. The central issue here for Hook was the West's reluctance to view its freedom on moral terms. If the West could not come to recognise that its freedom carried with it the responsibility to defend that freedom; if the West could not rid itself of its apathy toward absolute moral categories in order to view Soviet Communism as morally and ethically wrong, Hook believed that the West could and likely would be defeated.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Hook, 577.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Hook, in his own way, was arguing against moral relativity, although in far more practical terms than Novak had. Whereas Novak had linked moral relativity to the destruction of the social fabric of the West, Hook presented it as a weapon through which its freedom could be endangered and ultimately destroyed. Furthermore, Hook believed that Solzhenitsyn had envisioned the only possible means by which the West could protect itself: war with the Soviet Union could be averted if the West was strong. For Hook, strength was derived from commitment to freedom; if the West could regain its zeal to defend its liberty, then popular morality and civic courage would follow naturally. Hook argued that true strength, such as that required to avert war, comes from a moral dedication to freedom and the courage to sacrifice one's own life for it.<sup>29</sup>

Martin E. Marty also used the categorisation of Solzhenitsyn as a 'prophet' to account for his views. Although Marty conceded that the *Address* merited serious consideration, he warned his readers that "it comes from and points to directions that the West cannot and should not go."<sup>30</sup> In order to appreciate the prophet's words, he wrote, we must first understand that "he wants to be taken whole and that his power and passion dissipate when we do not take him whole or see him in context." If only pieces of Solzhenitsyn's vision can be implemented, then his power as a prophet is weakened considerably. Marty firmly believed that Solzhenitsyn was not irrelevant to the West, but he qualified his support of the author by crediting him with helping "us most when we have seen the limits of his understanding and appreciation of what constitutes Western life....Then there can be empathy for his position, and the beginning of a hearing."<sup>31</sup> In other words, Americans could begin to ponder Solzhenitsyn's ideas only after recognising that his knowledge of the West was insufficient to give credence to his criticisms of it; in Marty's view, Solzhenitsyn's experiential limitations gave him intellectual status, but not intellectual viability.

<sup>29</sup> Hook, 578.

<sup>30</sup> Marty, 578.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Marty began his contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn by identifying the source of the author's convictions in the *Harvard Address* as his belief "in the concept of a truly transcendent force or being or person." He specifically named this 'force' as the Russian Orthodox concept of God, referred to in the *Address* non-denominationally as the 'Supreme Complete Entity'. The Russian Orthodox God is not the friendly, accessible Western God; it is rather "the absolutely transcendent restrainer of human impulses and bringer of human unity. There is no room in this blazing vision for the relatively relative, the relatively absolute, the half-serious, the democratic deity." While Solzhenitsyn's understanding and belief in this God gives "him a special power," Marty believed that it had problematised Western interpretations of the *Address* unnecessarily.<sup>32</sup> Put more simply, Marty argued that Solzhenitsyn's prophetic strength was derived from the mysticism of Russian Orthodoxy and that religion's perception of God as all-powerful. Had American critics recognised the specific religious tradition from which Solzhenitsyn had spoken, the basis for the strident tone and judgmental nature of the *Address* would have been better understood.

Marty identified certain characteristics unique to Solzhenitsyn's thought and character which supported his assignation of prophet status. First, Solzhenitsyn's religiosity moved him to speak in religious terms with absolute confidence, though his secularised audience often found his discourse confusing. Second, he indulged in the prophet's habit of speaking in terms of imminent disaster on a global scale and of the cosmic forces of good and evil. Third, he did not bother himself with absolute empirical accuracy; as most 'prophets' do, Solzhenitsyn speaks and writes in sweeping generalities, rarely uses footnotes, and thinks on a grand scale, unconcerned with precision of fact. Fourth, he conforms to the prophet status in that he views the world as inherently flawed, "dualistically torn" between good and evil. As evil is present in society, it therefore divides peoples and nations; Solzhenitsyn believed this and spoke as if it were

---

<sup>32</sup> Marty, 579.

fact.<sup>33</sup> Thus, according to Marty, Solzhenitsyn was a prophet, distinct from the usual critics of Western society and infinitely more complex.

After validating Solzhenitsyn as a prophet, Marty then turned to an examination of his prophecy and concluded that he did not believe that the West could accept Solzhenitsyn's vision for its future. Specifically, Marty asserted that he could not support the supplantation of politics with morality as the primary organiser of western life and institutions, nor could he favour the reformation of Western societies in religious terms. Nevertheless, he asserted that the West could still benefit from Solzhenitsyn's message in that "the alert he sounds to the fact of a turning point in our culture needs sounding...from his voice in our darkness we get some impression that we need not see ourselves as nothing but a shipwreck."<sup>34</sup> If the West could not accept the Address in practical terms, it could certainly accept its underlying meaning that it was in decline and regard the speech as the inspirational impetus necessary to begin strengthening itself. Marty remained firm, however, that change in West must continue to depend entirely on the purely voluntary willingness with which its citizens pursued it. It could not be forced, not even in the name of freedom.<sup>35</sup>

Through their designations of Solzhenitsyn as a modern prophet, Hook and Marty presented his thought as 'other-worldly'. Solzhenitsyn spoke from the strength of his belief in God and Christianity, and if this did not enhance the practicality of his vision, it nevertheless lent him an air of credibility which had not really been present before. Hook carefully contextualised Solzhenitsyn as a prophet of importance only in times of potential war. Marty was prepared to accept Solzhenitsyn's status as such on much wider grounds but ultimately concluded that his message could only serve as inspiration for the West to construct its own, more acceptable agenda for change. It is evident, however, from the numerous descriptions of Solzhenitsyn as a prophet in both the early and later responses

<sup>33</sup> Marty, 583.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

to the *Address* that this identification of the author was apparently accepted as a legitimate 'explanation' of his views. And yet, it is equally evident that this labelling of Solzhenitsyn was more than a simple means of 'explanation,' it also served as an effective way to distance Solzhenitsyn from his audience, the American people. To label him a prophet with its connotations of strong religious convictions for a secular society perhaps helped to ensure that though his words could be accepted as his due, his ideas would likely not be understood. It is doubtful that this was a conscious decision on the part of some intellectuals; the consequence, however, was that Solzhenitsyn's thought became even less accessible to those he most wanted to reach: average Western men and women.

Others preferred to invoke Solzhenitsyn's now familiar 'Russian-ness' to 'explain' his faulty vision of the West. Among the responses enumerated below, there is a certain sense again that Solzhenitsyn would not have said what he did if he had known anything about the West; however, given his obvious ignorance it was permissible to excuse his misinterpretations of the realities of Western life. Alain Besançon gave an excellent example of this tendency in his article "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard" when he wrote that he sympathised with Solzhenitsyn's obvious confusion: after all, he had left "a world which is absolutely bad to find himself in a world which is relatively bad."<sup>36</sup> To be fair, Besançon observed, Solzhenitsyn had only lived in the West for a short time before he gave the *Address*, perhaps only long enough to realise that the possession of freedom does not ensure dignity, nor does it guarantee happiness. In Solzhenitsyn's defence Besançon asked, "Is it possible to realize immediately, without a great deal of effort, that freedom includes the freedom to do wrong, that man cannot be expected to use his freedom wisely, nor freedom to engender anything other than freedom?"<sup>37</sup> Perhaps Besançon felt that Solzhenitsyn only needed more time to appreciate the subtle limitations of human freedom in the West.

---

<sup>36</sup> Alain Besançon, "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard," *Survey* 24:1(1979), 140.

McNeill attributed Solzhenitsyn's misconceptions of American society more directly to his stubborn unwillingness to adapt to life in the West. Because the author "remains true to his Russian past, [he] cannot feel comfortable with our messier way of thinking and acting."<sup>38</sup> He justified the reluctance of the West to effect radical societal change on the basis that the impetus was not clear; was the West in fact in danger from the Soviet Union? Was it in fact in decline? The situation remained, to McNeill if not Solzhenitsyn, still too hazy to warrant immediate action. Although he recognised a vague potential for future peril, McNeill did not consider it "unambiguous enough to justify personal sacrifice and risk-taking." In short, he found the unfamiliarity of Solzhenitsyn's convictions disquieting, and he preferred to believe that the West, resting on the strength of its commitment to pluralism and secularism, could in time of need achieve "sufficient unanimity...to keep us strong enough to survive."<sup>39</sup> McNeill would clearly have elected to place his hopes on miraculous Western ingenuity rather than on Solzhenitsyn.

Harold Berman also defined Solzhenitsyn as incorrigibly Russian when he identified the author's roots in the Orthodox Russian tradition of "anti-nomianism" or "anti-lawism" to explain the author's criticisms of Western legalism. In that tradition, Berman explained, law is soulless and is "connected only with guilt and punishment." It is presented as the opposite of love and faith, and thus Russians most often cannot then differentiate between mechanistic legalism (the ordering of society) and moral law (justice). Solzhenitsyn therefore was not speaking of "the spirit of the law, which gives life" at Harvard, but rather the "letter of the law, which kills". Berman went back to the nineteenth century to argue that the Russian people valued communalism and organic togetherness far more than they did formal law; in fact, prominent Russian thinkers, specifically the Slavophiles, assumed a religiously influenced distaste for entrenched Western legalism. Berman quoted key Slavophile Ivan Kireevsky's mocking comment

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> McNeill, 125.

<sup>39</sup> McNeill, 129.

that "In the West, brothers make contracts with brothers" to illustrate that Russian social custom dismisses formal law as insulting to traditional communal beliefs which propound the inalienable brotherhood of all.<sup>40</sup> Berman concluded that despite the fact the Slavophile vision of *sobornost'* or 'communality' is anachronistic,<sup>41</sup> Western law is too formal, and too cold; "We need to recover our sense of the historical rootedness of our law in our moral and religious tradition....That recovery would help us reform our legal system in the direction of greater humaneness and greater social justice without making it an object of idolatry."<sup>42</sup> Although the influence of Slavophile on Solzhenitsyn's thought is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to observe that once again his criticisms of Western life were 'explained' as a consequence of his intractable 'Russian-ness'.

This small group of American intellectuals represent the major trends in academic attempts in the 1970s to contextualise Solzhenitsyn and the *Harvard Address*. Several trends are apparent. First, those who could not accept Solzhenitsyn as even remotely intellectually valid rejected him outright. Second, those who wished to validate his intellectual importance but who disputed specific points refuted him, yet ultimately argued for his acceptance. Third, those who tried to 'explain' his views tended to rely on evocations of his status as a prophet or his 'Russian-ness' to account for his mistakes when analysing the West. Of utmost importance, however, is the undeniable tendency of the American intellectuals to evaluate Solzhenitsyn and the *Harvard Address* according to *secular* concepts, and using *secular* language. This approach was ill-conceived, and it ultimately hindered the process by which such intellectuals could come to understand their subject.

Solzhenitsyn is by no means a product of the secular West, and he should not be studied as such. To argue his ignorance of the West, the morality of the Western peoples or the validity of Western freedom is futile if one does not attempt to understand the

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in Berman, 108.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

specific tradition from which Solzhenitsyn's thought emerged; if one does not attempt to evaluate his thought as rooted in the *Christian*, and not Western, tradition. Several authors did aspire to this goal in small ways; particularly Hook's and Marty's examinations of Solzhenitsyn as a prophet and, more importantly, Novak's dissection of the *Address* as a religious document are examples. These tiny but tantalising clues to Solzhenitsyn's true heritage and context, however, did not lead to any other attempts to interpret Solzhenitsyn through his Christianity; other later responses ignored this avenue in favour of more prosaic analyses of the various ways in which the author did not fit with Western intellectual trends. As we have seen, many of those critics who studied Solzhenitsyn in the hopes of understanding him tended to acknowledge his essential Christianity but failed to explore it, and those who did, did so only within strictly proscribed limits. Most analyses of Solzhenitsyn's corpus read as failed undertakings; unable to reconcile Solzhenitsyn with the precepts of modern Western thought they simply acknowledged his 'otherness' without giving any real insights to him, managing only to show how he was different. Solzhenitsyn is not difficult to understand, however, if he is contextualised properly as a Christian thinker.

The beginnings of a reliable contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn and the *Harvard Address*, then, is the focus of the fourth and final chapter. His thought is far more complex than is apparent at first glance, and more deeply rooted in the Christian tradition than was commonly recognised. What follows is a contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn as a primarily Christian thinker and an exposition of the *Harvard Address* as a Christian document. Through an extended analysis of his other works, including his novels and other, lesser-known speeches in conjunction with his clearly Christian theory of art, we can begin to understand what Solzhenitsyn meant in Harvard Yard.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SOLZHENITSYN AS A CHRISTIAN AND THE HARVARD ADDRESS AS EVIDENCE**

Solzhenitsyn speaks from another tradition...his voice is not modern but ancient. It is an ancientness tempered in the modern world. His ancientness is that of...Christianity, but it is a Christianity that has passed through the central experience of our century—the dehumanization of the totalitarian concentration camps—and has emerged intact and strengthened. If history is the testing ground, Solzhenitsyn has passed the test. His example is not intellectual or political.... We have to use an even older word, a word that still retains a religious overtone—a hint of death and sacrifice: witness. In a century of false testimonies, a writer becomes the witness to man.

—Octavio Paz (1975)

The opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.

—Kierkegaard (c.1848)

Historians most veridical  
Assure us that we lack  
That hell-inspired juridical  
Doubt whether white is black.  
In such a narrow border  
Broad natures find no scope:  
The Russian form of order  
Requires a lot more rope.

—Almazov (c.1830)

The *Harvard Address* of 1978 represented the apex of Solzhenitsyn's career in the United States and the final turning point in his intellectual relationship with his American critics. From that year until his return to the Soviet Union in 1994 he fell further and further from the public eye; his later essays and speeches attracted little attention and even the last volumes of the *Red Wheel*, his monumental history of the Russian Revolution and his life's work, were published with only minor fanfare.<sup>1</sup> The *Harvard Address*, it appears, had determined Solzhenitsyn's intellectual and public reputation in the United States. It is evident from the preceding chapter that after 1978 he was no longer considered intellectually viable; either he was too 'Russian,' or he was hopelessly 'ignorant' of Western realities of life, or he was an archaic theocrat who was incompatible with the modern world. Such conceptions of Solzhenitsyn have persisted well into the 1990s. For example, literary critic Irving Howe's 1990 charge that Solzhenitsyn was "a shrill and spleenetic polemicist who...showers adversaries with sarcastic contempt, and employs his talents to cudgel readers into submitting to his increasingly authoritarian views"<sup>2</sup> is not so very different in tone from *The Globe and Mail's* estimation of him in March 1998 as "Russian to the ends of his straggly beard, the fierce and righteous beams darting from his intolerant eyes."<sup>3</sup> More importantly, neither comment is radically different from those presented in the early and later responses to the *Address*, illustrating a largely negative pattern of opinion about the author that has survived twenty years after the speech itself. It seems clear, then, that the *Address* was the turning point in Solzhenitsyn's intellectual relationship with his American critics.

The *Address'* place at the heart of Solzhenitsyn's reputation in the United States is the focus of this study. The preceding chapters have examined the reactions of American commentators to the speech, and in the process have illuminated the various patterns and trends in both public and academic treatments of Solzhenitsyn and his

---

<sup>1</sup> No Author, "A Conscience Comes Home," *The Economist* 331:7865 (1994), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Irving Howe, "The Fate of Solzhenitsyn," in *Selected Writings, 1950-1990* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1990), 459.

works. Solzhenitsyn himself, however, has remained in the background, presented merely as the catalyst to the debates which surrounded him and his thought in the late 1970s. This intent of this chapter is to bring the author to the forefront in an effort to examine one particular aspect of his thought which remained largely unexplored by his American critics. Perceptions of Solzhenitsyn as "Disturbing, Fanatical and Heroic" are common in American studies of him,<sup>4</sup> yet commentators seem to have been reluctant to examine that aspect of his thought which yields important insights into both Solzhenitsyn and the *Address*: his Christianity.

Many American critics were disinclined to accept Christianity and Christian beliefs as an acceptable basis for social criticism, especially criticism of the West. Solzhenitsyn's persistent evocations of the battles between good and evil as well as his public admonishments of morality and ethics alienated many in the United States who consequently dismissed him as an obsessive and unbalanced theocrat. Western critics of Solzhenitsyn's works often focused on what they considered to be his excessive religiosity as proof for the larger charges that he was 'anti-modern,'<sup>5</sup> and even those who attempted to contextualise him in religious terms usually limited their efforts to evaluations of his compatibility with their Western definitions of what it meant to be a 'prophet'. It is the contention here that his words in Harvard Yard, as with all of his other works, both fiction and non-fiction, derived in part from his devout Christian beliefs. To understand Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the *Harvard Address*, and the nature of his intellectual reputation in the United States, one must necessarily understand the impact of Christianity on the man and his art, and do so with the recognition that his personal experiences with Soviet Communism influenced how he interpreted basic Christian principles, and then used them to criticise the West.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Watson, "Solzhenitsyn: A Second Exile," *The Globe and Mail* (7 March 1998), D16.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Schapiro, "Disturbing, Fanatical, Heroic," *New York Review of Books* (13 November 1975), 10.

As was stated in the introduction, it is not the intention here to argue that Solzhenitsyn's ideas and beliefs are characteristic of or derived from a specific Christian tradition. Determinations of his religious compatibility with the particular tenets of, for example, Russian Orthodoxy, or the similarities and/or differences between his thought and other Christian dogmas are important; however, they are beyond the scope of this thesis. The intent here is to argue that studying the impact of basic Christian principles and beliefs, common to all forms of Christianity, on the work of Solzhenitsyn is a valid and rewarding approach to his thought, an approach which has not, as of yet, gained much currency among those who study him. Once Solzhenitsyn is recognised among Western scholars as a Christian man and artist, further study of the ways in which his thought conforms to or is representative of one particular dogma or another would form an significant component of current Western understandings of him. However, it is possible to make some preliminary observations throughout this chapter on the nature of Solzhenitsyn's own Christian-world view, as it was derived from his experiences in the totalitarian Soviet Union.

At first glance, the *Address* does not appear to be an overly religious document. Aside from Solzhenitsyn's analysis of the Enlightenment as the cause of Western irreligiosity, it seems to be primarily concerned with eminently practical issues: world divisions, materialism, legalism and justice. It is only when that speech is read alongside Solzhenitsyn's other works that its essential Christianity and its compatibility with his religious conception of art may be more easily understood. In recognition of the difficulty inherent in interpreting the *Address* within its generally Christian context, it is discussed below as part of Solzhenitsyn's larger body of work, including his novels, prose poems and other, more neglected speeches. Through an examination of Solzhenitsyn's theory of art we can better understand the artist; through an examination of his Christianity we can

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Charles Kesler, "Up From Modernity," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 48-56.

better understand the thinker. Although the *Address* is not a full explication of Solzhenitsyn's religious views, it may certainly be considered an essentially Christian document, and through it Solzhenitsyn understood as a Christian intellectual and author, with specific views as a result of his personal history.

Solzhenitsyn has rarely alluded to his own personal religious convictions; indeed, he has been consistently reluctant to speak directly to interviewers about them. For example, when asked in a BBC interview with Janet Sapiets in February 1979 if he was a Christian, Solzhenitsyn replied that "a close reading of my books would answer that question."<sup>6</sup> Curiously, he met publicly with evangelist Billy Graham to discuss "world trends in religion," prompting Graham to comment approvingly in *The New York Times* that "Solzhenitsyn has the kind of intellect and moral courage that the world so desperately needs today. His grasp of both history and theology is amazing."<sup>7</sup> On the whole, however, he has preferred to express his religious views either through the characters of his novels or to speak in more general terms, particularly in his various speeches.<sup>8</sup> David Remnick did learn, however, while researching his 1994 *New Yorker* article that Solzhenitsyn's sons and stepson (Yermolai, Ignat, Stephan and Dmitri, respectively) began each day of their childhoods in Vermont "with a prayer for Russia to be saved from its oppressors," and that Solzhenitsyn had built a Russian Orthodox chapel in his home there.<sup>9</sup>

This aversion toward discussing his Christian beliefs openly was likely a result of his years as a secret Christian in the Soviet Union, and was thus a habit carried over to life in the West. To be a dissident Soviet author and a renegade intellectual was one thing; to be an openly Christian critic was quite another. Solzhenitsyn could be contained

<sup>6</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Interview with the BBC, February 1979," in Solzhenitsyn, *East and West: Nobel Lecture on Literature, A World Split Apart, Letter to the Soviet Leaders, and a BBC Interview* trans. Alexis Klimoff (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 178.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence van Gelder, "Solzhenitsyn Talks Religion with Graham," *The New York Times* (10 December 1974), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Niels C. Nielsen, *Solzhenitsyn's Religion* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975), 2.

<sup>9</sup> David Remnick, "The Exile Returns," *The New Yorker* (14 February 1994), 67.

fairly easily, and, usually, effectively ignored by the Party apparatus as long as he chose to filter his views through fiction. But had he explicitly declared his Christian views he would likely have invited the full repressive weight of those Soviet authorities already seeking to end his literary career permanently. Therefore, making public his Christian faith would have likely eliminated his opportunities to write at all—and Solzhenitsyn had, in the 1950s and 1960s, much left to say. Nonetheless, a careful examination of his early novels—those same novels which formed the basis of the West's early acclamations of him—reveals a consistent adherence to the basic principles of Christianity, whether the West chose to recognise this or not. As David Halperin remarked, "[his religious convictions] need not have occasioned astonishment."<sup>10</sup> They were, in fact, quite obvious; however, the vagueness with which Solzhenitsyn refers to his religious beliefs is problematic for those who choose to study him in this context. Solzhenitsyn is a very private Christian, and one who has preferred not to discuss the specifics of his beliefs. Therefore, given the difficulty of categorising his views with the varied derivatives of the Christian faith, this thesis simply seeks to validate his inclusion as an author and thinker within that tradition in its broadest sense.

Although he was raised in the Russian Orthodox Church, Solzhenitsyn abandoned formal religion while a university student and adopted the doctrine of Marxist-Leninism. It was not until he was a prisoner in the gulag that he realised that he could not defend his views to other prisoners and began to revert to the faith of his childhood. He wrote that

It is true that I used to try to defend Marxism during the early years of my imprisonment. But it turned out that I was incapable of it. There were such strong arguments and such experienced people against me that I simply couldn't. They beat me every time....Then, while still at the *sharashka*, I began gradually to abandon [my] scepticism. In fact, I began to return to my old, original childhood concepts...I began to move ever so slowly

---

<sup>10</sup> David Halperin, "Continuities in Solzhenitsyn's Ethical Thought," in John B. Dunlop et al., eds., *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 267.

towards a position that was in the first place idealist, as they call it, that is, of supporting the primacy of the spiritual over the material, and secondly patriotic and religious.<sup>11</sup>

By Solzhenitsyn's own admission, his religious beliefs had never truly been eradicated, but merely repressed until they resurfaced amid the horrors of the gulag. He converted back to Christianity secretly in 1952 while in a prison hospital suffering from stomach cancer. The doctors had told him that he could not be cured, but he withstood massive (and usually fatal) doses of radiation and survived.<sup>12</sup> As a result Solzhenitsyn came to believe that he had been healed not by medical science, but by God. Solzhenitsyn describes his experience of religious rebirth at length in the fourth volume of *Gulag Archipelago*, and ends with the invocation of a prayer he composed and memorised in prison, quoted here in part:

When was it that I completely  
Scattered the good seeds, one and all?  
For after all I spent my boyhood  
In the bright singing of Thy temples...

But passing here between being and nothingness,  
Stumbling and clutching at the edge,  
I look behind me with a grateful tremor  
Upon that life that I have lived...

And now with the measuring cup returned to me,  
Scooping up the living water,  
God of the Universe! I believe again!  
Though I renounced You, You were with me!<sup>13</sup>

The rest of Solzhenitsyn's life and work has derived from his conviction that he was saved by God for a purpose, that his life was to have meaning above the common trivialities of daily existence. This conviction forms the foundation of Solzhenitsyn's Christian faith, which in turn has greatly influenced virtually everything he has written since 1952. It should also be noted here that Solzhenitsyn's Christian faith is absolute,

<sup>11</sup> As quoted in Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 245.

<sup>12</sup> Halperin, 267.

<sup>13</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* Vol IV (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), 614-615.

and does not, as will be evidenced by excerpts from his works, allow any room to doubt his acceptance as religion as a vital influence in his life and his art. His theory of art, while certainly rooted in the Russian tradition, serves as an excellent introduction into the examination of the major Christian themes in his work, including the *Harvard Address*.

The most explicit elaboration of Solzhenitsyn's theory of art may be found in his speech entitled 'One Word of Truth': *The Nobel Lecture on Literature* (1970), though specific examples are best found in his various works of literature.<sup>14</sup> Even had the American public had the opportunity to read the lecture in its entirety, it seems unlikely that responses to it would have been anything but apathetic.<sup>15</sup> The *Nobel Lecture* roused few passions in the United States, perhaps in part a result of overzealous editing or perhaps, as Czeslaw Milosz commented, because "Solzhenitsyn, though famous, is only a novelist, i.e., by American standards, a figure somewhere between a producer of commodities and a clown; writers have always been ranked here much lower than in Slavic countries and [American] writers hardly claim moral authority."<sup>16</sup> This is what Solzhenitsyn assumed to the irritation of some Americans; he claimed the right of moral judgement on the Russian basis that he was (and remains) a writer of literature.

Solzhenitsyn began the *Lecture* by establishing the religious basis for his theory of art. (When Solzhenitsyn speaks of art, of course, he is referring primarily to literature.) True art, he asserted, rests on the foundations of two fundamental ideas: first, that absolute truth exists and can be sought; and second, that the realities of human life are not subjective. These basic premises are clearly Christian concepts. God created the

---

<sup>14</sup> Richard Haugh, "The Philosophical Foundations of Solzhenitsyn's Art," in Dunlop, John B., et al., ed. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Company, 1973, 168.

<sup>15</sup> *The Washington Post* published excerpts from the lecture on 27 August 1972 and *The New Times* published it in two instalments on 30 September and 7 October 1972. *The Times* enlisted Thomas P. Whitney to translate it from its original Russian and his version is generally accepted to be far superior to that published in the *Post*. However, neither version was complete and thus much of Solzhenitsyn's message was lost. See Czeslaw Milosz, "Questions," in John B. Dunlop et al., ed. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1973), 447.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 447-448.

world and therefore God created art, and thus art "is a gift from God; it entails the exercising of a God-given ability."<sup>17</sup> As with all that God created, art holds within its essence the divine spark, and though it may be twisted to suit the need of the individual, the ideology or the nation, art is never fully corrupted of its divinity despite humanity's attempts to manipulate it for his own selfish gain.<sup>18</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's first novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, provides an apt example of the human abuse of art. Prison inmate Ivan Denisovich Shukhov receives a letter from his wife, who tells him that the newest way the peasants of their kolkhoz<sup>19</sup> have found to earn extra money is by painting 'carpets'. These 'new artists' "charged fifty roubles to make a carpet out of an old sheet that nobody wanted, and it only took about an hour to paint the pattern on."<sup>20</sup> Shukhov's wife writes that she hopes that he will become a carpet-painter if he is ever released from prison, and although Shukhov is initially enthusiastic, his excitement at the prospect of making a quick rouble wanes. "Easy money had no weight: you didn't feel you'd earned it....He still had a good pair of hands, hands that could turn to anything, so what was to stop him getting a proper job on the outside?"<sup>21</sup> This mini-lesson on Solzhenitsyn's view of art reflects his antipathy toward soulless creativity. Although Shukhov lacks any real sense of artistic nobility, Solzhenitsyn does not; he clearly regards this 'carpet painting' as an example of the exploitation of art and deplores it. In the *Nobel Lecture* however, Solzhenitsyn was quick

<sup>17</sup> Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'One Word of Truth': The Nobel Speech on Literature, 1970, Trans. BBC Russian Service. (London: The Bodley Head, 1972), 3.

<sup>19</sup> A kolkhoz or *kollektivnoe khoziaistvo* was a collective farm, instituted originally as part of Stalin's agenda for collectivisation of the countryside under the auspices of the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932). Such collective farms were 'owned' by their members, though technically the property of the state. Members were required to submit their quota of food or supplies to the state in return for the use of the land. By 1932, more than fourteen million Russian peasants had joined collective farms; their only other option was to join a sovkhoz or state farm, where everything belonged to the state and peasants provided only labour, dependent on the state for their food. See Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 497-498.

<sup>20</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* trans. H. T. Willetts (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991), 42-43.

to assert that despite such exploitation art "is not sullied by our efforts; it loses nothing of its lineage, but every time and however applied it grants us a share of its own secret, inner light."<sup>22</sup> The combined references to art as "a gift from God" and its "secret, inner light" are unambiguously Christian, and thus in the *Lecture* Solzhenitsyn established his perception of art as an embodiment of both God's will as well as an incorruptible aspect of God's design.

Solzhenitsyn's perception of the role of the artist in society was initially stated elsewhere, and it has not been amended at all in the thirty years since he first articulated it. At a meeting of the Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1967, he responded to a fellow members' criticism that his novel *Cancer Ward* was 'anti-humanitarian' by stating that

It is not the task of the writer to defend or criticize one or another mode of distributing the social product or to defend or criticize one or another form of government organisation. The task of the writer is to select more universal and eternal questions, [such as] the secrets of the human heart and conscience, the confrontation between life and death, the triumph over spiritual sorrow, the laws in the history of mankind that were born in the depths of time immemorial and that will cease to exist only when the sun ceases to shine.<sup>23</sup>

Solzhenitsyn explained the writer's role in more detail in the *Nobel Lecture* by comparing the two types of artist which he perceived to exist in society. The first he identified as the one who fails to recognize art as inspired by God and who seeks to "be the creator of an independent spiritual world, [and so they] burden themselves with the act of creating and peopling this world, accepts complete responsibility for it," but then "breaks down." Their art is a resounding failure because such a task cannot be accomplished by one person. As humanity has denied the hand of God in modern life, this artist has arrogantly ignored the role of God in the creation of art. The second kind of

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, 3.

artist does not make this mistake; he or she recognises God's presence in art and welcomes the opportunity to serve Him through the expression of his or her own creativity. These artists acknowledge their debt to God and assume it gratefully; they are content "to work joyfully as a small apprentice under God's heaven," their only gift that "of perceiving more acutely than others the harmony of the world and the beauty and ugliness of man's contribution to it, and the gift of acutely conveying this to others."<sup>24</sup>

Solzhenitsyn clearly identified himself with the second artist; his belief that he had been saved by God only served to further his conviction that artists are beholden to God for their talent; that what they create is not their own. Edward E. Ericson recognised this belief in the author's work and concluded that "[t]he moral universe of Solzhenitsyn rests ultimately on the power of the word. The Word of the Creator established this universe. The word of the writer seeks to be faithful to it. The writer's little stories reflect the Great Story....By such means the human word upholds and even drives the universe bestowed by the Original Word."<sup>25</sup> As such, in Solzhenitsyn's view the task of the artist is to do nothing less than to pay homage to the inherent goodness of Creation, recognise all aspects of human participation in it, and then to tell the truth about all of it.

Solzhenitsyn believes that true art and artists have a Higher Purpose. It is important to note here that the role of the artist in the Russian view of literature transcends public entertainment; rather, it is to develop "a social conscience. [Literature] is both critical and educative, at once an expression of, and a guide to, social development."<sup>26</sup> In this tradition, the foremost responsibility of the writer/artist is to tell truths—in fact, it is his or her *moral duty* to do so. Solzhenitsyn accepts this view completely. He said, "I do not believe that it is the task of literature, with respect to either

<sup>23</sup> "Secretariat Meeting with Solzhenitsyn, 22 September 1967," in Leopold Labedz, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), 151.

<sup>24</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Edward E. Ericson, *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993), 45.

<sup>26</sup> Francis Barker, *Solzhenitsyn: Politics and Form* (London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1977), 47.

society or the individual, to conceal the truth or to tone it down. Rather, I believe that it is the task of literature to tell people the real truth as they expect it.<sup>27</sup> This moral duty of truth-telling was part of a larger responsibility to write compassionately of human suffering, to refute untruths and to fight for human freedom, without thought to personal risk.<sup>28</sup> Solzhenitsyn is determined to fulfil what he perceived to be his moral duties as a writer, writing that "no one can bar the road to truth, and to advance its cause I am prepared to accept even death."<sup>29</sup> Although it is possible that this statement could be construed as Solzhenitsyn's willingness to be martyred, it seems equally likely that, given his personal religious views, he was simply affirming his responsibilities to seek and tell the truth as a Christian man and artist for the betterment of society.

Further examination of Solzhenitsyn's theory of art is postponed in favour of an analysis of the central Christian themes of Creation, the Fall and Redemption as he incorporated them into his thought. These three concepts are crucial to Christianity as they are the basis upon which the nature of humanity as God created it exists and functions in the temporal world. Solzhenitsyn's views on art and the role of the artist delineate how he perceives himself and his work; an examination of how his religiosity is embedded in his work affirms his status not only as a Christian man, but also as a Christian artist.

Andrej Kodjak has defined Solzhenitsyn's perception of the world as a "profoundly Christian one, with definite eschatological overtones."<sup>30</sup> Father Alexander Schmemann, whom Solzhenitsyn has publicly credited with "explaining me to myself," agreed.<sup>31</sup> He identified a typically Christian writer as one who has "in mind a deep and all-embracing,

---

<sup>27</sup> "Secretariat Meeting with Solzhenitsyn, 22 September 1967," in Labedz, 151.

<sup>28</sup> A. Obolensky, "Solzhenitsyn in the Mainstream of Russian Literature," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8:2-3 (1971), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Open Letter to the Fourth Congress", in Labedz, 116.

<sup>30</sup> Andrej Kodjak, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 144.

<sup>31</sup> As quoted in Scammell, 768. During the 1970s Father Schmemann was the Dean of St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York City.

although possible unconscious perception of the world, man, and life, which, historically, was born and grew from Biblical and Christian revelation, and only from it." Furthermore, this 'perception' manifests itself as "the triune intuition of creation, fall, and redemption."<sup>32</sup> In other words, Solzhenitsyn's sensitivity to the religious and moral universe has a deeply rooted impact on all that he writes. This, in turn, allows us to categorise him broadly as a Christian writer.<sup>33</sup>

Schmemann's definitions of these three 'intuitions' and their applicability to Solzhenitsyn's works require elaboration. The 'intuition' of Creation refers to a belief in any person that the world, because it was created by God, is inherently good. If an individual believes that the world is "meaningless and absurd," then according to the precepts of Christian belief that person is not a Christian. Despite the atrocities of modern life, if a person believes that the world remains intrinsically good and that life has purpose, then that person may be considered to be a Christian.<sup>34</sup> For example, though Solzhenitsyn's novels depict and explore real evil, he never condemns humanity, "the poisonous whisper of which can be heard so clearly in so much of 'contemporary art.'"<sup>35</sup> He has never lost his sense of hope, or his perception of the world as originally and innately good.

Life is not meaningless for Solzhenitsyn, and he expressed his belief of the meaning of existence best through the character of Oleg Kostoglotov in *Cancer Ward* as "to preserve untarnished, undisturbed and undistorted the image of eternity which each person is born with—as far as possible. Like a silver moon in a calm, still pond."<sup>36</sup> More prosaically, he stated in the *Harvard Address* that the purpose of life should be "to leave

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Schmemann, "On Solzhenitsyn," trans. Marjorie L. Hoover, in John B. Dunlop et al., eds., *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1973), 39.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1968), 460.

[it] a better human being than one started it.<sup>37</sup> Solzhenitsyn values life; he has been deemed to be the expert "on the lengths to which men regularly go in order to survive. He is our leading literary authority on the sheer value of life itself, of the need to keep breathing."<sup>38</sup> A prose poem entitled 'The Elm Log' is an excellent example of the primacy of life in Solzhenitsyn's world view, and it illustrates his conviction in the strength of the human spirit:

We were sawing firewood when we picked up an elm log and gave a cry of amazement. It was a full year since we had chopped down the trunk, dragged it along behind a tractor and sawn it up into logs...and yet this elm log had still not given up! A fresh green shoot had sprouted from it with the promise of a thick, leafy branch, or even a whole new elm tree.

We placed the log on the sawing-horse, as though on an executioner's block, but we could not bring ourselves to bite into it with our saw. How could we? That log cherished life as dearly as we did; its urge to live was even stronger than ours.<sup>39</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's belief in the value of life in the modern world formed the foundation of the *Harvard Address*; indeed, it was his concern for the West and for the value of the lives of its peoples which motivated the speech in the first place.<sup>40</sup> He was concerned with the decline of the West, and he spoke of the need for change in the interest of Western survival. This position is supported by the fact that Solzhenitsyn warned his audience that a decline in courage is "considered the first symptom of the end", that "a high degree of habitual well-being is not advantageous to a living organism," and that "it will be simply impossible to bear up to the trials of this threatening century with nothing but the supports of a legalistic structure."<sup>41</sup> He wanted Americans to understand the perils of their society as he perceived them, and his warnings to them demonstrate an

<sup>37</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart: The Harvard Address," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections* (Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980), 19.

<sup>38</sup> Steven Allabeck, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1978), 94.

<sup>39</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "The Elm Log," in Solzhenitsyn, *Stories and Prose Poems*, trans. Michael Glenny (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1973), 197.

<sup>40</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 6.

adherence to a firm belief in Schmemann's intuition of Creation. It could be argued that, given his time in the Soviet Union, he was well aware of the perniciousness of rapid social decline and sought to give the West the benefit of his experience. In any case, he clearly valued Western life, and he counselled the West to strengthen itself for its own sake.

Solzhenitsyn's works also manifest the intuition of the Fall, which is a unique component to the Christian system of beliefs among the world's religions. Unlike other religions, Christianity does not attempt to explain the nature of evil, "to rationalize it away, or to neutralize it by justifying that it exists."<sup>42</sup> Christianity simply affirms evil's existence and depicts it. 'Evil' is not separate from 'good', and evil is not defined as simply the "absence of good", but rather, it is always associated with the Fall.<sup>43</sup> Schmemann explains that "only that which is raised on high can fall, and the higher, the more brilliant, and the more precious it is, the stronger the horror, grief and suffering....[T]o experience and to recognize evil as a fall and to be horrified by it is precisely to reveal evil as evil, to experience evil as the terrible presence, reality and efficacy of that which has no 'essence', and yet exists."<sup>44</sup> Evil is a real force in human life and cannot be ignored or explained away.

This is how Solzhenitsyn both understands and depicts evil in the twentieth century. Solzhenitsyn's personal definition of evil is "the absence of any mercy, the absence of any humanity,"<sup>45</sup> and his Christian beliefs do not permit him to dismiss evil as a nebulous, indefinable or obscure concept with no clear presence or meaning in the lives of individuals. He believes that it is real and is present in our daily lives as well as within ourselves. Solzhenitsyn's persistent focus on the presence of good and evil in human life has helped to distinguish him from other major authors of this century. Allabeck identified this aspect of Solzhenitsyn's uniqueness as "his refusal to regard good and evil as

<sup>41</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 6-8.

<sup>42</sup> Schmemann, 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Paul Gray, "Russia's Prophet in Exile," *Time* 134:4 (1989), 68.

outdated, either as words or concepts.<sup>46</sup> Solzhenitsyn acknowledged the tendency to view the concepts of good and evil as unfashionable and has decried it; he wrote that "[it] has become embarrassing to appeal to eternal concepts, embarrassing to state that evil makes its home in the individual human heart before it enters a political system. Yet it is not considered shameful to make daily concessions to an integral evil."<sup>47</sup>

Solzhenitsyn believes that the central goal of each person on earth should be to learn the difference between 'good' and 'evil'. He learned the difference in the camps, and he conceded that great suffering can accelerate the process considerably. He described his own gradual recognition of the realities of good and evil in the fourth volume of *Gulag Archipelago*:

It was granted to me to carry away from my prison years on my bent back, which nearly broke beneath its load, this essential experience: how a human being becomes evil and how good....And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through the human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of hearts, there remains an unrooted [sic] corner of evil.<sup>48</sup>

For devout Christians such as Solzhenitsyn this state of affairs is a fact, not an opinion. For he and like-minded others, the moral universe very much exists and is fully operational, regardless of whether humans choose to believe in it or not.<sup>49</sup> A consequence of his strong belief in the distinction between good and evil, however, is that Solzhenitsyn tends to view the world in black-and-white terms, in terms of 'good' or 'evil',

<sup>46</sup> Allabeck, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Men Have Forgotten God: The Templeton Address," *National Review* 35:14 (1983), 875. Solzhenitsyn had received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, and his remarks were presented in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace with Prince Philip in attendance. Previous winners had been Mother Theresa (1972) and Billy Graham (1982). See *Ibid.*, 872.

<sup>48</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago IV*, 615.

and only in those terms. He leaves the impression that he cannot or will not recognise shades of grey. This in and of itself may be understandable, given that Solzhenitsyn's religiosity was reborn amid the horrors of the gulag, but this tendency to judge within such a strictly prescribed framework must be taken into account when examining not only Solzhenitsyn's views on the meaning of his own life and his art, but also his criticisms of the West.

In accordance with his acceptance of the moral universe, one of Solzhenitsyn's most enduring themes is the eternal struggle between good and evil, particularly during the twentieth century. A point which he raises repeatedly is that the horrors of our century have stemmed directly from the fact that humanity has forgotten God. In his 1985 *Templeton Address* he told those assembled that

More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened." ...And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: "Men have forgotten God."<sup>50</sup>

This theme, of course, was a significant one in the *Harvard Address*.

Solzhenitsyn's analysis of the cause of Western decline may be simply summarised as 'the West has forgotten God'. The embracing of that Enlightenment-inspired doctrine of "anthropocentricity, with man seen as the center of all" led to the acceptance of the view that humanity and the temporal world assumes primacy over God and the eternal, spiritual world. Humanism refused to "admit [to] the existence of intrinsic evil in man," upon which Christianity itself is premised, and thus "did [not] see any task higher than the attainment of happiness on earth." As a result, "man's sense of responsibility to God and society has grown dimmer and dimmer," and the West in the twentieth century is suffering

<sup>49</sup> Ericson, 24.

<sup>50</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Templeton Address*, 873.

from "moral poverty."<sup>61</sup> Solzhenitsyn expanded this line of analysis further in a later section of the *Address* with the argument that modern humanity has "lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity" to the detriment of its inner spirituality and sense of moral responsibility.<sup>52</sup>

In short, Solzhenitsyn believed, as shown in the *Address*, that we human beings have denied that religious consciousness inherent within us, the 'divine spark,' which makes us human. Western civilisation chose to forget God, and consequently set in motion the agents of its own decline—its own peoples, who succumbed to materialism and self-deification in their efforts to attain primacy in a universe not of their making. It is telling that Solzhenitsyn's analysis of the cause of the decline of the West rests entirely on the failings of the Enlightenment and its irreligiosity. Again, this is an example of Solzhenitsyn's characteristic narrow-mindedness in perceiving the world in terms of good and evil, moral and immoral. He does not posit any other possible explanation for Western decline other than its secularism, instead attributing all of the faults of the West to its immorality, a consequence of forsaking God. It is possible that he, after more than fifty years of living under totalitarianism, was disappointed to discover that Western freedom and prosperity did not satisfy his expectations of concomitant moral strength as he had envisioned it. Regardless, the theme that 'humanity has forgotten God' is a common one in Solzhenitsyn's works, and is clearly evident in the *Harvard Address*.

Finally, a belief in Redemption is not a result of "humanistic optimism" or a "triumph of reason," but rather the Christian precepts of rebirth and salvation. Solzhenitsyn does not accept the Enlightenment posits of ideology or science as the key to individual and/or societal regeneration. He believes strongly in the potential of humanity to save itself, based on his ultimate faith in the perfectibility of the individual and collective conscience. He has been consistently unprepared, even in his fiction, to ever

<sup>51</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 19.

dismiss a character as beyond redemption.<sup>53</sup> Even Solzhenitsyn's most evil characters are portrayed as those who simply lack the courage to revert to the right path; each novel ends on a note of hope for all of its characters, that they are redeemable and perfectible.<sup>54</sup> The future always holds great possibility; specifically the possibility that Christianity and the power of faith (manifested by Christian morals and ethics) will prevail over materialism, greed and violence.<sup>55</sup> Man, to which God's divine spark attests, is inherently 'good' and thus 'moral'; therefore Solzhenitsyn believes that humans have the potential for moral perfectibility. The conversation quoted below, from *Cancer Ward*, illustrates the force of conscience and the painful process of evaluating one's own life for an ordinary man called Yefrem. Yefrem is presented in contrast to Pavel Nikolayevich Rusanov, a career Party official:

Yefrem sighed hoarsely. 'I've mucked so many women about, left them with children hanging round their necks. They cried...[my conscience will] never resolve.'

'What's that got to do with it?' Pavel Nikolayevich suddenly lost his temper. 'The whole idea's sheer religious rubbish! You've read too much slush, Comrade Poddyuyev, you've disarmed yourself ideologically. You keep harping on about that stupid moral perfection!'

'What's so terrible about moral perfection?' said Kostoglotov aggressively. 'Why should moral perfection give you such a pain in the belly? It can't harm anyone—except someone who's a moral monstrosity!'<sup>56</sup>

Solzhenitsyn deliberately leaves the reader with the impression that through even the contemplation of such thoughts there is hope for Yefrem, the very real possibility that he will find his way back to Christian morality in a rigidly secular society and thus better himself as a human being. Solzhenitsyn's persistence in ending on a note of hope is rooted in his belief that, at heart, all men are good, and that there is purpose in the God-created moral universe in which we all live. Humans do not derive life's meaning through the values and beliefs which we ourselves have created and clung to, but rather from

<sup>53</sup> Schmemann, 42-43.

<sup>54</sup> Ericson, *Modern World*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Allabeck, 148.

God. The overall goal of Christianity is, after all, to embody the will of God, but first we must determine what that is. Truth, real and ultimate Truth, does exist and should be sought.<sup>57</sup>

The search for truth, however, must be complemented by faith, a concept which forms an important component of Solzhenitsyn's hopeful belief in the ascendancy of humanity's inherent goodness over its intrinsic evil; in his view, faith in religion and faith in God is essential to anyone seeking the right path. An excellent example of this aspect of the author's compatibility with Schmemann's intuition of Redemption is found in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Near the novel's end, Shukhov and Alyoshka the Baptist are preparing for bed, hoping to get enough sleep to survive another day in the camp. Their conversation depicts the gulf between the secular person concerned with the problems of daily life and the devout Christian who believes absolutely in the power of faith:

Shukhov lay with his head toward the window, Alyoshka on the other half of the bunk with his head at the other end, where light from the bulb would reach him. He was reading his Testament again.

The lamp wasn't all that far away. They could read or even sew.

Alyoshka heard Shukhov thank God out loud, and looked around.

"There you are, Ivan Denisovich, your soul is asking to be allowed to pray to God. Why not let it have its way, eh?"

Shukhov shot a glance at him: the light in his eyes was like a candle flame. Shukhov sighed.

"Because, Alyoshka, prayers are petitions—either they don't get through at all, or else it's 'complaint rejected.'..."

"That's because you never prayed long enough or fervently enough, that's why your prayers weren't answered. Prayer must be persistent. And if you have faith and say to a mountain, 'Make way,' it will make way."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*, 150.

<sup>57</sup> Ericson, *Modern World*, 34-35.

<sup>58</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *One Day*, 174-175.

Hope and redemption are important Christian themes in Solzhenitsyn's speeches as well. The *Nobel Lecture* ends on a note of enthusiasm for the future of world literature, that "single great heart, beating in response to the cares and sorrows of our world,"<sup>59</sup> which he optimistically believed had the ability to unify and morally elevate humankind. In addition, Solzhenitsyn concluded his remarks at Harvard with a statement which conveyed his by now familiar faith in the Western peoples to regain their essential spirituality, to find the right path for the necessary moral regeneration of their civilisation. He urged them to question that which they has presumed before—those beliefs that God has no place in the modern world and that humans are the highest beings in the universe—and then said that "[if] the world has not approached its end, it has reached a major watershed in history....It will demand from us a spiritual blaze; we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life....This ascension is similar to climbing onto the next anthropological state. No one on earth has any other way left but—upward."<sup>60</sup>

The conclusion of the *Address* leaves little doubt in the reader's mind that Solzhenitsyn intended the speech to be inspiring; he clearly believed that the modern West still had time to rectify its mistakes, to rid itself of its spiritual apathy and to begin its necessary social and political regeneration in moral terms. The *Address* conveyed hope for the West as his other essays, notably the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* and *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals* (1990), conveyed hope for the future of Russia. It can be argued that Solzhenitsyn's faith that good can triumph over evil formed the basis of his hope for Russia to overcome the devastation of totalitarianism, and that he was willing to extend the same optimism to the West during its struggle to reorient itself morally and ethically.

Schmemann's Christian-derived intuitions of Creation, the Fall and Redemption are extremely useful in analysing the influence of Solzhenitsyn's personal Christianity on his works of fiction as well as his public speeches. Through them we may identify

---

<sup>59</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, 23.

Solzhenitsyn broadly as a Christian writer and begin to develop a more complex and rewarding framework through which to analyse his thought. This approach also illuminates the ideological gulf which existed between Solzhenitsyn and the majority of his American critics in 1978. However, there are other typically Christian themes in Solzhenitsyn's works which were not examined by Schmemann, and we must move more deeply into the basic tenets of that tradition to further establish his status as a Christian writer. Of particular importance here is Solzhenitsyn's thematic and artistic compatibility with the common Christian precepts of universalism, freedom, truth, conscience and justice.

Solzhenitsyn's preoccupation with the plight of human beings everywhere, with the world-wide struggle between good and evil, and with the moral and spiritual health of all peoples indicates his conformity to the Christian concept of universality. Although Solzhenitsyn is technically a Russian Orthodox Christian, his is a universalist Christian world view; that is, he speaks to *all* Christians. This allows us to study him within the broad boundaries of Christianity without becoming entangled on the particularities of Russian Orthodoxy or other dogmas, as Solzhenitsyn himself chose to speak and write in very general Christian terms and as a Christian, rather than as a Russian Orthodox Christian.<sup>61</sup> On an even broader scale, Solzhenitsyn is greatly concerned that all world religions, and not solely Christian ones, should "teach the primacy of human personhood," and he identified a central theme common to all religions as their recognition of humanity's internal and external battles between good and evil. Thus, evil is not a unique cross which only Christians bear; it is common to all religions and all peoples.<sup>62</sup> As he wrote in the *Gulag Archipelago*, "I have come to understand the truth of all religions of the

<sup>60</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 20.

<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to note that the two American critics who were willing to study the impact of Solzhenitsyn's religiosity on his works both chose to study his ideas within the broad Christian tradition, rather than within Russian Orthodoxy. Alexander Schmemann, a Russian Orthodox priest himself, "align[ed] the writer not with Russian Orthodoxy in particular but with Christianity in general." See Ericson, *The Moral Vision*, 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Ericson, *Modern World*, 33.

world: They struggle with the evil inside a human being (inside every human being)."<sup>63</sup>

This is their most basic area of commonality, and Solzhenitsyn's sympathy for the struggle of all religions to guide their peoples toward spiritual lives propelled him to speak to all human beings without the particularistic language of Christianity. Perhaps the best example of the universality of Solzhenitsyn's discourse was his careful use in the *Address* of the terms 'Supreme Complete Entity' and 'Superior Spirit' in most sections in lieu of 'God,' an unmistakable indication that he was "[taking] pains to speak...in words that belong to no one tradition alone....He...raised the discussion to a pluralistic plane on which those of varying commitments may join."<sup>64</sup> Solzhenitsyn's avoidance of dogma-specific Christian terms in his works is an important aspect of his universality as an artist.

Solzhenitsyn's views on the potential of art to provide common ground for the nations of the world is another important aspect of his universal Christian world-view. For Solzhenitsyn, art is the universal language, transcending simple syntax to become the process by which nations learn from each other for the betterment of all. Literature, as the living memory of a country, becomes a social unifier and a moral educator within its own boundaries and beyond them. Solzhenitsyn finds it difficult to sympathise with the 'problems' which humans have with one another; in his view, the greatest fear all people have is of death, and the greatest joy is love. These sentiments should serve to unite humankind because they are universally felt, regardless of nationality, age, sex, or ideological belief.<sup>65</sup> Kafka wrote that "the indestructible is one; every single man is the indestructible—and at the same time the indestructible is common to all people and from this springs the inseparable union of all people."<sup>66</sup> Solzhenitsyn concurred; if fear of death and the joy of love are not sufficient to draw the world's peoples together, then the universal and undeniable presence of the divine spark should be. As human beings will

<sup>63</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago Vol IV*, 615.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Novak, "On God and Man," in Berman, 142.

<sup>65</sup> Alan J. Whitehorn, "What Men Live By: An Analysis of Solzhenitsyn's Writings," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 8:2-3 (1971), 235-236.

not or cannot acknowledge their common link to one another as the creations of God, then artists must accept—as their moral duty—the responsibility for the necessary and vital process of bringing together the peoples of the world in recognition of their commonality.

Solzhenitsyn's convictions on the necessity and moral purpose of art underscore his views on freedom, another important aspect of his predominantly Christian world view. If, as he believes, art is to be the moral educator and social and national unifier of humanity, then art must be free. An examination of Solzhenitsyn's view on the importance of artistic freedom reveals the basis of his overall view of human freedom. Freedom as he perceives it is not a matter of political or legal freedom, but rather a Christian-derived concept of freedom of spiritual and moral development.<sup>67</sup> This is in marked contrast to Western perceptions of freedom and illustrates an important area where Solzhenitsyn differed significantly in the complexities of his world-view from his American critics. Solzhenitsyn was far less concerned with formal, temporal freedom than he was with intellectual, artistic freedom. This aspect of his thought is evident in the *Harvard Address*, even though it was virtually unrecognised by his American critics. Christianity teaches that moral freedom is paramount,<sup>68</sup> and Solzhenitsyn's thoughts on art and censorship demonstrate his concurrence with this tenet.

The earliest exposition of Solzhenitsyn's thought on the necessity of artistic freedom may be found in his *Open Letter to the Fourth Congress* (1967). In this document, he openly criticised both the Soviet government and the Soviet Writers' Union; the first for their persecution of Soviet writers, and the second for their refusal to defend their members from attacks in the press. The crux of his complaint lay in his belief that both organs were ruthlessly stifling artistic life and creativity in the Soviet Union by

<sup>66</sup> As quoted in Pavel Kovaly, "Problems of Anti-Humanism and Humanism in the Life and Work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn," *Studies in Soviet Thought* 11:1 (1971), 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ericson, 62.

<sup>68</sup> Nielsen, 108.

allowing GLAVLIT<sup>69</sup> to interfere in "the role of unfleeting time"—the organic process of writing a nation's literature. Should this process be halted altogether or even interrupted, it would not be only Russia which would suffer, but all of world literature.<sup>70</sup> With the *Open Letter* we may establish Solzhenitsyn's views on the absolute necessity of artistic freedom through his scathing critique of Soviet censorship.

Arguing that it was unacceptable for Party bureaucrats to judge of literary quality, Solzhenitsyn reminded the Congress that even Dostoyevsky, "the pride of world literature," had not even then been published in full after decades of literary banishment. Solzhenitsyn defended the right of freedom of publication on the very Christian basis that a nation's political apparatus cannot, for any reason, suppress that which is created for the good of its people, which educates and helps society struggle with life, morality and human nature;

Literature cannot develop in between the categories of 'permitted' and 'not permitted', 'about this you may write' and 'about this you may not'. Literature that is not the breath of contemporary society, that dares not transmit the pains and fears of that society, that does not warn against threatening moral and social dangers—such literature does not deserve the name of literature; it is only a facade. Such literature loses the confidence of its own people, and its published works are used as wastepaper instead of being read.<sup>71</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's protest against censorship was not inspired by considerations such as the violation of civil liberties. Politics was not relevant to his argument: in the *Open Letter* he was more concerned with protecting the literary life of a nation than he was with the restriction of personal freedoms. To repeat, the role of art in society is primarily a social one, and in Solzhenitsyn's view literature develops organically; it is rooted in and grows from the collective lives, history and experiences of a nation's people. It is meant to manifest the characteristics of a country and the mores and traditions of its

<sup>69</sup> Acronym for *Glavnoye upravleniye literatury* (Chief Administration of Literature), the organisation responsible for literary censorship. See Scammell, 889.

<sup>70</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Open Letter," in Labedz, 112-113.

citizens, as well as to guide that nation on its path—in this world and the next.

Censorship prevents art from fulfilling its social obligations to the people, who rely on it for moral instruction and spiritual inspiration.<sup>72</sup>

Solzhenitsyn is also, logically, an ardent supporter of the twin freedoms of thought and speech. In his *Open Letter to the Secretariat of the R.S.F.S.R Writer's Union*, written after he had been expelled without warning and *in absentia* from the Ryazan Writers' Union<sup>73</sup> in 1969, he wrote angrily that "It is high time to remember that we belong first and foremost to humanity. And that man has separated himself from the animal world by thought and by speech. These, naturally, should be free. If they are put in chains, we shall return to the state of the animals."<sup>74</sup> He went on to write that "openness, honest and complete openness—that is the first condition of health in all societies, including our own."<sup>75</sup> Humans have an inherent 'worth' which must be protected as creations of God, and because God gave us our freedom it cannot be taken away.

In *The First Circle*, a prisoner called Bobynin is summoned to Abukumov's (the Minister of State Security) office and questioned harshly on the expected date of completion for the *sharashka*'s<sup>76</sup> prize project—one which Stalin is awaiting impatiently—a device which would allow the secret police to identify 'criminals' from their voices through

<sup>71</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Open Letter," in Labedz, 112.

<sup>72</sup> Barker, 47.

<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that only authors who were members of the Writer's Union in their area were allowed access to publishing houses and literary magazines in the Soviet Union. Once expelled, Solzhenitsyn was left with no avenue to publish his works in his homeland, a dream which was not realised until 1991. See Scammell, 695.

<sup>74</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Open Letter to the Secretariat of the R.S.F.S.R Writer's Union," in Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 494.

<sup>75</sup> As quoted in Labedz, 224. Notably, Solzhenitsyn used the word *glasnost* or 'openness' almost two decades before Mikhail Gorbachev gave it international recognition. See Ericson, *Modern World*, 27.

<sup>76</sup> A *sharashka* was a special prison camp for intellectuals, primarily scientists. In exchange for work on state-sponsored projects, the prisoners received a substantially higher standard of living than those in ordinary work camps. To be placed in a *sharashka* meant that one would likely survive imprisonment, whereas the risk of death by starvation or the elements was much higher in the other work camps. Solzhenitsyn was imprisoned in a *sharashka*, the Marfino Institute in Moscow for nearly three years as a physicist before returning to the gulag. His experiences in

the use of voice printing and wiretapping. Bobynin is insolent and Abakumov threatens him, sure that he can be cowed. Bobynin retorts:

You are wrong, Citizen Minister! I have nothing!....You took my freedom away long ago, and you don't have the power to return it because you don't have it yourself....Just understand one thing and pass it along to anyone at the top who still doesn't want to know that you are strong only as long as you don't deprive people of *everything*. For a person you've taken *everything* away from is no longer in your power. He's free all over again.<sup>77</sup>

Bobynin is an excellent example of one of Solzhenitsyn's 'heroic' characters. Although he is a prisoner and his fate is in Abukumov's hands, he refuses to cooperate in any way with a project which he perceives to be morally wrong. His freedom is internal and purely spiritual; it cannot be compromised by the loss of physical freedom or by the possibility of violence. It is the freedom of conscience and of morality, and Bobynin clings to it in the face of physical danger and even death. In Solzhenitsyn's view, this defines both Bobynin's humanity and his heroism: freedom, even internal, spiritual freedom must be fought for and protected.

It is precisely the reverence with which Solzhenitsyn treats the concept of freedom and the concomitant moral responsibility of the writer to respect and promote freedom which provoked his ire with the irresponsible use of Western freedom of the press in the *Harvard Address*. In his view, Western journalists, who do not struggle against repressive state censorship or risk imprisonment or even death for their opinions, abuse their positions as the moral edifiers of society by misusing their freedom. As he said elsewhere, "I am accustomed to all kinds of slander in the Soviet press that no one in the country has the power to correct or refute, but I never expected such irresponsibility in the West."<sup>78</sup> They ignore what he considers to be their moral responsibilities toward the

Marfino provided the setting and characters for his novel *The First Circle*. See Scammell, 228-269.

<sup>77</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 96.

<sup>78</sup> No Author, "The Unexpected Perils of Freedom," *Time* 103:9 (1974), 29.

people which they inform; they fail to educate or inspire their audiences, preferring to print "hasty, immature, superficial, and misleading judgements."<sup>79</sup>

In Solzhenitsyn's view, the Western press has assumed the public importance which should be attributed to art, and yet does not fulfil the obligations inherent in its freedom as art would. That the press is the educator of the people is regrettable; that the press is sensationalistic and superficial is evidence of both Western decline and the deprivation of the Western peoples of the moral guidance of true art. This criticism of the West is indicative of the impact of Solzhenitsyn's personal experiences as an author struggling for freedom of thought in the Soviet Union. His perception of political and civil freedoms as subservient to the greater need for artistic and moral freedom seems likely to have been a legacy of life under Soviet Communism. This is one of Solzhenitsyn's more obvious biases and further evidence of his tendency to think in black and white terms; because the Western presses do not fulfil the role in society which he felt Soviet ones would have if they had not been censored, they are immoral. Once again, Solzhenitsyn seemed disappointed that his expectations of the free West had not been met, and he criticised the Western presses on his own concept of what constitutes immorality in the language of Christianity, shaped by his personal experience.

Truth, and telling the truth, are a key elements of Solzhenitsyn's Christian world view, his literature and his life. His devotion to 'telling the truth'—at all costs—has been the motivation behind, for example, his public speeches, which were generally misunderstood by American commentators. 'Truth' is linked closely with 'good' in Solzhenitsyn's discourse; concomitantly, the 'lie' is always equated with 'evil'. In the Christian tradition, he believes that there is ultimate Truth; as a result, he believes that the moral universe provides objective categories by which to judge. "It is a matter of readiness and being smart enough to recognize the truth when it hits you....People need

---

<sup>79</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 10.

truth. A little of it goes a long way."<sup>60</sup> Solzhenitsyn's persistent emphasis on the importance and healing properties of 'truth' is well-documented, and the *Harvard Address* is certainly emblematic of his determination to be a truth-teller in the West.

Solzhenitsyn understands that 'truth' is difficult to discern, and that 'ultimate truth' is even harder to seek, but he allows no excuses for those who do not even try. In his novels, "[the] step-by-step process of beginning to think is mapped out carefully...as if Solzhenitsyn wishes reemphasize [sic] whenever possible that Man Thinking is rare on every social level and under any circumstances."<sup>61</sup> Solzhenitsyn is concerned only with serious thought and is disdainful of people wasting precious energy on frivolous thought; he focuses on the "process which results in an individual's gaining a sobering new perception of life or a dawning sense that his previous self-conceptions were false. He continually suggests that it is difficult to think; people rarely do it unless they must and even then are usually unprepared."<sup>62</sup> Solzhenitsyn describes the process of ascertaining truth in his prose poem 'Reflections' and concludes with the thought that perhaps only God can know 'ultimate truth':

On the surface of a swift-flowing stream the reflections of things near or far are always indistinct...

It is the same with our lives. If so far we have been unable to see clearly or to reflect the eternal lineaments of truth, is it not because we too are still moving towards some end—because we are still alive?<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, even if only God can know absolute truth, humanity has a moral obligation to seek its own truths. Solzhenitsyn has great sympathy for individuals who wrestle with the complexities of the truths in their own lives.

An excellent example of this characteristic is found in *Cancer Ward*. An ex-prisoner is serving out her sentence of eternal exile by working as an orderly in the camp hospital. Elizaveta Anatolyevna confides in Kostoglotov about a matter which worries her

<sup>60</sup> Allabeck, 129.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-129.

<sup>63</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Reflections" in *Stories and Prose Poems*, 197.

greatly—how to tell her son that he suffers the double shame of being born illegitimate and in exile, his mother an ex-prisoner, a traitor to his country. She confides in Oleg:

The trouble is, my boy's growing up, he's clever and he asks about everything. How ought I to bring him up? Should I burden him with the whole truth? The truth's enough to sink a grown man, isn't it? It's enough to break your ribs. Or should I hide the truth and bring him to terms with life? Is that the right way?<sup>84</sup>

Kostoglotov answers confidently that she should tell her son the truth—illustrating that while Solzhenitsyn understands the difficulties of truth-telling, it is nonetheless imperative, regardless of the situation.<sup>85</sup> Again, Solzhenitsyn makes clear the strict differentiation between the 'truth' and the 'lie', and does not appear to allow for anything in between. Throughout his entire authorial career in the Soviet Union he was committed to revealing the 'lie' of Communism, to exposing the brutal 'truth' of life in his homeland.<sup>86</sup> This typically Christian dedication to unvarnished truth-telling was carried over into his time in the West, but was not tempered with any recognition that he could, in fact, have been wrong in his assessments of the West.

This same dedication to truth-telling was the impetus for the *Harvard Address*. He began that speech by citing Harvard's motto of *Veritas* and established the need for constant vigilance in the search for truth, because "it eludes us as soon as our concentration begins to flag, all the while leaving the illusion that we are continuing to pursue it."<sup>87</sup> His goal at Harvard was not to cater to any Western sense of freedom from criticism; it was to fulfil his duty as a Christian and as an artist to free as many people from the lies of this century as possible. In this light, Solzhenitsyn's perception of truth-telling is more than a matter of duty; it is also a matter of conscience.

In Solzhenitsyn's philosophy, 'conscience' is an integral component of spirituality. It is the link between God and humanity which sets us apart from the animals; it is also

<sup>84</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*, 511.

<sup>85</sup> Ericson, *The Moral Vision*, 38.

<sup>86</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago I*, 53.

<sup>87</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 3.

the key to our inherent goodness and eventual salvation, as manifested in the divine spark. He believes that conscience is the root of freedom, of morality and of virtue, whether that of a nation or of a single individual.<sup>88</sup> As Schmemann observed, "conscience invisibly rules, triumphs over and illuminates the horror, ugliness and evil of the 'fallen' world."<sup>89</sup> Inherent in such a view is the conviction that the potential for human development (here to mean primarily moral and spiritual) is as unlimited as the physical universe itself.<sup>90</sup> Andrej Kodjak supported this insight and extended it:

It is conscience rather than compassion, however, that rests at the heart of Solzhenitsyn's world. Conscience as the last spiritual resource of a society governed by a completely materialistic philosophy....Solzhenitsyn expresses this idea when he adds to the cliché "You only have one life," the phrase "and also one conscience," thus implying that conscience is as precious as life. If conditions force one to choose between the two, one must choose conscience, not life.<sup>91</sup>

This belief was the basis for Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of American withdrawal from Vietnam in the *Address*. In that section of the speech he was not advocating war as desirable, but as the only moral response to the victimisation of an innocent country by an evil ideology. He perceived it as an American responsibility, predicated by the dictates of human conscience, to accept that concern for the possible deaths of American soldiers was invalidated by the necessity of combating evil. In his view, 'justice' and 'conscience' are the sole bases of human ability to distinguish 'right' from 'wrong,'<sup>92</sup> and Solzhenitsyn was arguing that the United States had failed to justify its humanity when it condemned the Vietnamese to Communism. This was its "betrayal," made even more significant by the fact that when it abandoned Vietnam, it opened the doors to the rest of the Far East for Communism to march through uncontested.

---

<sup>88</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Letter to Three Students," in Labedz, 155.

<sup>89</sup> Schmemann, 43.

<sup>90</sup> Schmemann, 43.

<sup>91</sup> Kodjak, 145-146.

<sup>92</sup> Constantine W. Boldyreff, "Solzhenitsyn: The Conscience of Russia," *Transactions* 6 (1972), 30.

In Solzhenitsyn's eyes, the Vietnam war was not a test of *military* strength, and in this context Kodjak's comment is especially relevant. Materialism had weakened American society, but the just cause of Vietnam was the test of the strength of its conscience. In *Cancer Ward*, Solzhenitsyn wrote that "it must have been Gorky who said the only people worthy of freedom are those prepared to go out and fight for it every day."<sup>93</sup> By withdrawing from the fight against Communism in Vietnam, Solzhenitsyn felt that the United States failed the test. Yet again we see Solzhenitsyn's tendency for strict demarcations between 'good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong'. That American withdrawal from Vietnam was supported by many Christian groups in the United States on ethical grounds was not noted in the *Address*, and perhaps Solzhenitsyn lumped those Christian protesters with the other anti-war groups, tarring them all with the same brush. Regardless, it can be argued that Solzhenitsyn's own personal experiences in the Soviet Union biased his judgements of the West in this instance, fairly or unfairly. In Solzhenitsyn's view, Communism was evil and had to be defeated by any means, including war. Because the American government withdrew, he branded them as immoral.

Solzhenitsyn's perception of 'justice' is closely tied with his views on conscience and is extremely significant in Solzhenitsyn's personal philosophy. In the Christian tradition, Solzhenitsyn has argued that the concept of 'justice' is a human impulse, God-given and thus another distinction between humans and animals. In his view, justice exists as long as even only one person believes in it, and he has written that people will never go wrong if they follow their instinct for justice, or, in the Russian way, if they follow the old dictum 'to live by truth'. This is important because it justifies action, whether it be social, political or religious. Solzhenitsyn does not tolerate passivity, and his heroes are always conscious of the choices they make and why they make them. He openly

---

<sup>93</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*, 53.

encourages action, but for the right reasons: the noble goal for the betterment of mankind.<sup>94</sup>

As with 'truth', there is nothing relative about 'justice'. In his *Letter to Three Students*, Solzhenitsyn wrote:

There is nothing relative about justice, as there is nothing relative about conscience. Indeed, justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience usually recognize also the voice of justice. I consider that in all questions, social or historical (if we are aware of them, not from hearsay or books, but are touched by them spiritually), justice will always suggest a way to act (or judge) which will not conflict with our conscience.<sup>95</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's essentially Christian understanding of justice and its integral link to the human conscience further clarifies the basis of his views on Vietnam; in addition, it helps to provide the proper context for his criticisms of Western legalism in the *Harvard Address*. A careful examination of those criticisms reveals that he was not critiquing the effectiveness of the Western legal system as much as he was deplored what he perceived to be its almost complete lack of a moral or ethical foundation. Western legalism does not encourage the evaluation of 'right' and 'wrong' based on the dictates of human conscience, nor does it promote "voluntary self-restraint" in individuals or society at large. Rather, it operates through laws alone, which can lead to legally-sanctioned immorality: as he pointed out in the *Address*, both the greedy oil company and the food manufacturer who uses dangerous preservatives are 'wrong,' and yet the Western legal system allows them to behave unethically without penalty.<sup>96</sup>

In Solzhenitsyn's personal Christian world-view 'justice' is sacred; it is the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the amoral and evil. Guilt is established through the simple application of moral laws; conscience demands it and provides the

<sup>94</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Letter to Three Students," 155.

<sup>95</sup> Solzhenitsyn, "Letter to Three Students," 155.

<sup>96</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Harvard Address*, 7.

determination of guilt or innocence accordingly.<sup>97</sup> In this light, the secular Western system of legalistic justice appears ineffectual at best, and unprincipled and unethical at worst. This aspect of Solzhenitsyn's religiously-based critique of Western legalism may be further contextualised as being a result of his suffering in the Soviet Union, where laws were usually weapons against the people. It seems likely that Solzhenitsyn expected Western legality to be absolutely moral where Soviet legality had been absolutely immoral, in accordance with his rather black-and-white perceptions of the cultural, social and institutional differences between East and West.

The *Harvard Address* of 1978 is a Christian document. It establishes quite clearly the impact of Solzhenitsyn's personal religiosity on his thought, and through a careful examination of its most controversial sections—those criticisms of Western materialism, legalism and freedom—his thematic compatibility with the basic Christian world-view quickly becomes evident. All of Solzhenitsyn's works, from his novels and prose poems to his speeches and essays, have as their common ground a consistent adherence to the most common tenets of Christianity. Despite the fact that the *Address* dealt with a relatively new theme in Solzhenitsyn's thought, the origins and nature of Western decline, it was not an aberration among his works; those criticisms of the West and the language in which they were expressed reveal a distinct congruity with the essential Christian belief system manifested in the whole of his corpus.

Solzhenitsyn is an identifiably Christian artist. He believes absolutely in the link between art and God, and between the artist and God. He is not a passive Christian; his works are meant to embody his religious beliefs and to fulfil his duty to God by attempting to morally and ethically educate his audience. Regardless of his personal reluctance to discuss his faith openly, Solzhenitsyn is a public Christian, and all of his works, including the *Harvard Address*, derive from his religiosity. His thematic concurrence with Alexander Schmemann's triune of intuitions is evidenced by the *Address*; his conviction that the

---

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

world and its peoples are inherently good because it and they were created by God constituted the basic premise of the speech. Solzhenitsyn's belief in the concept of evil, not as an abstract theory, but as a real and present force in modern life, was the motivation for the *Address*. Finally, his hope that the West would overcome its materialistic self-absorption in order to ascend to a higher and infinitely more meaningful spiritual level may be identified as the core theme of the speech. These three intuitions form the foundation of the Christian faith, and Solzhenitsyn consistently represented them in his various works, including the *Harvard Address*.

Other commonly Christian themes are also present in the *Address*. Solzhenitsyn may be defined as a universalist thinker; his ideas are intended to apply to all nations and all peoples regardless of sex, race or ideological persuasion. He did not frame his thought within the particularistic discourse of Russian Orthodoxy, nor did he speak in exclusively Christian terms. Instead, Solzhenitsyn raised his message to a universal level to emphasise the common bonds and concerns of the world's peoples. His views on the importance of human freedom, and especially the freedoms of thought, speech and press, were logical extensions of his Christian faith in that he emphasised inner, moral freedom over external, political or civil freedom. In this context, Solzhenitsyn is much less a political activist than he is a moral force, and this aspect of his philosophy is apparent in the *Address*. For example, his critique of the Western press stemmed from his view that it is the responsibility of the artist to educate and guide humanity; where he sought integrity and the recognition of moral duty, he found only sensationalism and superficiality.

Solzhenitsyn sees himself, first and foremost, a truth-teller.<sup>98</sup> Christianity teaches that ultimate truth can and should be sought, and his career may be accurately described as one which has actively sought to fulfil this goal. The *Harvard Address* is an excellent example of his devotion to telling the truth. Solzhenitsyn persisted in this not to anger his American audience deliberately, but because in his view truth-telling is a duty of the artist

---

<sup>98</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago IV*, 614.

in recognition of his or her responsibility to God, and second, in accordance with the tenets of Christianity, it is a matter of personal conscience. Conscience is inextricably linked to both freedom and truth in his Christian thought; to be free is to have the freedom of spirituality, and to have such freedom and not use it to seek truths in accordance with the dictates of moral conscience constitutes a perversion of freedom and a failure of duty as a human being. Conscience demands truth, and if humanity is free then truths must be sought.

The power of truth in Solzhenitsyn's discourse should not be underestimated—it provided the impetus for the *Harvard Address* and constituted the basis for his persecution in the Soviet Union as a dissident author. The themes of universalism, conscience and justice are all bound to Solzhenitsyn's fundamental and unshakeable Christian belief that humankind can ascertain ultimate truth and thus live truthfully. If humans cannot recognise truth, then it is the responsibility of art to lead them to it. As God is eternal, so is truth; in Solzhenitsyn's world-view it is the role of the conscientious artist to educate people toward their own spiritual rehabilitation. He believes that the result is freedom: freedom of the mind, of the conscience, and of the soul. This process is depicted in all of Solzhenitsyn's novels, but the *Harvard Address* is the only one of his works which melds modern politics and his personal religiosity in an effort to incite the Western peoples to restore their forgotten spirituality, which he felt that they had wrongly sacrificed on the altar of temporal happiness.

In retrospect, the efforts of Solzhenitsyn's American critics to come to terms with the significance of his religious convictions to his thought are unsatisfactory. The reluctance to explore this aspect of his works, shared to a great extent by both the early and the later responses, is indicative of a larger pattern with regard to treatments of the author and the *Harvard Address*. Most American critics and intellectuals at that time chose to view Solzhenitsyn and the *Address* ideas through the prism of their own secular experiences and views. Those who attempted to grapple with the implicitly religious

nature of the speech usually did so only through examinations of his compatibility with their own perceptions of what it was to be a 'prophet,' a somewhat vague term associated with the historical Old Testament image of fire and brimstone.<sup>99</sup> Solzhenitsyn's ideas are contemporary ones; he is a product of this century and his works address modern issues and concerns. To 'explain' Solzhenitsyn's religiosity by way of prophecy is to present his thought as otherworldly, remote from the experiences and world-view of his secular Western audience. Had his American critics chosen to study the clearly Christian roots of his work, it would have become apparent almost immediately that Solzhenitsyn is very much this-worldly, and not at all the holy Russian mystic he was often purported to be.

Those critics who chose to ignore or dismiss the impact of Solzhenitsyn's Christian beliefs on his work also contributed to misunderstandings of him. It has been argued that basic Christian principles lie at the heart of all of his thought, and thus must be taken into account in studies of him. The *Harvard Address* is no different from his novels in this respect, and its essentially Christian basis should be studied in order to help contextualise his message. The fact that his critics were most often predominantly secular historians, literary critics and political scientists is clear from their analyses of that speech. Religion was often not viewed as an acceptable basis from which to criticise the modern West, and so Solzhenitsyn's message at Harvard was negatively viewed through the tainted framework of Christianity. As a consequence, his real and potentially valid criticisms of modern Western life and institutions were all but ignored.

However, it is important to note here that Solzhenitsyn's particular version of Christianity, from which much of his thought is derived, is the product of the events of his own life and his experiences in the atheistic Soviet Union, and thus remote from the West. Although examinations of Solzhenitsyn's congruity with Russian Orthodoxy and/or other religions are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is possible to make some preliminary observations on the nature of his personal Christian views, and how he used those views

---

<sup>99</sup> Patrick Granfield, "Contemporary Prophecy: The Solzhenitsyn Case," *Thought: A Review of*

to criticise the West. Solzhenitsyn's view of the role of religious beliefs and morals in society, as well as his basis for judging the West according to those views, should be studied within the context of his personal history and the influences of life in the atheistic Soviet Union.

It may be argued that Solzhenitsyn's criticisms of the West, as presented in the *Harvard Address*, stemmed from his seemingly black-and-white perceptions of good and evil, morality and immorality as they were developed and influenced by the realities of life under Soviet Communism; his personal history greatly influenced both his interpretations of the tenets of Christianity and how he chose to use his beliefs to criticise the West. In retrospect, it is understandable that Solzhenitsyn should feel so strongly about Soviet Communism; he spent many years of his life working in direct opposition to the regime which had victimised him. Perhaps it was difficult for contemporary Western analysts of the *Harvard Address* to look past Solzhenitsyn words to see the historical and personal experiences on which his views were premised; future scholars will be better able to do so. Solzhenitsyn's personal Christian world-view encompasses basic Christian principles tempered by his personal biography, and if the impact of his Christianity on his works and thought should not be denied or ignored, neither should the impact of those events of his life which sparked and helped to develop his religious views.

It is not necessary to be a devout Christian to understand the *Harvard Address*, but it is necessary to recognise that it is a Christian document, and that its ideas derive from the Christian tradition, in order to begin to study it within its proper context. With their reluctance to assess the *Address* in the spirit in which it was written, Solzhenitsyn's American critics were left with only their own secular perspectives with which to evaluate it. As a consequence, their contribution to the body of scholarship of the author and this important speech is limited; we in the 1990s cannot look to the bulk of the work of that time to provide insights into Solzhenitsyn, but rather only into his critical audience—their

secular beliefs and views, expressed in their own secularised discourse. Solzhenitsyn himself was not given a strong voice, nor was he examined on his own terms as a Christian man and artist. This may be rectified with the growing recognition that we do not have to feel the power of his faith ourselves in order to understand its impact on his work. We only have to accept that he is a Christian man, artist and thinker, and thereby begin the process of contextualising Solzhenitsyn and the *Harvard Address* within the more accurate and rewarding framework of Christian theology.

Though reflection turns the image  
Making things to seem awry,  
Still it holds a veiled message  
For the wise and seeking eye.

—Omar Khayyam, *The Rubiyat*

*Feci quod potui, faciant meliora potentes.*  
[I did what I could, let those who can do better.]

—Solzhenitsyn, August 1914

When Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was exiled from the Soviet Union in February of 1974 his reputation in the United States seemed firmly entrenched. His American audience had watched his struggles against totalitarian communism with great sympathy, based on the recognition that Solzhenitsyn had been fighting a system which stood in direct opposition to their own free, democratic society. They had cheered when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970, and were angered when they learned that he could not leave the Soviet Union to accept it for fear that he would not be allowed to return. His novels were critical successes, and he was hailed him as the greatest Russian writer of the twentieth century, perhaps of all time.<sup>1</sup> *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* had provided Americans with their first real glimpse into Stalin's prisoner labour camps, and the *Gulag Archipelago* had won instant acclaim in the United States for its exposure of the savagery of Soviet Communism, proving that life in the USSR was every bit as abominable as those in the West had envisioned it to be. Solzhenitsyn's personal courage and integrity were admired as a matter of course; as literary critic Steven Allabeck observed, in the early 1970s Americans had been "interested in this man and [had] even regarded him as a hero."<sup>2</sup> 1974 was the year when Solzhenitsyn became the Soviet Union's most famous and internationally celebrated exile.

By 1980 Solzhenitsyn was an intellectual outcast among Americans. No longer was he identified as a fearless Soviet dissident or as a great Russian author. His politics had become undesirable, and his later novels generated little critical interest; he was no longer perceived as a hero but as a false prophet, never again invited to give a commencement address at an American university or to speak publicly in an American forum. The idol had become an ingrate, an incorrigible Russian theocrat who criticised the West, seemingly incapable of appreciating its good qualities as well as he could detail its weaknesses. In the final analysis, Solzhenitsyn was determined to be incompatible

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Carter, *The Politics of Solzhenitsyn* (London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1977), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Allabeck, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1978), 13.

with the West, and therefore undeserving of the status American intellectuals had innocently bestowed upon him in earlier years.

Solzhenitsyn lived in the United States for sixteen years after the *Harvard Address* of June 1978. In that time he spoke publicly only once more, to present his *Templeton Address* in the United Kingdom in 1983. He published very little in English in that period: his edited collection of dissident Soviet essays (which included three of his own) entitled *From Under the Rubble* (1980) and two essays, *The Mortal Danger: How Misconceptions about Russia Imperil the West* (1981) and *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals* (1990). None of the *Templeton Address*, *Rubble or Mortal Danger* is usually mentioned in later studies of Solzhenitsyn, and *Rebuilding Russia*, an extension of the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* of 1974, was not perceived as significant enough to merit much more than brief mention in *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*.<sup>3</sup> Keeping in mind Solzhenitsyn's amazing literary and political productivity during the 1960s and 1970s, his body of work from 1978 to 1994 seems uncharacteristically thin, perhaps the work of a man who knew he had lost his audience. In those later years, Solzhenitsyn chose to abandon further analysis of the West and instead refocused his intellect on the issue which he had always considered to be paramount: the future of Russia. This topic did not appear to interest his American critics to any serious extent, and presumably neither did that of Solzhenitsyn. Thus his entire career in the United States was truly lived out in the short years of 1974 to 1978. A logical and important question for the 1990s, then, is, What happened to Solzhenitsyn?

It is the contention here that Solzhenitsyn was relegated to intellectual exile in the United States as a direct result of the fact that his American critics felt that he had failed them. They had had certain expectations of him, based on their impressions of his years

---

<sup>3</sup> For reviews of *Rebuilding Russia* see Francis X. Clines, "Russia Gets Call by Solzhenitsyn for Slavic State," *The New York Times* (19 September 1990), A1, A8; "Solzhenitsyn and the Slavic Dream," *Newsweek* (1 October 1990), 42; Sophie Quinn-Judge, "Retreat from Empire," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 150:43 (1990), 23-4; John Gray, "Solzhenitsyn's Flawed Blueprint,"

in the Soviet Union and their assumptions of his political and ideological compatibility with the West. It had soon become evident that Solzhenitsyn was not in fact what his critics had assumed him to be, and their idolisation in the early period was rapidly replaced with pervasive charges of his ignorance, his archaic religiosity and rejections of his baseless and unfair criticisms of the West as explicated in the *Harvard Address*. Very little of what Solzhenitsyn thought of the West in the years from 1974 to 1978 was what Americans had wanted or expected to hear, and the reality of his views was shocking.

Solzhenitsyn's speedy tumble from his intellectual pedestal in the eyes of the American press and academic community was the consequence of his failure to live up to their expectations of him.

What, specifically, were those American expectations which Solzhenitsyn, and, in particular the *Harvard Address*, failed so completely to fulfil? They may be summarised as the following: he was expected to laud American democracy after witnessing first-hand the brutality of life under Soviet Communism, and to revere liberalism after surviving totalitarianism. He was expected to appreciate a legal system premised on the rule of law after suffering from the consequences of living in a lawless society. After struggling for years to publish his works a country where censorship ruled, he was expected to rejoice in Western freedom of the press. He was supposed to support the humanitarian decision to withdraw American troops from Vietnam. Finally, Solzhenitsyn was expected to view Western prosperity as proof of its superiority as a nation. These were the general expectations which the members of the American press and academic communities seem to have had of Solzhenitsyn in 1978, based on their perceptions of him from earlier years.

The *Harvard Address* expressed none of these sentiments. Instead, Solzhenitsyn denigrated the electoral process and labelled Western political elites cowardly bullies. His American audience was informed that their cherished legal system was immoral and, at times, utterly unethical. He criticised the press as sensationalistic,

superficial and irresponsible with its freedom. He rejected the very foundation of the modern West by categorising the Enlightenment as a mistake from which all Western ills were derived, and he had the effrontery to state that despite the horrors of Soviet Communism, Russia remained spiritually superior to the West. Where he was expected to applaud Western strength, he argued its unmistakable decline and pointed to the American withdrawal from Vietnam as symptomatic of its weakness. Finally, he refused to admit to the desirability of Western standards and institutions for the future rehabilitation of Russia. Clearly, the speech was not what Americans had expected to hear from a man who had enjoyed two years of complete freedom in the United States.

Early American expectations of Solzhenitsyn all evolved from one simple supposition: if one was against the Soviet Union, then one was necessarily for the West. Concurrently, if one was anti-Communism, then one was obviously pro-democracy. Therefore, since Solzhenitsyn was clearly against *them*, he was certainly for *us*. This perception of the cultural and political distinctions between a Soviet dissident in opposition to totalitarianism and the free, liberal democratic West was, aside from being misleading and limiting, utterly useless for any worthwhile understanding of Solzhenitsyn. He believed that as a Christian thinker, he transcended political categories and was operating outside of the popular paradigm. The early responses failed to recognise that any application of this model to Solzhenitsyn's thought would be ultimately futile, and the overwhelming reaction was one of defensive confusion and misplaced anger.

Based on their superficial analyses of the *Harvard Address*, the early responses understood Solzhenitsyn to be anti-Western. The later academic responses, though generally less vitriolic, perpetuated this impression through more subtle applications of the same model. Neither group could or would view Solzhenitsyn's ideas outside of this limiting and extraordinarily simplistic analytical framework, and thus both failed to recognise that he was, in fact, neither pro- nor anti-West, but infinitely more complex. As

a Christian thinker and artist, his perceptions and criticisms of the West were not rooted in antipathy or arrogance, but rather in his devout belief in the moral universe. The *Harvard Address* was the fullest exposition of Solzhenitsyn's religious convictions as they applied to his analysis of the state of the modern West, and the persistent adherence of his critics to the Western-Soviet dichotomy prevented them from appreciating the subtext and motivations of his thought. Solzhenitsyn could not be accurately categorised within contemporary American political categories because they simply did not apply to him; as a Christian he spoke from a different tradition, one which his critics could or would not understand.

The early reactions to the *Harvard Address* in the press lend great credence to the argument that such criticisms of the West were unexpected. Where was the freedom-fighter, the liberal democrat? Where was the victim of Soviet Communism who had been expected to profess his admiration for the West? The answer is that that man had never existed in the first place. The popular perceptions of Solzhenitsyn in the years before his exile to the West which persisted almost unchanged until 1978 were entirely the creation of American intellectuals themselves, who formulated their own ideas of who Solzhenitsyn was and what he believed. What had been grounds for a vague suspicion of Solzhenitsyn's true thought with the *Letter to Soviet Leaders* became glaringly obvious after the *Harvard Address*: Solzhenitsyn was not what he was supposed to be.

And so the backlash against him began. In the place of their daring liberal hero stood a Christian thinker who emphasised morality and ethics over political and civil freedoms, truth over easy explanations, spirituality over materialism, communalism over individuality. Solzhenitsyn was not at all appreciative of the things which defined the West, and his criticisms shocked his audience, which had clung to its fictional image of him as one who wanted to be one of them. He was refuted, rejected as a viable thinker, dismissed on the basis of his religiosity, and almost completely misunderstood. By 1980 he had been pushed aside as an ungrateful guest in the country which had given him

refuge from persecution. American intellectuals shook their heads; he had failed them, he was not what they had been sure he was. But how could that be? The politics of the cultural cold war were clear. If one was against the Soviet Union then one was for the West. Where was Solzhenitsyn? In basic terms, Solzhenitsyn was firmly grounded in the Christian tradition, bound by his beliefs in morality, ethics and spirituality and not at all influenced by the politics of secularism. This was his failure in the eyes of his American critics, and it served as sufficient justification for his intellectual banishment in the United States.

The question remains, however, as to whether or not the recognition and exploration of Solzhenitsyn as a Christian artist in the period immediately following the *Harvard Address* would have made any difference in the contemporary critical estimations of him. In retrospect, it is not likely that such an understanding of him would have forestalled the essentially hostile nature of the early responses. The American press was, after all, the foremost instrument of the Cold War, in both political and cultural terms. Proper contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn as a Christian artist and thinker would likely not have detracted from the predictably political interpretations of his ideas. However, it may be asserted that study of the Christian roots of Solzhenitsyn's thought would have had an appreciable, if not considerable, impact on the nature of the later evaluations of the *Address*. Traditionally, Western academia has been far more accepting of theology as a legitimate influence on political and social theory. As such, comprehensive study of the principles and beliefs of Christianity in conjunction with the works of Solzhenitsyn would have perhaps lent him the air of intellectual credibility which he was denied. Subsequently, the authors of the later responses might have been better able to understand the *Harvard Address*, and thus able to refute the initial charges that the *Address* was the rantings of an ignorant, anti-Western Russian theocrat with studies of the speech as a valid Christian analysis of the West and its problems. Unfortunately, this

line of thought is purely speculative; in reality the later respondents were as reluctant as their predecessors to explore the impact of Solzhenitsyn's personality on his thought.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is a complex figure in modern history. The combination of soldier, prisoner, author, dissident and intellectual in one man presents a daunting picture for historians, political scientists and literary critics alike. The search for his true identity is complicated by a sea of conflicting views and multidisciplinary understandings of him. To study Solzhenitsyn is to step into an intellectual morass of Soviet history and Western ideology, the politics of secularism and the power of Christianity, classical Russian philosophy and modern American political theory. There is no easy path toward constructing new, more rewarding understandings of him. How, then, can we in the 1990s begin to frame a proper contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn?

It is the central argument of this thesis that this process must begin with the acknowledgement and examination of the impact of Christianity on Solzhenitsyn's life and works. This focus reveals a crucial link between all of the differing images and interpretations of him, and it allows us to finally reconcile Solzhenitsyn the Author with Solzhenitsyn the Historian, Solzhenitsyn the Political Theorist with Solzhenitsyn the Social Critic, Solzhenitsyn the Hero with Solzhenitsyn the Outcast. It was not generally recognised, for example, that his opposition to Soviet Communism and his criticisms of the West were both conceived and expressed through Christianity; or that both his works literature and political thought are premised on Christian principles and his Christian commitment to the restoration of human morality and spiritual rehabilitation. All of the different aspects of his life and thought converge in and extend from his personal religiosity; they are the basic premise of all that he thinks, writes and speaks, and for this reason they must be explored.

Therefore, it was not that Solzhenitsyn failed to fulfil the expectations of his American critics. Rather, they failed him by refusing to set aside their own presumptions, by neglecting to give him a full hearing, for their unwillingness or inability to admit to his

complexity or to explore the depths of his thought. They were unprepared as a critical audience to evaluate the *Harvard Address* on its own terms, and in its own language. The result has been two decades of work and thought which cannot contribute in any meaningful way to the contextualisation of Solzhenitsyn in the 1990s. It is the contention of this thesis that if current historians, political scientists and literary critics are to succeed where our predecessors fell short, we must begin with the acceptance of Christianity and Christian principles as the key to the author, the dissident, the poet, the icon, the critic and the outcast. Such an approach will lead us away from the miscomprehensions of the past and away from simplistic, unsatisfying analyses. Most importantly, this will lead us to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF SOLZHENITSYN'S LIFE, 1917-1976**

- 1917 Isai Solzhenitsyn married Taisiya Zakharovna Shcherbak. Isai was a student of linguistics at the University of Moscow until he was drafted into the Russian army in 1914. He served as a front line artillery officer for almost the entire war and received three officers' decorations.
- 1918 June: Isai Solzhenitsyn died at home in a hunting accident.  
December 11: Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn was born in Kislovodsk, a northern Caucasian resort town.
- 1924 Taisiya and Solzhenitsyn moved to Rostov-na-Donu (Rostov-on-Don). Taisya was employed as a typist and stenographer; Solzhenitsyn's childhood was spent in extreme poverty.
- 1930 At the age of 11, Solzhenitsyn joined the Young Pioneers because of peer-pressure. The Young Pioneers were the junior wing of the Communist Party's youth movement, the Komsomol, and were organised in a similar manner as the Hitler Youths and with like aims.
- 1931 February 31: Solzhenitsyn's maternal grandmother Evdokia died in Georgievsk. Solzhenitsyn's mother arranged a memorial mass in her Rostov church, which both she and her son attended. This event was not reported to the authorities, however, several of Solzhenitsyn's classmates informed their schoolmaster and he was reprimanded for 'conduct unbecoming a Young Pioneer'.
- 1936 Solzhenitsyn graduated from the Rostov-on-Don intermediate school with high marks in Russian and science.  
He made his first attempts to publish some of his stories, to no avail. In addition, he began to collect material on the Samsonov catastrophe,<sup>1</sup> which provided the main theme of *August, 1914*.
- 1937 Solzhenitsyn entered Rostov University in the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics. It was here that he met his future first

---

<sup>1</sup> The so-called 'Samsonov catastrophe' of August 1914 followed the Russians' defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg. Bound by a secret treaty with the French, Russia launched an offensive within twenty days of mobilisation, directed at Eastern Prussia. "During the last fortnight of August [1914] the two [Russian] armies of General Rennenkampf and General Samsonov, powerful in numbers but in little else, fumbled their opportunity, were outwitted by the [German] enemy, failed to effect a junction and were cut up separately. Two entire Russian army corps surrendered; Samsonov committed suicide." See Richard Charques, *The Twilight of Imperial Russia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 58 and W. Bruce Lincoln, *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914-1918* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 69-78.

- wife, Natalya Alexeyevna Reshetovskaya, a fellow first-year student.
- 1939 Solzhenitsyn began a two-year course in literature at MIIFLI (the Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature) in Moscow by correspondence. This was accomplished simultaneously with the final two years of his study at Rostov University.
- 1940 April 27: Solzhenitsyn and Reshetovskaya married. She retained her maiden name, as was permissible by Soviet law.
- 1941 Solzhenitsyn and Reshetovskaya graduated from Rostov University; he with a licentiate in Mathematics and Physics and she with a licentiate in Physical Chemistry and later, Biochemistry.
- October 18: Solzhenitsyn was drafted. He began his military career as a driver of the transport wagons due to fragile health.
- 1942 Solzhenitsyn entered an intensive year-long course at artillery officer school from which he graduated a Second Lieutenant. He served as the Commander of the listening post of a reconnaissance battery of the advanced front line. He soon rose through the ranks to Lieutenant and First Lieutenant.
- 1944 January 17: Taisiya Solzhenitsyn died of tuberculosis. Solzhenitsyn was at the front and did not learn of his mother's death until many months later.
- Solzhenitsyn was awarded two medals of bravery: the Order of the Patriotic War and the Order of the Red Star.
- 1945 January: Solzhenitsyn was promoted to the rank of Captain and Battery Commander.
- February: Solzhenitsyn was arrested at the front by SMERSH<sup>2</sup> and denounced as a traitor. He was interrogated for four months in the Butyrki Prison in Moscow.
- July 7: Solzhenitsyn was sentenced *in absentia* to eight years' hard labour and eternal exile in the ITL.<sup>3</sup> The sentence was administered by an OSO.<sup>4</sup>
- 1946 Solzhenitsyn was moved to the Marfino prison, a special facility for political prisoners outside Moscow. It was a *sharashka*, a scientific research institute operated under the aegis of the MVD and the MGB.<sup>5</sup> The prison was run almost entirely by its inmates, who were

<sup>2</sup> SMERSH was the counter-espionage section of the NKVD (the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs). The acronym was derived from the Russian saying *Smerch Shpionam*, translated as 'Death to Spies'. See M. K. Dziewanowski, A History of Soviet Russia, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), 266.

<sup>3</sup> ITL was the acronym of the Soviet system of 'correction' camps.

<sup>4</sup> An OSO or *Osobye Soveshchaniye* was a special NKVD military tribunal.

<sup>5</sup> The MVD was the Soviet Ministry of the Interior and the MGB the Ministry of State Security.

- all intellectuals with scientific training. His term here provided the material for *The First Circle*.
- 1947 Solzhenitsyn was transferred to a labour camp for political prisoners in the town of Ekibastuz, in north-eastern Kazakhstan.
- 1953 February: Solzhenitsyn was released from the GULAG.<sup>6</sup> He remained under surveillance in a transit camp while en route to Kok-Terek (Kazakhstan) to serve out his sentence of eternal exile.
- March 5: Josef Stalin died.
- Winter: Solzhenitsyn was dying of stomach cancer. He was finally permitted by the NKVD Commandant of Kok-Terek to travel to a cancer clinic in Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan) for treatment.
- 1954 Spring: Solzhenitsyn was treated with radium therapy and it saved his life, although it didn't cure the cancer completely. This experience provided the material for the story 'The Right Hand' and the novel *Cancer Ward*.
- 1955 Solzhenitsyn began writing *The First Circle*.
- 1956 February 6: Solzhenitsyn's term of eternal exile was reviewed as a direct result of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization program,<sup>7</sup> begun at the Twentieth Party Congress a few days earlier. Solzhenitsyn was officially re-habilitated by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.<sup>8</sup>
- June: Solzhenitsyn left Kok-Terek and returned to European Russia. He settled in the village of Ryazan, one hundred miles south-east of Moscow. He took a teaching post there in Mathematics. Reshetovskaya joined him there and he began work on *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*.
- 1959 December: Solzhenitsyn finished *The First Circle* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*.
- 1961 October: At the Twenty-Second Party Congress, Aleksandr Tvardovsky (Editor-in-Chief of the literary magazine *Novy Mir*) made a speech which encouraged Soviet writers to write 'the whole truth'. Solzhenitsyn submitted *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* to *Novy Mir* for publication. Tvardovsky was enthusiastic, and sent copies of the manuscript to several high-ranking Party writers and to Khrushchev for approval.

---

<sup>6</sup> GULAG was the acronym for *Glavnoye upravleniye lagerei*, or 'The Main Administration of the Camps'.

<sup>7</sup> Khrushchev's 'de-Stalinization' program began with his denunciation of Stalin's 'personality cult' and his crimes in a 'secret speech' addressed to the Twentieth Party Congress in early 1956. His intent was purely political; he sought to increase popular support for the Party. To this end, among other acts, he rehabilitated almost 8,000 political prisoners that year, of which Solzhenitsyn was one. See Dziewanowski, 313-330.

<sup>8</sup> See Leopold Labedz ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974), 16.

- 1961 November 3: Khrushchev included the issue of the publication of *One Day* at a meeting of the Presidium and after much debate, it was approved for inclusion in the November 1962 edition of *Novy Mir*.
- 1962 Winter: Solzhenitsyn stopped teaching for good. Poorly translated editions of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* were published in the West.
- November 18: Konstantin Simonov, *Izvestia*. "The story *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* is written with the sure hand of a mature, unique master."
- November 20: The eleventh edition of *Novy Mir* was distributed in Moscow and Leningrad and it sold out almost immediately. The press, and particularly the Party papers, published rave reviews of the novel.
- November 23: Vladimir Ermilov, "In the Name of Truth, in the Name of Life," *Pravda*. "There can be no doubt that the fight against the consequences of Stalin's personality cult...will continue to facilitate the appearance of works of art outstanding for their ever increasing artistic value, their ever deeper closeness to the people, works reflecting our contemporary life and the creative labor of our people..."
- December 26: L. F. Illichev, a Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU<sup>9</sup> made a speech at a meeting of the Party Ideological Commission, published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on January 10, 1963. "As for the story *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*...as you know, the story deals with a bitter subject, but it is not written from a decadent [Western] viewpoint. Works like this inspire respect for the laboring man, and the Party supports them."
- 1963 January: Solzhenitsyn's short stories 'An Incident at Krechetovka Station' and 'Matryona's Home' were published in *Novy Mir*. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* was published in its own *roman-gazeta* series. The first edition ran 750 000 copies.
- January 25: Viktor Bukhanov (an APN correspondent), 'Visiting Solzhenitsyn in Russia,' *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. The story was complimentary; he wrote that Solzhenitsyn was imprisoned in 1945 "on a false charge".

---

<sup>9</sup> CPSU was the acronym for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

**February:** Soviet national publishing house Sovetsky Pisatel published *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* in book form. The first edition ran 100 000 copies.

**Spring:** Solzhenitsyn was accepted into the Union of Soviet Writers without having submitted an application. His admission was protested by the Ryazan branch, and was unusual in that it was achieved very quickly and that the Ryazan writers were not consulted with regard to the decision.

**1963** Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia published translated copies of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*. Bulgaria and Hungary later ceased publishing Solzhenitsyn's works in concordance with Moscow's deepening hostility to the writer; Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia continued to do so despite this.

**March 7-8:** A meeting of the Presidium was held and attended by high-ranking members of the literary and artistic communities. At this meeting Khrushchev, encountering serious opposition to his plan of further liberalisation of the arts, decisively backed down. Tvardovsky had spent the better part of a year trying to convince Khrushchev to abolish literary censorship, prompting Khrushchev to take the matter to the other members of the Presidium.

**March 8:** Khrushchev praised Solzhenitsyn in a speech which was published by *Pravda* on March 10 and by *Literaturnaya Gazeta* on March 12. "The Party gives its backing to artistic creations which are really truthful, whatever negative aspects of life they may deal with, so long as they help the people in their effort to build a new society, and so long as they strengthen and weld together the people's forces." Immediately after the publication of this article, a rigid ban was imposed on works dealing with the time of Stalin's 'personality cult'.

**April:** Solzhenitsyn began *Cancer Ward*.

**April 2:** Mikhail Sokolov, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. "It is impossible to agree with those who claim that we had a period of disorder, of ideological hesitation. There was no disorder whatsoever, no sort of hesitation either among literary people or among others...We went where the Party called us."

**July:** Solzhenitsyn's short story 'For the Good of the Cause' was published in *Novy Mir* and it was immediately attacked by the Soviet press.

**October 19:** The Editors, *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. "A keen ideological battle is going on in the modern world. And we must not for a single moment lower our ideological and ethical standards in our assessment of literary works. It is because we respect [Solzhenitsyn's] talent that we cannot make allowance for [his] artistic mistakes."

December 28: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was put forward by the Editorial Board of *Novy Mir*, seconded by the Central State Archives of Literature and Art, for the 1964 Lenin Prize in Literature.

1964 Solzhenitsyn submitted three copies of *The First Circle* to *Novy Mir* for publication. It was accepted.

January 30: *Pravda* published a very favourable review of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*.

1964 February 19: The Moscow newspapers printed the final considerations for the Lenin Prize in Literature. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* was on the list.

April: This month marked the beginning of Solzhenitsyn's disfavour in the Soviet press and government.

April 11: *Pravda*. "...Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's short novel deserves a positive assessment but it cannot be placed among such outstanding works which are worthy of the Lenin Prize."

April 22: (Lenin's birthday) O. Honchar's novel *The Sheep-Bell* was announced as the winner of the 1964 Lenin Prize for Literature.

October: Khrushchev was removed from power and was replaced by Brezhnev, who immediately re-entrenched 'socialist realism' as the Soviet art form.<sup>10</sup>

1965 The journal *Kommunist* published an article by N. G. Egorychev, a First Secretary of the Moscow Party Committee. In this, he laid out the new policy directives regarding literary works topically concerned with the Stalin era. He specifically attacked *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, and charged it as overrated as well as ideologically and artistically suspect.

*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* was published in Cuba.

January: Aleksandr Tvardovsky, *Novy Mir*. "How difficult it is in our literary life to get rid of the sad legacy of the past years, when all kinds of falsification and distortion of truth were flourishing.

---

<sup>10</sup> 'Socialist realism' as an art form was first introduced by Stalin in 1934. The concept was essentially that all art forms were to provide a 'varnished' version of reality; that is, reflect Soviet reality as it should or could be, not as it necessarily was. In addition, this form of artistic expression should be obviously identifiable in any work so that even the uneducated could 'get the message'. Its definition according to the Union of Soviet Writers was as follows: "It demands of the artist the truthfully, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of Socialism." As quoted in Dziewanowski, 220. Ironically, as Nicholas V. Riasanovsky noted, "Solzhenitsyn's writings may well be considered to represent the long-delayed success of socialist realism: they focus on central problems and situations of Soviet life; they deal with common people...; they are meant for the masses; and they are certainly realistic." See Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 586.

creating among the people a distrust of the printed word...[One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch], published two years ago, simply had to be created...The reader badly needs the full truth about life; he is sickened by evasiveness and hypocrisy..."

Spring: Solzhenitsyn's 'Miniature Stories' (prose poems) were published in *samizdat*<sup>11</sup> form in *Grani*, a Russian-language journal based in West Germany.

1965 March 29: Brezhnev made a speech in which he made it clear that the Party would "lead an uncompromising struggle against all appearances of ideologies irrelevant to us."

April: In anticipation of the twentieth anniversary of the Russian victory over Nazi Germany articles dedicated to the memory of Stalin are published prolifically in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Pravda* and others. This was another manifestation of Brezhnev's 'new line'.

Summer: Solzhenitsyn was informed by the Editorial Board of *Novy Mir* that although they had accepted *The First Circle* for publication, it seemed unlikely that they would be granted permission to publish it.

Fall: Authors Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuri Daniel were arrested and charged with smuggling their anti-Soviet works to the West. Sinyavsky received seven years imprisonment with hard labour, Daniel received five. This was met with much protest within the Russian literary community, which in turn sparked arrests and purges in the artists' unions and organisations.

September 8: Solzhenitsyn asked *Novy Mir* to return the three copies of *The First Circle* which he had submitted in early 1964 for minor corrections. They did, and as he had other business to attend to in Moscow before returning to Ryazan, he left the copies with a friend from the camps, Teush.

September 11: Teush's apartment was searched by the KGB. The three copies of *The First Circle* were confiscated, as were Solzhenitsyn's personal literary archives which contained material dating back twenty years. Included in this material was a copy of the play 'The Feast of the Victors,' which Solzhenitsyn had composed in his head while in Ekibastuz. It was never intended for publication.

Solzhenitsyn wrote a formal letter of protest to P. N. Demichev, Chairman of the Central Committee's Ideological Commission, and also to Brezhnev and Andropov. He requested that the copies be returned to either him or *Novy Mir*. He received no responses.

<sup>11</sup> *Samizdat* literally translates as 'self-publishing'. The process has a long tradition in both Imperial and Soviet Russia. Often, banned or censored works are reproduced independently by readers who have managed to acquire a copy. Both copies are then passed on, and the process is repeated over and over again, often resulting in thousands circulating within a very short period of time. *Samizdat* books were also most often those which were smuggled out of the Soviet Union to Western publishing houses. See Riasanovsky, 556.

This marked the beginning of open conflict between Solzhenitsyn and the Party machinery. "It symbolized the struggle between those who believed in the need for freedom of thought and freedom to analyze reality, and certain officials who wished to impose state and ideological controls upon all forms of creative activity."<sup>12</sup>

1966 Neither Solzhenitsyn nor *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* were mentioned in the Soviet press anymore. This marked the beginning of the campaign to make Solzhenitsyn into a 'non-person' in the Soviet Union.

1966 January: *Novy Mir* published Solzhenitsyn's short story 'Zakhar-Kalita'. This was the last work of Solzhenitsyn's to be formally published in the USSR. At this time, the KGB began to take a serious interest in Solzhenitsyn.

March 29-April 8: The Twenty-Third Party Congress. This Congress signified the end of the intellectual 'thaw' which had characterised Khrushchev's rule. Brezhnev's directive of continued artistic immersion in 'socialist realism' was entrenched.

Summer: Solzhenitsyn finished the first part of *Cancer Ward*. At the end of July, he submitted it to *Novy Mir*, it was accepted. To facilitate its chances for publication, Solzhenitsyn arranged to have the novel discussed at a meeting of the Moscow branch of the Writers' Union.

November 17: The Moscow branch of the Writers' Union met and discussed *Cancer Ward*.<sup>13</sup> They were enthusiastic and recommended it for publication. By December the novel was circulating widely in *samizdat* form.

1967 May 15-16: Solzhenitsyn mailed 250 copies of his 'Open Letter to the Fourth Writers' Congress' to the members of the Presidium of the Congress, its delegates, the attending non-delegated writers and to various newspaper and journal editors. Solzhenitsyn was not invited to attend the Congress.

May 22: The Fourth Writers' Congress opened in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of Soviet power. Solzhenitsyn's letter was the topic of much discussion behind the scenes, but was not formally read, discussed or even mentioned. The Soviet press declined to publish the letter.

June: The second part of *Cancer Ward* was circulating in *samizdat* form.

June 12: Solzhenitsyn met with four Secretaries of the Writers' Union to discuss the slander campaign which had been mounted

<sup>12</sup> Zhores A. Medvedev, *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovitch*, trans. Hilary Sternberg (London: Macmillan London Ltd., 1973), 48.

<sup>13</sup> For the complete transcript of this meeting, see Labedz, 87-109.

against him,<sup>14</sup> and also to protest the delay in the publication of *Cancer Ward*. Solzhenitsyn warned the Secretaries that the book was circulating in *samizdat* out of his control, and that it could be published at any time in the West regardless of his wishes.

**September 12:** Solzhenitsyn sent out a new letter of protest addressed to all forty-two Secretaries of the Writers' Union. He castigated the Union for failing to protect him against the slander campaign and for not investigating the matter of *Cancer Ward*'s delayed publication.

**1967** September 22: A special session of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers met<sup>15</sup> and issued an appeal to Solzhenitsyn (who was present) to publicly denounce the manner in which his name and works were being manipulated by the West for anti-Soviet purposes.

Solzhenitsyn refused on the grounds that since the rumours and accusations were being printed abroad, and not in the USSR, the Soviet people would have no idea what he was talking about. He wanted the Union to issue a statement in his defence. In short, the situation remained unresolved and only further confused.

**October:** Tvardovsky received permission from the Secretariat of the Writers' Union to sign a contract with Solzhenitsyn to publish *Cancer Ward*, and to send the novel to the type-setters. It was proposed that the first part appear in the January 1968 edition of *Novy Mir*.

**October 5:** *Pravda* Editor-in-Chief Mikhail Zimyanin made a speech at the House of Press in Leningrad, which was later published in *Survey*. "At the moment, Solzhenitsyn occupies an important place in the propaganda of capitalist governments. He too is a psychologically unbalanced person, a schizophrenic. Formerly he was a prisoner and justly or unjustly was subsequently subjected to repression. Now he takes his revenge against the government through his literary work. The only topic he is able to write about is life in a concentration camp. This topic has become an obsession with him...He doesn't see anything positive in our society."

**December:** *Novy Mir*'s proof of *Cancer Ward* was sent to the Central Committee for approval. The Central Committee decreed that the decision was to be made by the Secretariat of the Writers' Union. There it was rejected despite Tvardovsky's impassioned campaign for its approval.

<sup>14</sup> Among the many rumours circulating, the most common ones were that Solzhenitsyn had been a German POW (and therefore a traitor), that his ancestors were *kulaks* (wealthy peasants on whom Stalin had declared a personal war) and that he was allowing the money accrued from foreign royalties to be used for anti-Soviet activities in the West.

<sup>15</sup> For a complete transcript of this meeting, see Labedz, 132-154.

1968 February/March: Ideological conferences were held in all Party districts. The main theme was the impossibility of ideological co-existence between the USA and the USSR. Party members were specifically instructed to denounce Solzhenitsyn's 'role' in providing the West with the ammunition it needed to begin an ideological war.

April: By the middle of April, it was obvious that both *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward* had been smuggled to the West as unauthorised copies were released both in the original Russian and in translation. Solzhenitsyn's position became increasingly untenable.

A telegram was sent to *Novy Mir* from *Grani*, notification that *Grani* was going to publish a copy of *Cancer Ward*, received from Victor Louis.<sup>16</sup>

1968 Solzhenitsyn immediately sent a letter of protest to the Secretariat of the Writers' Union in which he made it clear that he had no desire to see his books published in poorly translated editions in the West. He also questioned the telegram's veracity, as Victor Louis was not given a copy of *Cancer Ward*. His letter was never acknowledged.

April 25: Solzhenitsyn sent letters to *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Le Monde* and *L'Unità*<sup>17</sup> in which he protested the unauthorised foreign publication of his works, specifically *Cancer Ward*. He stated emphatically that no foreign publisher had ever received a manuscript from him nor his permission to publish any of his work.

*L'Unità* published the letter immediately. "I declare that no foreign publisher has received a manuscript of *Cancer Ward* from me, nor any authorization to publish it. Therefore I do not recognize as legal any publication of this novel, present or future, done without my authorization, and I do not grant that anyone else can hold the copyright..."

*Literaturnaya Gazeta* did not publish the letter until June 26, when it was accompanied by an article denouncing the West for using Solzhenitsyn's name for anti-Soviet propaganda.

June: *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published rumours about Solzhenitsyn's imminent expulsion from the Writers' Union.

December 11: Solzhenitsyn's fiftieth birthday. Traditionally, this was treated as a landmark; it was customary for the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* to publish congratulations to those members of the Writers' Union on this occasion in varying degrees in accordance to their prominence. Solzhenitsyn received no mention at all in any Soviet literary publication. However, he did receive over 500 international telegrams and letters of congratulations at the offices of *Novy Mir*.

<sup>16</sup> See Winter, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> An Italian Communist Party newspaper.

and another 100 at his home in Ryazan.

1969 Solzhenitsyn was awarded a special literary prize in France for the best translated work (*The First Circle*).

He was elected an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Boston) and the American Academy of Arts and Letters (New York).

Solzhenitsyn began *August, 1914*.

July 26: The Moscow journal *Ogonyok* published a statement from eleven respected 'Party' authors accusing *Novy Mir* of publishing works which were blasphemous and anti-Soviet in sentiment.

November 5: The Ryazan branch of the Writers' Union expelled Solzhenitsyn in a meeting held in Moscow. He was not informed of the meeting until the last minute and was unable to attend, as Ryazan was a four-hour drive from Moscow.

1969 November 12: Solzhenitsyn's expulsion was publicly announced in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. "A meeting has been held of the Ryazan writers' organization, concerned with problems of the intensification of ideological-educative work...In this connection the participants...unanimously noted that the behavior of A. Solzhenitsyn was of an anti-social nature and fundamentally conflicted with the principles and aims formulated in the Constitution of the Union of Writers of the USSR...Proceeding from this, the meeting of the Ryazan writers' organization resolved to expel A. Solzhenitsyn from the Writers' Union of the USSR."

Soviet intellectuals barely protested; however, Western authors were volatile in their condemnation of the Writers' Union.

November 12: Solzhenitsyn sent a letter to the Secretariat of the Writers' Union protesting his expulsion.

November 18: *Les Lettres Françaises*,<sup>18</sup> signed by, among others, Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Aragon and Alain Prevost, members of the French National Writers' Committee. "The expulsion of Solzhenitsyn from the Union of Soviet Writers, first announced, then denied, and finally confirmed, with the 'concerted propaganda' technique to which we are getting accustomed, constitutes in the eyes of the whole world a monumental mistake but helps confirm the view of socialism as propagated by its enemies..."

November 26: *Literaturnaya Gazeta* accused Solzhenitsyn of allowing his Western royalties to be given to an 'International

---

<sup>18</sup> A French Communist newspaper.

Rescue Committee' for anti-Soviet activities. This was a serious allegation.

December 3: Letter to K. Fedin<sup>19</sup> from various prominent Western authors including, among others, Arthur Miller, John Updike, Truman Capote, Heinrich Böll, and Kurt Vonnegut. "We reject the conception that an artists' refusal humbly to accept state censorship is in any sense criminal in a civilized society, or that publication by foreigners of his books is ground for persecuting him...We sign our names as men of peace declaring our solidarity with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's defense of those fundamental rights of the human spirit which unites civilized people everywhere."

Victor Louis,<sup>20</sup> "Is Solzhenitsyn nice?", *Survey* (Winter/Spring 1969). "Solzhenitsyn is not a Tolstoy, but he appears to be becoming one gradually, although only in mini-form...[he] has started growing a beard but it is nothing compared with Tolstoy's. His estate compares poorly too...Like any Soviet citizen who has spent time in a labour camp, he is his own lawyer and knows the value of having an alibi. If he writes letters he knows that they will eventually find their way into the Western newspapers, but he addresses them to members of the Writers' Union...From a legal point of view no one can accuse Solzhenitsyn of anything... Russians love a martyr and Solzhenitsyn plays the role..."

1969 Winter: Voronkov, a Secretary of the Writers' Union, urged Tvardovsky to resign as Editor-in-Chief of *Novy Mir* for 'health reasons'. Tvardovsky refused, despite an offer of a permanent post as a Secretary of the Writers' Union (conditional on his resignation from *Novy Mir*).

1970 Solzhenitsyn finished *August, 1914*.

Solzhenitsyn left his wife, Natalya Reshetovskaya.

February: The Secretariat of the Writers' Union arbitrarily 're-organised' the upper echelons of *Novy Mir* without Tvardovsky's knowledge or approval. The Deputy Editor and the heads of various sections were replaced and three new 'Party' members were added to the Editorial Board. Tvardovsky's protests were ignored. He resigned, as he was meant to. He was replaced by V. A. Kosolapov, who was not a writer nor a member of the Writers' Union. Solzhenitsyn lost his greatest ally and defender.

March 5: Solzhenitsyn retained Dr. Fritz Heeb of Zurich as his official literary agent and legal representative. Heeb published a

<sup>19</sup> Fedin was a fairly well-known Soviet author, especially in the 1930s. At this time, he was the Chairman of the Writers' Union and played a decisive role in prohibiting *Cancer Ward* from being published in the USSR. See Labedz, 146.

<sup>20</sup> Victor Louis was a pseudonym for a Moscow correspondent of the London *Evening News*. He may or may not have been a KGB agent. Various authors have speculated that it seems almost certain that the KGB was smuggling Solzhenitsyn's works to the West themselves in order to lay the foundation for future charges against him. See Labedz, 176.

statement which clearly prohibited any unauthorised foreign publication of Solzhenitsyn's works.

**October 8:** The Nobel Committee announced that Solzhenitsyn had been awarded the 1970 Nobel Prize for Literature, "for the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature."

Solzhenitsyn replied by telegram: "I am grateful for this decision. I accept the prize. I intend to go and receive it personally on the traditional day—in so far as this will depend on me..."

**October 9:** *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published a statement from the Secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers which declared that the award of the Nobel Prize to Solzhenitsyn was "undertaken by no means in the interests of the development of spiritual values and literary traditions, but dictated by speculative political considerations."

**October 10:** Solzhenitsyn received the official telegram from the Nobel Foundation and the Swedish Academy. *L'Humanité*<sup>21</sup> and *L'Unità* published articles in support of the decision.

**1970** Letter to Solzhenitsyn from thirty-seven Soviet intellectuals: "From the bottom of our hearts we congratulate Solzhenitsyn, wish him new and creative successes, health and fortitude on his path of work. We are proud of our literature, which, in spite of all obstacles, produces such first-class masters. At the same time, we expect that the award...will become another occasion for continuing the baiting that is consistently exercised here against him and is viewed by us as a national shame..."

The Editors, *Izvestia*. "...the works of this author, which were illegally sent abroad and published there, have long been used by reactionary circles in the West for anti-Soviet purposes...One can only regret that the Nobel Committee has allowed itself to be drawn into an unseemly game, undertaken by no means in the interests of the development of spiritual values and literary traditions, but dictated by speculative political considerations..."

**October 14:** *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. "The facts speak for themselves: The Nobel Prize Committee has allowed itself to be drawn into an unseemly game. It has declared that it is concerned with the 'aesthetic aim' of literature. Yet it is quite obvious that in this case the members of the committee understood 'aesthetic aim' to mean anti-Soviet trends."

**October 14:** *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. "This decision is by no means dictated by concern for Russian literature. And we Soviet men of letters consider this yet another international act of an anti-Soviet nature."

---

<sup>21</sup> Another French Communist Party newspaper.

Pierre Daix, *Les Lettres Françaises*. "The choice of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn justifies the existence of the Nobel Prize for Literature..."

October 17: *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. "It is a sacrilege to place side by side the name of Solzhenitsyn with the names of Russian and Soviet creators of classical works known all over the world."

October 21: *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published an article by the editors which claimed that Solzhenitsyn had been nominated for the Nobel Prize by a White Russian<sup>22</sup> journal called *Chasvoi* in Belgium. In fact, he had been nominated by celebrated French writer and Nobel Laureate François Mauriac and his colleagues.

October 31: Open letter from Rostropovich<sup>23</sup> to the Editors of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and *Sovetskaya Kultura*, published in the *New York Times* on November 16. "It is no longer a secret that A. I. Solzhenitsyn lives a great part of the time at my house near Moscow...I do not speak about political or economic questions in our country. There are people who know these better than I. But explain to me, please, why in our literature and art so often people absolutely incompetent in this field have the final word? Why are they given the right to discredit our art in the eyes of our own people?..."

1970 November 27: Solzhenitsyn to the Swedish Academy, published by the *New York Times* on December 1. "I have already expressed and now again express my gratitude for the honor bestowed upon me by the awarding of the Nobel Prize...I [have] expressed the intention to accept your invitation to come to Stockholm although I anticipated the humiliating procedure... However, in recent weeks, the hostile attitude toward my prize, as expressed in the press of my country...compels me to assume that my trip to Stockholm would be used to cut me off from returning to my native land, simply to prevent me from coming home... I could receive the Nobel diploma and medal, if such a format would be acceptable to you, in Moscow from your representatives, at a mutually convenient time..."

December 17: *Pravda*. "Every day the thousand voices of imperialist propaganda focus, not on the great and astounding life of a great people, but on the negligible handful of corrupt self-seekers...Fakes and base insinuations by isolated renegades—such are the weapons of propaganda used by our ideological opponents. By resorting to base slander they thereby lay bare their moral and ideological poverty..."

1971 June: YMCA Press (Paris) published the first authorised foreign edition of *August, 1914*.

<sup>22</sup> The bloody Russian civil war of 1918-1920 was fought by the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (Mensheviks) for power in Russia. The Whites were defeated in 1920 and their leaders hanged. See Riasanovsky, 479-487.

<sup>23</sup> A celebrated Russian cellist.

September 14: *New York Times* (editorial). "Sweden's world prestige gains no luster from revelations of the submission by its Government to Soviet cultural policy with regard to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's richly deserved Nobel Prize for Literature...Now it emerges that Stockholm rejected a suggestion by the author that he be awarded the prize in a ceremony at Sweden's Embassy in Moscow. Premier Olaf Palme has explained rather lamely that Mr. Solzhenitsyn could have gotten the prize at the embassy without a ceremony, but a ceremony...might have been interpreted as a political manifestation against the Soviet Union..."

September 17: Olaf Palme to (and in) the *New York Times*. "The Times has evidently been misinformed about the facts...The Swedish Embassy in Moscow was certainly willing to present the Nobel Prize to Solzhenitsyn. The Swedish Embassy was, however, not prepared to comply with the ceremonial suggested by the representative of Solzhenitsyn's publisher, who wished such forms as would have purposely presented a political manifestation against the Government in the country where the embassy was accredited...I have certainly not vetoed any ceremony..."

1971      September 24: Per Egil Hegge<sup>24</sup> to the *New York Times*, published on "It was the Nobel laureate himself, through me...[who] inquired whether presentation of the award at the embassy was possible. The answer to this was no. At the same time the embassy refused to give him an invitation card to the embassy for a conversation, stating as the reason that the embassy cannot invite private Soviet citizens. In my view, Mr. Palme should answer the following question: How does he envisage the presentation of the Nobel Prize in an embassy that flatly refuses to invite the laureate?"

September 18: Solzhenitsyn established Heeb as his world-wide literary and legal representative. "I want to declare publicly that my lawyer, Dr. Fritz Heeb (Zurich) is my only genuine representative outside the confines of my own country...One of the most important instructions given to him is to prevent a hasty and inadequate commercial publication of my books, a practice against which I did not have earlier any defense."

September 18-20: Solzhenitsyn to Hegge. "I was aghast at the reply by Palme [in the *New York Times*]: is the Nobel Prize actually a stolen property that must be handed over behind closed doors and without any witnesses?"

December 18: Tvardovsky died.

<sup>24</sup> Hegge was a Norwegian journalist, then a Moscow correspondent for three Scandinavian newspapers. See Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 701.

1972 March 30: Solzhenitsyn was interviewed by several members of the Western press. The interview was published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* on April 30. Solzhenitsyn discussed his work on the sequels to *August, 1914; October, 1916* and *March, 1917*, his difficulties in collecting the Nobel Prize, his social origins and his family history.

August: The Nobel Foundation published the text of Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Lecture.

1973 March 9: Solzhenitsyn's wife, Natalya Reshetovskaya, announced that she would be publishing her memoirs.

March 15: Solzhenitsyn's marriage to Reshetovskaya was officially dissolved. Later in the year, he married Natalya Svetlova, the mother of his children.

May 2: Open letter from Heeb: "[Reshetovskaya] has announced...that she intends to publish certain chapters of her memoirs. It is her full right to do so. However, she has no right to publish letters written by A. Solzhenitsyn to her, or his correspondence with other persons, or to publish material from his literary archives...Any publishers or newspaper editors who receive offers of Mrs. Reshetovskaya's memoirs containing [such material] are warned that A. Solzhenitsyn cannot tolerate their publication."

1973 May 27: The USSR joined the UNESCO Copyright Convention. Until that year, Soviet writers were not protected under the Universal Copyright Law, as the USSR had refused to sign the Convention. As a result, the USSR could publish any Western works it chose to without paying royalties. However, Western publishers were not compelled to regard the wishes of Soviet authors regarding publication of their works, including works in *samizdat* form.

September: Solzhenitsyn nominated Andrei Sakharov<sup>25</sup> for the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize.

September 6: Solzhenitsyn announced the suicide death of his friend Elizaveta Voronyanskaya, who after five days of KGB interrogation revealed the location of a copy of the *Gulag Archipelago*.

December 20: Parts I and II of the *Gulag Archipelago* were published in an authorised edition by YMCA Press (Paris), prompted by Voronyanskaya's death and the obvious interest of the KGB in the book. Solzhenitsyn had delayed its publication for several years; "I held back from printing this book for years because my duty to those still alive was more important than that towards the dead."

---

<sup>25</sup> A well-known nuclear physicist; he also had an active interest in literature and was a friend of Solzhenitsyn's, though they rarely agreed on anything.

- 1974 January 14: "The Path of Treason", I. Solovyev, *Pravda*. "The *Gulag Archipelago* is clearly designed to fool and cheat gullible people by all kinds of fabrications about the Soviet Union. The author of this composition is literally choking with pathological hatred for the country where he was born and grew up, for the socialist system, for the Soviet people...Solzhenitsyn deserves the merit for which he has so zealously striven—the fate of a traitor for whom all Soviet working people, and every honest man on earth, cannot but turn away in anger and disgust."
- February 12: Solzhenitsyn was forcibly arrested by seven policemen and interrogated at the Lefortovo prison (Moscow).
- February 13: Open letter from various Moscow writers, including Andrei Sakharov. "Anyone acquainted with [the *Gulag Archipelago*], the cause of such anger on the part of public leaders in the USSR, knows that his 'treason' consists of the tremendous forcefulness with which he revealed to the world the appalling crimes which took place in the USSR in the recent past...We demand: firstly, the publication of [*Gulag Archipelago*] in the USSR and its accessibility to every fellow-countryman; secondly, the publication of archive and other material which would give a complete picture of the activities of the Cheka, OGPU, NKVD and NKGB;<sup>28</sup> thirdly, the creation of an international public tribunal to investigate the crimes committed; and, fourthly, the protection of Solzhenitsyn from persecution and the granting to him the opportunity to work in his homeland...We ask the mass information media to spread our appeal..."
- 1974 February 13: Solzhenitsyn was exiled to West Germany, his Soviet citizenship revoked. He found sanctuary with Heinrich Böll, a fellow Nobel laureate.
- February 14: TASS Communiqué on Solzhenitsyn's expulsion, in *Pravda*. "By a decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for his systematic activities incompatible with the possession of Soviet citizenship and detrimental to the Soviet Union, A. I. Solzhenitsyn was deprived of citizenship of the USSR and on 13 February 1974 he was expelled from the Soviet Union. The family of Solzhenitsyn can join him when they deem it necessary."
- February 18: An interview with M. Malyarov, a Soviet Deputy Prosecutor-General, airs on Radio Moscow. "The legal grounds

---

<sup>28</sup> These are all successive names of the Soviet police apparatus. The Cheka, or *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya* (Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution, Sabotage and Speculation) was set up by Lenin in 1917. See Riasanovsky, 478 and Scammell, 61. The Cheka metamorphosed into the GPU or *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie* (State Political Administration) in 1922, and the GPU into the OGPU (General State Political Administration) in 1923. The OGPU lasted until 1934, when Stalin incorporated it into the NKVD, or *Narodny Komissariat vnutrennikh del* (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs). In 1941, the secret police split from the NKVD and became the NKGB or *Narodny Komissariat gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti* (The Peoples Commissariat for State Security), and were a fully autonomous force within the Soviet government. Scammell, 212.

of expelling Solzhenitsyn from the Soviet Union are provided by the decree issued by the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on

February 12, 1974...The law empowers the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to deprive...a person of his rights and to expel him from our country..."

February 26: *New York Times*. An open letter from David Carver, General Secretary, International PEN, and C. V. Wedgwood, President, Society of Authors. "International PEN and the Society of Authors protest emphatically against this violation of the elementary norms of civilized behavior. The forcible removal of a Nobel Prizewinner from his own country is an unprecedented act, one of the most shameful in the history of world literature...We ask not only our members, but all writers and readers all over the world to express their solidarity with Solzhenitsyn by supporting [Sakharov's] appeal."

March 3: Solzhenitsyn published his short work *Letter to Soviet Leaders in the West*.

March 29: Solzhenitsyn was joined in Zurich by his wife, three sons, stepson and mother-in-law. The family settled in Zurich.

June: Parts III and IV of the *Gulag Archipelago* were published by YMCA Press.

1974 November: YMCA Press published a Russian edition of *From Under the Rubble*, a collection of *samizdat* essays edited and contributed to by Solzhenitsyn on the future of Russia.

December 10: Solzhenitsyn finally received the Nobel Prize in Stockholm.

1975 September: Solzhenitsyn visited Canada and the United States, including Vermont. When asked by a member of the press if he would settle in the USA, he replied that he "would like some day to make my home in Russia."

October 9: The Nobel Committee announced that Andrei Sakharov was the winner of the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize.

1976 Summer: Solzhenitsyn moved his family from Switzerland to Cavendish, Vermont and began his career in the West.

## **WORKS CITED**

### **BY ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN**

*Cancer Ward.* London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1968.

*East and West: Nobel Lecture on Literature, A World Split Apart, Letter to the Soviet Leaders, and a BBC Interview.* Trans. Alexis Klimoff. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

*The First Circle.* New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

*Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation Vols. I & IV.* Trans. Thomas P. Whitney. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973 & 1975.

"Letter to Three Students," in Leopold Labedz ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Penguin Books Ltd., (1974), 155.

*Letter to Soviet Leaders.* Trans. Hilary Sternberg. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974.

"Men Have Forgotten God: The Templeton Address," *National Review* 35:14 (1983), 872-876.

*The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union.* Trans. Harry Willetts. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980.

*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* Trans. H. T. Willetts. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1991.

'One Word of Truth': *The Nobel Speech on Literature, 1970.* Trans. BBC Russian Service. London: The Bodley Head, 1972.

"Open Letter to the Fourth Congress", in Leopold Labedz ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record.* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Penguin Books Ltd., (1974), 116-118.

*Stories and Prose Poems.* Trans. Michael Glenny. London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1973.

"A World Split Apart: The Harvard Address," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections.* Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 3-20.

### **NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES**

Alsop, Joseph. "Solzhenitsyn's Warning." *The Washington Post* (2 January 1974), A19.

- Astrachan, Anthony. "Trotsky Last to be Expelled." *The Washington Post* (14 February 1974), A21.
- Blake, Patricia. "Solzhenitsyn: An Artist Becomes an Exile." *Time* 103:8 (1974), 28-32.
- Cousins, Norman. "The Verdict on Alexander Solzhenitsyn." *Christian Science Monitor*, (23 June 1978), 23.
- Editorial. "A Conscience Comes Home." *The Economist* 331:7865 (1994), 47.
- Editorial. "Solzhenitsyn." *The New York Times* (13 June 1978), A18.
- Editorial. "Solzhenitsyn: Pro and Con." *The Christian Science Monitor* (12 June 1978), A11.
- Editorial. "The Unexpected Perils of Freedom." *Time* 103:9 (1974), 29-30.
- Editorial. "Words of Advice from the Exile." *Time* 103:10 (1974), 44.
- Feifer, George. "The Dark Side of Solzhenitsyn." *Harper's* 260:1560 (1980), 49-58.
- Frankel, Charles. "An Image of Heaven," in "Is Solzhenitsyn Right?" *Time* 111:26 (1978), 18.
- van Gelder, Lawrence. "Solzhenitsyn Talks Religion with Graham." *The New York Times* (10 December 1974), 53.
- Gray, Paul. "Russia's Prophet in Exile." *Time* 134:4 (1989), 66-70.
- Hesburgh, Theodore. "Unpopular Truths", in "Is Solzhenitsyn Right?" *Time* 111:26 (1978), 18.
- Leonard, John. "Solzhenitsyn as a Media Creature." *The New York Times Book Review* (3 March 1974), 39.
- McCarthy, Colman. "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Misspent Rage." *The Washington Post* (21 June 1978), A25.
- Remnick, David. "The Exile Returns." *The New Yorker* (14 February 1994), 64-83.
- Reston, James. "A Russian at Harvard." *The New York Times* (11 June 1978), E21.
- Robertson, Nan. "A Russian Nationalist Looks to the Past." *The New York Times* (3 March 1974), 26.
- . "Letter Softened By Solzhenitsyn." *The New York Times* (3 March 1974), 9.
- Safire, William. "Solzhenitsyn Without Tears." *The New York Times* (18 February 1974), 25.
- Schapiro, Leonard. "Disturbing, Fanatical, Heroic." *New York Review of Books* (13 November 1975), 10-17.

- Schwartz, Harry. "Solzhenitsyn Without Stereotype." *Saturday Review* (20 April 1974), 24.
- Shabab, Theodore. "Solzhenitsyn Asks Kremlin To Abandon Communism And Split Up Soviet Union." *The New York Times* (3 March 1974), 26.
- Walsh, Edward. "A Rebuttal to Solzhenitsyn." *The Washington Post*, (21 June 1978), A2.
- Watson, Patrick. "Solzhenitsyn: A Second Exile." *The Globe and Mail* (7 March 1998), D16.
- Will, George F. "Solzhenitsyn's Critics." *The Washington Post* (18 June 1978), B7.

## BOOKS

- Allaback, Steven. *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1978.
- Barker, Francis. *Solzhenitsyn: Politics and Form*. London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1977.
- Berman, Ronald ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980.
- Carter, Stephen. *The Politics of Solzhenitsyn*. London: The Macmillan Press Limited, 1977.
- Charques, Richard. *The Twilight of Imperial Russia*. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- Dunlop, John B. et al., ed. *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1973.
- . *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985.
- Dziewanowski, M. K. *A History of Soviet Russia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985.
- Ericson, Edward E. *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World*. Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993.
- . *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.
- Kodjak, Andrej. *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978.
- Labeled, Leopold, ed. *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974.

- Lincoln, W. Bruce. *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914-1918*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986.
- Medvedev, Zhores A. *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Hilary Sternberg. London: Macmillan London Ltd., 1973.
- Nielsen, Niels C. *Solzhenitsyn's Religion*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1975.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. *A History of Russia*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Scammell, Michael. *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography*. London: Hutchinson, 1985.
- Singer, Daniel. *The Road to Gdansk: Poland and the USSR*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981.

## ARTICLES

- Berman, Harold J. "The Weightier Matters of the Law," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 99-113.
- Besançon, Alain. "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard." *Survey* 24:1(1979), 139-140.
- Boldyreff, Constantine W. "Solzhenitsyn: The Conscience of Russia." *Transactions* 6 (1972), 29-35.
- Buckley Jr., William F. "Solzhenitsyn's Modest Proposal." *National Review* 26:13 (1974), 390.
- Carlisle, Olga. "Solzhenitsyn's Invisible Audience," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 39-42.
- Dunlop, John B. "Solzhenitsyn's Reception in the United States," in John B. Dunlop (et al) eds., *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, (1985), 24-55.
- . "Solzhenitsyn in Exile." *Survey* 21:3 (1975), 133-154.
- Editorial. "Thoughts on Solzhenitsyn." *National Review*, in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 30-32.
- Editorial. "Mr. Solzhenitsyn as Witness." *The Washington Post*, in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 25-26.
- Ericson, Edward E. "Solzhenitsyn and the Truth of History." *The Intercollegiate Review: A Journal of Scholarship and Opinion* 18 (1973), 177-182.

- Geffert, Bryn. "Western Reaction to Solzhenitsyn: A Bibliography." *Bulletin of Bibliography* 49:4 (1992), 289-298.
- Getlein, Frank. "Holy Russia Rises in Vermont." *Commonweal* 105:13 (1978), 422-423.
- Gleason, Abbot. "Solzhenitsyn and the Slavophiles." *The Yale Review* 65:1 (1975), 61-70.
- Granfield, Patrick. "Contemporary Prophecy: The Solzhenitsyn Case." *Thought: A Review of Culture and Ideas* 50:198 (1975), 227-246.
- Halperin, David. "Continuities in Solzhenitsyn's Ethical Thought," in John B. Dunlop (et al) eds., *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, (1985), 267-285.
- Haugh, Richard. "The Philosophical Foundations of Solzhenitsyn's Art," in John B. Dunlop, (et al) eds., *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Company, (1973), 168-184.
- Hook, Sidney. "Solzhenitsyn and Western Freedom." *World Literature Today* 53:4 (1979), 573-578.
- Howe, Irving. "The Fate of Solzhenitsyn," in Irving Howe, *Selected Writings, 1950-1990*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, (1990), 459-463.
- James, Anthony. "The Ikon and the Latrine Bucket: The World of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn." *Contemporary Review* 263:1530 (1993), 16-22.
- Jones, Jack. "Solzhenitsyn's Warning: A Secular Reinterpretation." *Chicago Review* 32:3 (1981), 141-164.
- Kesler, Charles. "Up From Modernity," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 48-56.
- Kovaly, Pavel. "Problems of Anti-Humanism and Humanism in the Life and Work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 11:1 (1971), 1-18.
- Laber, Jeri. "The Real Solzhenitsyn." *Commentary* 57:5 (1974), 32-35.
- Latynina, Alla. "Solzhenitsyn and We." *Soviet Studies in Literature* 27:2 (1991), 23-61.
- MacLeish, Archibald. "Our Will Endures," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 57-59.
- Marty, Martin E. "On Hearing Solzhenitsyn in Context." *World Literature Today* 53:4 (1979), 578-584.
- McGroarty, Mary. "Solzhenitsyn Doesn't Love Us," in Ronald Berman ed., *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 60-62.

- McNeill, William H. "The Decline of the West," in Ronald Berman, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 123-129.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. "Questions," in John B. Dunlop (et al) eds., *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, (1973), 446-448.
- Morgenthau, Hans J. "What Solzhenitsyn Doesn't Understand." *The New Leader* 61:14 (1978), 12-13.
- Novak, Michael. "On God and Man," in Ronald Berman, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 131-143.
- Obolensky, A. "Solzhenitsyn in the Mainstream of Russian Literature." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8:2-3 (1971), 131-143.
- Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur. "The Solzhenitsyn We Refuse to See," in Ronald Berman, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: Twelve Early Responses and Six Later Reflections*. Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, (1980), 63-71.
- Schmemann, Alexander. "On Solzhenitsyn." Trans. Marjorie L. Hoover, in John B. Dunlop (et al) eds., *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, (1973), 28-44.
- Schwartz, Harry. "Solzhenitsyn Without Stereotype." *Saturday Review* (20 April 1974), 24.
- Treadgold, Donald W. "Solzhenitsyn's Intellectual Antecedents," in John B. Dunlop (et al) eds., *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, (1985), 243-266.
- Whitehorn, Alan J. "What Men Live By: An Analysis of Solzhenitsyn's Writings." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8:2-3 (1971), 235-236.

**VITA AUCTORIS**

**NAME:** Danielle Alexandra Townley  
**PLACE OF BIRTH:** Toronto, Ontario  
**YEAR OF BIRTH:** 1974  
**EDUCATION:** Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia  
1992-1996 B.A. (Honours)  
University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario  
1996-1998 M.A.