CHAPTER II

SOLZHENITSYN AS AN 'INSIDER'

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's status as a writer has behind it an intellectual's 'internalization' of varied life experiences enhanced by a process of assimilation, reassessment, reformulation of perspectives and rethinking and redefining of an individual's relationship with the historical process. In this complex activity Solzhenitsyn has had to play various roles and pass through several phases. This chapter deals with the first phase of Solzhenitsyn's life when he was an 'Insider' (This term is used in the thesis to qualify his existence as a writer within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union). It delineates his literary career from the publication of his first novel One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962) till his expulsion to the West in 1974. The works that constitute this period include One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962), The First Circle (1968), Cancer Ward (1968), the Nobel Prize speech published as One Word of Truth (1970), August 1914 (1972), The Gulag Archipelago I (1973), The Gulag Archipelago II (1974) and his Letter to the Soviet Leaders (1974).

The rhythm of his writings which ensures continuity also reveals that his expulsion to the West could not stifle his creative impulse nor disorient his historical bent of
mind. His ardent love for writing (especially writing the history of Russia) is a part of his youthful aspirations. Solzhenitsyn's relentless writings even after his deportation reflect his veneration for Art and his serious-minded involvement in literary affairs. At the core of all this lies his keen sense of patriotism. We have to approach his preoccupation with literature from a position that has been determined by his changing historical predicament. An intractable complexity within this writer has welded Art and Russian history together, where the Artist forges his vision of a society that has been exposed to drastic political and socio-economic changes. Placing Solzhenitsyn in such a context is naturally axiomatic.

Solzhenitsyn's historical enquiry was triggered off by his imprisonment in 1945. At the battle of Könisberg in East Prussia, Solzhenitsyn was arrested for slandering Joseph Stalin in a personal letter to his friend. Stalin had been referred to as the "Whiskered one" (Marc Slonim, Soviet Russian Literature: Writers and Problems 365). After months in the Lubianka prison at Moscow, he was stripped of his ranks (he was an artillery officer) and without any investigation was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment. He was released on March 5th in 1953 but was doomed to perpetual exile in Kazakhstan. Solzhenitsyn's camp experiences brought him closer to the historical reality of the operation of the regime which
has found expression in his works. The approach towards this reality has opened up several issues so far submerged within the official Soviet history and they may be said to constitute a veritable sub-text, as noted in Chapter I. Solzhenitsyn's subjective experiences, especially that of his labour camps, have become a testing ground from where he can carry out his evaluations which reconstitute the same Soviet history. It is imperative to remember here that Solzhenitsyn was, to begin with, a staunch Leninist, and only after his imprisonment did his Leninist fervour start abating. Solzhenitsyn's years at the labour camps inevitably shaped his views about Stalin. During the 'insider' phase, whatever notion/concept was formulated by Solzhenitsyn was in the immediate context of Stalinism. His mind was almost exclusively tuned to the Stalinist atrocities, aligned with his war experiences and the experiences as a cancer patient in 1952. It is as a chronicler of Russian history that he emerged during the earlier part of his life, and Russian history became an everlasting passion with Solzhenitsyn.

Soviet history since the Revolution had petrified into a monolithic structure imposing itself on the present, thrusting itself on the course of the collective life of the country through a perversion of 'State Ideology', and the institutionalisation of power. It had resulted in the creation of 'power apparatuses' which set forth their own regimes of truth. The version of history and life that was officially
portrayed by the state was diametrically opposed to the existing socio-political reality. The ideological climate was typically characterised by power-politics, where an individual was subjected by force to obey the ruling regime. Solzhenitsyn, born in the heyday of the Revolution, has been a witness, participant, and direct victim of such a set-up. Solzhenitsyn came to don the mantle of a critic of his society with his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) — which describes a single day in the life of a camp inmate Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. This novel was published in the November issue of the monthly magazine "Novy Mir" (New World). It was published later in book form in 1963. The author's name was not familiar but the subject matter of the book was stunning. For the first time in Soviet literature the complete truth was revealed about the life behind the barbed wires of Stalinist labour camps which by 1953 held four million inmates. The novel's political impact was tremendous. After the intervention of "Novy Mir's" editor Alexander Tvardovsky, (1958-1970) Premier Nikita Khrushchev allowed the publication of *One Day* and as mentioned in Chapter I, used it as a prime mover in his anti-Stalin campaign. From the publication of this novel Solzhenitsyn's name has come to be related, somewhat blindly, if one might say so, to 'anti-Stalinism'. This label is a stigma on Solzhenitsyn's intellectual potential and has deterred a better understanding of the man and his works.
One Day was indeed a critique of official Stalinism. What has been described in the novel on the surface is Shukhov's predicament. What remains unsaid constitutes the implied aspects of Stalinism. Shukhov loves work and symbolizes the heroism of survival. He transcends his dehumanizing condition of enslavement by means of his strong moral sense which springs from his opposition to the system, which in turn emerges as an ideal of the individual's vision. Another inmate, Buinovsky, once a naval captain, argues:

You've no rights to strip men in the cold, You don't know Article Nine of the criminal code. You're not behaving like Soviet people . . . . You're not behaving like Communists. (One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich 44)

Thus the very first novel of Solzhenitsyn focuses on the deviation of Communism from the path of its original ideal. One Day was projected as the author's affirmation of the individual's impulse for survival for all his implied sense of deprivation of personality. The political game played is evident from the intervention of Khrushchev in the publication of this work. Khrushchev, through allowing One Day's publication containing Solzhenitsyn's critique of the official ideology (Stalinism) used it as a tool of the policy of de-Stalinization. Khrushchev attempted to make it as a "State Apparatus", to use Louis Althusser's apt term, to fashion his
counter ideology. Solzhenitsyn's Ivan Denisovich Shukhov resists being ideologically conditioned by the "State Apparatus" and thereby creates his own "subjectivity". Khrushchev exploited this subjectivity as a power agency to reconstruct a 'Soviet subjectivity' pitted against a Stalinist construct. As a result, the Khrushchevian revision functions as a construction as well as a constriction of subjectivity. This repetition of remoulding of subjectivity is a distinctive feature in the official Soviet history in the modern times.

That Nikita Khrushchev's role in the publication of One Day was politically validated is a well-known fact. Alexander Tvardovsky comments on One Day that "the raw material of life which serves as a basis for A. Solzhenitsyn's story is unusual in Soviet literature" (qtd. in Foreword, One Day, v). He also recounts Khrushchev's concluding words at the "22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

"It is our duty to gain a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the nature of the matters related to the abuse of power. Time will pass and we shall die, we are all mortal, but so long as we work we can and must clear up many points and tell the truth to the party and to the people . . . . This we must do so that such things never happen again." (v)
Khrushchev's acceptance of *One Day* must deserve congratulations for this in an immense way, laid the groundwork for the international fame that Solzhenitsyn got. In his introduction to Solzhenitsyn's *One Day*, Marvin Kalb has mentioned the fact that Khrushchev is said to "have read the book and personally approved its uncensored publication" (xi). Referring to the novel becoming a "literary sensation", Kalb however remarks that "it is an official sensation because it humanizes the cold cliches of Khrushchev's attacks on Stalinist 'violations of social legality', and makes his drive to eliminate these abuses more comprehensible to the average Russian" (xiii). Anyone familiar with the immediate post-Stalin period can easily identify the ploy used by Khrushchev in authorising the publication of this work. Marvin Kalb raises two very pertinent questions in his introduction. He states that *One Day* has "raised a major question: how far has Khrushchev stretched the limits of what can and cannot be said in print. Although this is a bold and original book, could it have been bolder if the system had held it back?" (xiii-xiv). Kalb also poses another possibility commenting that "it is difficult to imagine Khrushchev endorsing a different kind of literary sensation — for example, one in which the main character openly denounces the Communist Party itself, rather than Stalin, for the evils of the labor camps" (xiv).
We can state with assurance that Khrushchev would never have played so prominent a part in the publication of Solzhenitsyn's first novel, had he not realized that the work critiqued Stalin and not the Party. We can also be assured that even if the authorities had clamped a blind censorship on this novel, this would never have succeeded in turning the acrimonious eye of Solzhenitsyn from Stalin.

It is evident that, in the process of a revaluation of Russian history, Solzhenitsyn's observations, at this point of his political engagement, are very much from a personal situation as a victim. Solzhenitsyn treats the issue of individual freedom in the Stalinist Russia at a microcosmic level in his first three novels. The ideological conditioning of individuals is portrayed both in One Day and The First Circle. In the first novel, the several means whereby prisoners are conditioned are explicitly portrayed. A prisoner should "never be conspicuous", and never be seen by "a campguard on your own" but "only in a group." One "had to take off" his "hat to a guard five paces before passing him, and replace it two paces after" (30). Prisoners' names were replaced by numbers, and referred to by the same. These numbers were touched up by paint often. The repeated roll calls, counting and recounting, dehumanize the prisoners. At the end of a day's work, when all the prisoners assemble for the roll call, a single prisoner's absence spreads pandemonium
and the counting of prisoners is repeated. It was not "so much the cold and the fact that they'd lost an evening that infuriated them" but they had no time "now to do anything of their own in the camp" (115). Solzhenitsyn bitterly comments: "They forgot to talk; they forgot to think; everyone in the column was obsessed by one idea: to get back first" (117). Even after getting back, prisoners were jostled out for another roll call - the "evening count". We realize that "no zek [prisoner] ever saw a clock or a watch" (150). "What use were they to him anyway?" asks Solzhenitsyn and replies: "All he [zek] needs to know is: will reveille sound soon? How long to roll call? How long to dinner? To the last clanging of the rail?" (150). Individuality is negated to a state of non-entity. The methods of subordination are subtle as well as open, as in the case of solitary confinement and physical punishment. In the novel we see that when the roll call is taken at the day's end, a prisoner's absence transforms the evening into a tense affair. Solzhenitsyn curses, "The evening was lost. That damned Moldavian [the prisoner missing]. These damned guards. This damned life" (114). Solzhenitsyn ironically states that "the authorities did his [the prisoner's] thinking for him about everything . . ." (50). Georg Lukacs in his Solzhenitsyn applauds Solzhenitsyn's achievement in the "literary transformation of an uneventful day in a typical camp into a symbol of a past which has not
yet been overcome nor has it been portrayed artistically" (13). This "literary transformation" does not restrict itself to this first work alone. Subsequently in The First Circle, the free employees who work with the prisoners are indoctrinated with hatred for the prisoners. These employees believe that the prisoners were the "dregs of the human race" (29). Hatred is used as an ideological weapon against the prisoners as well as among the free employees. The employees spy on each other and thereby they are also conditioned by the State Apparatus.

These early works of Solzhenitsyn's raise several basic issues which are however not confined to Soviet history alone. One Day sets the value of human life against the context of the Stalinist terrorism. From the very first work, Solzhenitsyn has emerged as a humanist who has an intense concern for an individual's role in history. Following the vulgar mass, he too in the beginning was a dedicated Leninist, typically blind. When he was sentenced to the gulag islands he came to realize that Lenin was indeed the principal creator of these labour camps. He got this valuable insight through his "dialogue", to use his own term, with numerous camp inmates. The trilogy The Gulag Archipelago is a result of such a "dialogue". The work is a monumental dedication to the millions whose lives have been mutilated by the Gulag Power Structures. Though subject to a multitude of experiences and
influences, Solzhenitsyn's interest in Russian history and the individual's participation in its making has never waned. Therein lies the humanist's concern for mankind. It is the focus on the ethical and spiritual values which enhance an individual's survival and existence, that forms the core of Solzhenitsyn's varied thinking. He is abhorred at the absence of human values in a totalitarian set-up. These values are firmly rooted in moral and spiritual grounds in his private ethics.

The Gulag volumes constituting a trilogy are a nonfictional account of the origin and establishment of the concentration camps. In the first volume, Solzhenitsyn describes the penal system as the "History of Our Sewage Disposal System," which incidentally is the title of one of the chapters. Solzhenitsyn's descriptions of the penal system in all its cruel and even sophisticated forms, implicate Marxism and its ideology as responsible for establishing a terrorist-state with its vicious power structures. Solzhenitsyn attempts to break this structure by critically recasting the history of Russia. His chief resource in this endeavour is language. He uses language in such away as to achieve a non-monologic discourse. This helps to reveal the truth of contemporary politics as well as affirm the worth of an individual's life. The process of recreation and revaluation is not one-sided. At this juncture, to highlight
this point further, a brief account of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts relating to "dialogism" may be given. For this "dialogism" is central to Solzhenitsyn's mode of perception and thinking.

Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogism and its Forms

Differentiating between a "monologic" and "dialogic" discourse, Bakhtin points to the predominance of a single voice in the former and the confluence of several voices in the latter. In an appendix "Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book" (1961) (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics), Bakhtin observes that a "single consciousness is contradictio in adjecto", and that "Consciousness is in essence multiple. Pluralia tantum" (288). To Bakhtin "monologism at its extremes, denies the existence outside of itself another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou) (292). In "a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness" (292-93). In such a case "monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force" (293). Thus monologue survives without "the other" and "to some degree materializes all reality" and "pretends to be the ultimate word (293). In contrast to this, Bakhtin sees the "dialogic nature of consciousness" as the "dialogic nature of human life
itself" (293), and realizes that the "single adequate form for verbally expressing, authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue" (293). Bakhtin reminds us that "life by its very nature is dialogic" and "to live means to participate in dialogue" to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth" (293). He declares with conviction that in this dialogue

a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (293)

Soviet ideology/history has been monologic, whereas a "dialogic" discourse is capable of revealing the process of the construction of a dominant ideology. A word in a monologic context is dead and closed in meaning (as seen in the distortion of language by Stalin) whereas language comes alive and operates meaningfully generating variable meanings in a dialogic discourse (as can be seen in the works of Solzhenitsyn).

Dialogism operates as "carnivalization" at the level of an event, where a stratified social set-up is temporarily inverted. In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin defines a carnival as a "pageant without footlights and without a
division into performers and spectators" (122). In this "everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act", and "its participants live in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect, that is, they live a carnivalistic life (122). Bakhtin points out that as "carnivalistic life is drawn out of its usual rut, it is to some extent 'life turned inside out'. . . ." (122). He enumerates the distinct features of a carnival:

The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is non carnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette concerned with it - . . . everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality, among people . . . . All distance between people is suspended, and a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people. (122-23).

(In The First Circle, an assorted group of people from various social strata enter a common ground being brought together as prisoners. In Cancer Ward, we have a group of patients).

At the level of technique, a multifaceted vision functions as "polyphony". Bakhtin viewed polyphony as a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and
consciousnesses with "equal rights and each with its own world" (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 6). In polyphony, 'the consciousness of a character is given as someone else's consciousness, another consciousness, yet at the same time it is not turned into an object, is not closed, does not become a simple object of the author's consciousness" (7). It is interesting to note here that Solzhenitsyn has offered his own interpretations of "polyphony". (There is no evidence on record to show how far Solzhenitsyn was intentionally using the concepts of Bakhtin and his works but in The Gulag Archipelago I, he refers to Bakhtin's arrest in 1929, calling him an "outstanding literary scholar" [51]). In 1966, Solzhenitsyn told his interviewer S. Komoto that the literary form that attracted him most was the polyphonic novel which was a novel "without a main hero, the most important character being the one with whom the narration has 'caught up' in a given chapter", a novel "with very exact references to the time and place of action" (qtd. in Donald Watt, "The Harmony of the World": Polyphonic Structure in Solzhenitsyn's Longer Fiction" 102). In 1967, Solzhenitsyn in an interview with Pavel Licko, again clarified his notion of polyphony:

Which genre do I consider the most interesting? A polyphonic novel strictly defined in time and space. A novel without a main hero. If a novel has a main hero the author inevitably pays more attention and devotes
more space to him. How do I understand polyphony? Each person, becomes the main hero as soon as the action reverts to him. Then the author feels responsible for as many as thirty-five heroes. He does not accord preferential treatment to any one. He must understand every character and motivate his actions. In any case he should not lose the ground under his feet . . . .

(qtd. in Vladislav Krasnov, Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky: A Study in the Polyphonic Novel 2-3)

Polyphony helps to break the hegemonic monologic official writing by presenting the simultaneous existence of several ideologies. In The First Circle and Cancer Ward, a number of ideologies are represented by several "voices". Each "voice" exists on its own and tries to subvert the other.

In his Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin declares:

... nothing conclusive has yet takes place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future. (166)

Soviet history has precisely attempted to close the future. Solzhenitsyn, through a "dialogic" representation, throws into relief the monologic structure of Russian history and politics. During the 'insider' phase, Solzhenitsyn's approach
is marked by a partial monologic view of Russian history but with implications for a dialogic view. With his *August 1914* (1972), the step towards a dialogic view had definitely been taken. Earlier Solzhenitsyn's observations were in the context of Stalinism. He saw history as warped by Stalinist politics. With *August 1914*, he was able to take a retrospective view of history. The novel, a part of the intended trilogy — portrays the involvement of Russia in the war of 1914. The shift from a microhistorical level to a macrohistorical level is latent here.

Through his non-monologic discourse Solzhenitsyn creates an alternate awareness in his readers. In *The First Circle*, the action covers four days at the end of 1949 in a "special prison" at Mavrino. It portrays the several evils of the Stalin period — the secret police system of informers, the false arrests, the arbitrary administrative justice, the harsh penal system and the privilege, corruption and luxurious living of the ruling class. A number of discussions characterises the novel. Even Joseph Stalin is portrayed as a character in the chapter "The Birthday Hero". *Cancer Ward*, set in the Post-Stalin period (1955), centres around a cancer ward of a provincial hospital where live several patients whose days are numbered. The values of life and death are discussed from several perspectives. In the novel Oleg Kostoglotov (despite being an autobiographical narrator, an
independent voice) takes up issues with everyone, especially with the bureaucrat Rusanov who is a Marxist. In *The First Circle*, it is the uncompromising "disciple of Socrates" (157), Gleb Nerzhin, who crosses swords with several ideologies, especially the official Marxist ideology. It is evident from these examples that Solzhenitsyn has been a participant in the making of modern Soviet history as well as an uncompromising critic of the version produced by the powers that be. Making his position very clear, Solzhenitsyn in his Nobel Prize Speech (1970), exhorted writers to develop their "own world vision" and said, "the simple step of a simple courageous man is not to take part in the lie, not to support deceit" (26). He was sensitive to what was happening to his country. He was torn between his sense of patriotism and his artistic conscience which goaded him to reveal the truth about his country, however bitter it may be. This led him to assert in his Nobel Prize Speech:

> Let the lie come into the world, even dominate the world, but not through me. (26)

**The Debauchery of Soviet Marxism**

Given this obsession Solzhenitsyn's focus was on the official Marxist ideology. In the Soviet Union, politics had negated religion and had conditioned individuals into becoming ideological beings. In his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (1974), Solzhenitsyn demands that Marxism be deprived of its
"powerful state support" and "exist of itself and stand on its own feet" (65). The former Soviet Union had nurtured Marxism as an official Party instrument, and people were "interpellated as subjects" (once again to use Althusser's terminology).

Solzhenitsyn's contribution to the Soviet history consists in showing how the latter has been totally conditioned by "ideology" used by fanatics from 1917 onwards. He discloses the perversion of the 'State Ideology', a process initiated by Lenin and Stalin. In August 1914, in hindsight he sees behind Stalinism, Leninism and behind Leninism a point in the past responsible for the post-Revolutionary Russia. He contends that Russia's woeful state (especially the Leninist period onwards) is not the result of a single man's paranoia (here Stalin's) but the logical outcome of the historical blunder of 1914. In the fortieth chapter of August 1914, Solzhenitsyn interrupts the narrative to ask, rhetorically of course:

Who can undertake to name the decisive battle in a war that lasted for years and strained the nation's morale to breaking point? Of the countless battles, more ended in ignominy . . . devouring our strength . . . snatching from us our bravest and strongest men and leaving the second raters. (440)
In this work, he views History as "irrational" with its "incomprehensible organic structure" (474) and as a river which "has its own laws" (474). Some find it as a "stagnant pond" and suggest alternatives for diversion into a better channel. But Solzhenitsyn believes that the "course of a river can't be interrupted . . ." (475). A Professor in the novel speaking of History states decisively that it "is not politics, where one chatterbox repeats or contests what some other chatterbox has said. The stuff of history is not opinions but sources" (639).

Vorotyntsev, a Colonel, expresses his opinion of the 1914 situation to his superior General Zhilinsky: "all we Russian officers bear a responsibility for the history of Russia" (714). The retrospective assessment made by Solzhenitsyn in August 1914 places him in a dialogic confrontation with history. A linear/temporal view of history is now being transformed into a dialogic one, where the past and the present are in a "recreative" interaction (to use Dominick LaCapra's term) with each other. The unhappy turn of events of 1914 caused the Revolution of 1917. The post-1917 events are now history.

The perversion of "State Ideology" talked about earlier, implies the diminishing role of an individual in the thwarted process of revolution. Soviet history never glorified
'individuality' but 'collectivity'. Solzhenitsyn is in no doubt about Marxist ideology being responsible for the very stifling of individuality. The first three novels picturize in a microcosmic way the perverted state of Soviet Russia. The Gulag volumes focus in detail on the creation of the penal system which found expression in an equally microcosmic manner in One Day and The First Circle. The first two volumes delineate the creation and establishment and the operation of the State penal system, while in the third volume we are given an account of several escapades symbolizing the spirit of resistance against the system. The State penal system began to take shape in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Solzhenitsyn views the system as a "Sewage Disposal system" whose history is the "history of an endless swallow and flow . . . ." (The Gulag I: 25). Solzhenitsyn sketches the different "waves" of arrests which began from 1917. The legal framework behind the penal system was so accommodative that "Article 58 "Section One stated that any action directed toward the weakening of state power was considered to be counterrevolutionary" (61). Solzhenitsyn lists a series of Sections from Section 2 to 14, which could be used to arrest an individual. He sarcastically notes that "we did not have any empty prisons" (92). The penal system's existence was strengthened by its cruel methods of interrogation and arrests. Solzhenitsyn aptly points out that the "principle" of "interrogation consists further in
depriving the accused of even a knowledge of the law" (121). Language was mutilated to the advantage of the system. Death penalty was "rechristened the "supreme measure", no longer a "punishment" but a means of social defense" (436). Solzhenitsyn perceptively reveals the mechanics that operate behind such a system; "to crush him [the inmate of the camp] once and for all and to cut him off from all others once and for all — that was the function of interrogation under Article 58" (504). The Gulag Archipelago graphically projects the kind of secular hell created by Lenin. Solzhenitsyn's enquiry poses the question whether Soviet Russia was the creation of Stalin or a corollary to an earlier phase of the historical process. In August 1914 he traces it back to the 1914 scene. His approach towards this war differs from the official interpretation which has persisted from the Leninist period to the present. Soviet history so far has interpreted the Russian way of life as generated by Marxism but with the advent of Solzhenitsyn, history itself is being interpreted.

Solzhenitsyn's critique of the distorted Marxist ideology finds itself as the center of his focus deeply influencing his approach towards history. In The Gulag Archipelago I, he opines that it is "ideology" that "gives evil doing its long-sought justification and gives the evil-doer the necessary steadfastness and determination" (174). In his Letter to Soviet Leaders he raises his clarion call to
"shake off . . . this filthy sweaty shirt of Ideology which is now stained with the blood of those 66 millions that it prevents the living body of the nation from breathing" (64).

The Secular Hell

In the name of "Ideology", history has been manipulated by despotic rulers like Lenin and Stalin. Solzhenitsyn senses the mechanics of power that have gone into the 'institutionalization' of history transforming it into a "power structure". Solzhenitsyn, a victim of the system, transcends it and is able to offer a critique of the same. Soviet history as constructed by the regime is seen as having failed in its experiments, the "collective" being one such instance. The "collective" is a term given to the groups of people made to live together. The process is called "Collectivisation", and denotes the transferring of land from a private enterprise to group ownership. The small forms of peasants in the USSR were brought together as agricultural collectives.

The value of human existence is indeed devalued in several ways under a totalitarian set-up. In One Day the physical aspects of the Stalinist hell emerge distinctively, whereas the metaphysical and ideological aspects are delineated in The First Circle (Vlasidslav Krasnov 22). This applies to Cancer Ward as well. The very dominant existence of
the gulag islands and the servile and inhuman existence of its inmates are indeed a tragic irony in a nation supposed to be motivated by the socialist ideas of Marxism. In One Day the dominant leitmotif is survival, which is pitted against the twin evils of an inclement weather no more comforting than the rigid and stringent camp system. The very "cold" atmosphere (physical as well as symbolic) is stressed throughout the work, so much so that Solzhenitsyn intervenes to comment, "Let your work warm you up, that was your only salvation" (19). Apart from the drudgery of hard labour in a rough weather, a prisoner had to confront other physical realities such as hunger. Describing how a prisoner feels, Solzhenitsyn says, "there it [dinner] was that brief moment for which a Zek lives" (136), when "a couple of ounces ruled your life" (66). A Zek, a Soviet slang for prisoner, had to face other problems such as bribing his leaders as well as camp commandants and their coterie. A sense of dread always haunted the prisoners, generated by the commands of guards, the presence of dogs that could be unleashed anytime, the repeated roll calls, and checkings, possibilities of physical punishment and solitary imprisonment. This intimidating picture about the materialistic reality of the Stalinist camp in One Day undergoes a metamorphosis in Solzhenitsyn's second novel The First Circle, where the ideological and metaphysical aspects of the Stalinist hell find themselves equally well represented.
The Mavrino prison described in *The First Circle* brings together several prisoners, mostly skilled ones, for a specific project of Joseph Stalin. The very second chapter titled "Dante's Idea", describes the arrival of several new comers from concentration camps. The Mavrino zeks are appalled at the deplorable sight of the newcomers, while the latter are flabbergasted at the relatively liberal atmosphere of the prison. A newcomer wonders, "Where have I landed? . . . . They don't forbid books! You can shave yourself! The guards don't beat the zeks. . . . . What kind of gleaming summit? May be I've died? May be this is a dream? Perhaps I'm in heaven" (9). Lev Rubin who is an inmate of the prison and also a dedicated Marxist and philologist, replies, with sarcasm, "No dear sir, . . . you are just as you were previously in hell. But now you have risen to its best and highest circle — the first circle" (9). Solzhenitsyn's very title for his novel "The First Circle" alludes to the confining of the poets and artists in the first circle of Dante's hell. In the second chapter of the *First Circle*, Lev Rubin explains the concept of Dante's first circle as it appears in the Fourth Canto of *The Divine Comedy* and actually quotes from it:

"At last
we reached the base of a great Citadel . . . (10)
He pauses, asking the prisoners to look at the old arches
at Mavrino and continues:

. . . circled by seven towering battlements
and by a sweet brook flowing round them all. . . . (10)
He refers to the gates here and again cites Dante:

... I saw four mighty presences come toward us with neither joy nor sorrow in their bearing.

'... What souls are those whose merit lights their way even in Hell? What joy sets them apart?'' (10)

Through this episode Solzhenitsyn openly admits his borrowing of Dante's phrase and the central idea of the first circle, and using it to his purpose.

We may say, Solzhenitsyn's title the "first circle" is a deliberate intertextual use of Dantean imagery. He invokes the image of the "first circle" to explain the nature and purpose of the "sharashka" (special prison). Lev Rubin declares that in the sharashka there were "mathematicians, physicists, chemists, radio engineers, telephonic engineers, artists, translators, bookbinders, architects, designers ..." (8). In a long passage Gleb Nerzhin, another zek who is a mathematician, explains the creation of the sharashka:

All these sharashkas were started in 1930 when they sentenced the engineers of the 'Promparty' on the charge of conspiring with the British, and then decided to see how much work they'd produce in prison. The leading engineer of the first sharashka was Leonid Konstantinovich Ramzin. The experiment was successful. Outside prison it was impossible to have two big engineers or two major scientists in one design group.
They would fight over who would get the name, the fame, the Stalin prize, and one would invariably force out the other. That's why outside prison all design offices consist of a colorless group around one brilliant head. But in a sharashka? Neither money nor fame threatens anyone. . . . A dozen academic lions live together peacefully in one den because they've nowhere else to go. It's a bore to play chess or smoke. What about inventing something? Let's. A lot has been created that way. That's the basic idea of the sharashka. *(The First Circle)* 72

It is also evident from Lev Rubin’s comment on the "first circle" (cited earlier) that the edge of bitter irony in phrases like "a dozen academic lions" cannot be sharper. Solzhenitsyn does in no way appreciate the existence of this privileged "first circle" even as compared to the several harsher labour camps. Neither does he fail to draw a sharp distinction between the two. As explained earlier the newcomers are taken by surprise at the comparatively liberal atmosphere at Mavrino. But a Mavrino inmate confesses, "We sit in this sharashka as if we were in a swamp — We're cut off from life." (9). At the end of the chapter "Dante's Idea", Valentine Pyranchikov, a zek radio engineer, rationalizes the idea of the special camps, hardly disguising of course, his cynicism:
I shall explain to the comrade what a sharashka is much more clearly. You need only remember the newspaper piece that said: 'It has been proved that a high yield of wool from sheep depends on the animals' care and feeding'. (10)

Thus Solzhenitsyn shows that though the Mavrino prison is a kind of a "first circle", and apparently privileged, it is in no way better than a concentration camp. In Dante's poem a justification exists for the poets and artists to be thrown into the "first circle". In Solzhenitsyn's "first circle" skilled artisans and professionals too are confined. Solzhenitsyn uses intelligently Dante to offer a moral condemnation of the utterly unjustifiable treatment of their labour and knowledge by the Party. It should be mentioned here that Dante's is one of the inarticulate "voices" but his image of the first circle is a central underlying symbol that holds the several "voices" and "plots" together. Dante's metaphor as employed by Solzhenitsyn speaks itself with a Swiftian savagery. Though the "first circle" is supposed to be a privileged circle at its surface level, it does not function as such. The visual imagination of Dante has been meticulously recaptured and given shape in The First Circle. Solzhenitsyn's description of the sharashka as a mysterious place lends it a mythical quality, but ironically, its existence is a hard reality one has to reckon with. Solzhenitsyn calls this
sharashka as an "enchanted castle set apart from the capital and its uninformed inhabitants by a magic no-man's land . . ." (53), and as an ark, "confidently plowing its way through the darkness", from where "the whole tortuous flow of accursed History could easily be surveyed, as from an enormous height, and yet at the same time one could see every detail, every pebble on the river bed, as if one were immersed in the stream" (340). Vladislav Krasnov commenting on the "central, image of the novel", describes its function as helping to locate "precisely the place of the sharashka, of Stalinist Russia, on the metaphysical map of modern history" (Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky 103). Solzhenitsyn's The First Circle reveals that he is not a political pamphleteer/writer. His novel does not fall in line with the likes of the American documentary fiction, but is a political epic which has emerged from his poetic vision, cutting across time and is representative of the contemporary European mind.

Who was Stalin?

Though the living conditions in the special camps are comparatively better and prison rules a bit relaxed, the dominance of the Stalinist stranglehold cannot be escaped. Both the Mavrino prisoners as well as the employees and officers are constantly under the maniac pressure exercised generously by Stalin. The process of intimidation and fear comes to function as a vicious circle, with Stalin holding all
the reins of absolute control. We see in The First Circle that Stalin intimidates Abakumov, Minister of State Security, who in turn takes it out on his subordinates - Deputy Minister Sevastyanov, Major General Oskolupov and the head of the Special Technical Section and its chief engineer, Colonel of Engineers, Yakonov. They in turn victimise the already pitiable victims of Mavrino. Above them all, the "Absolute Ruler" (117) reigns supreme. Solzhenitsyn subtly portrays the terror one feels in Stalin's presence:

Stalin was terrifying because he did not listen to excuses, made no accusations; his yellow tiger eyes simply brightened balefully, his lower lids closed up a bit and there, inside him, sentence had been passed, and the condemned man didn't know: he left in peace, was arrested at night, and shot by morning. (117)

The project at this special prison involves research into the creation of a secret telephone that can be used only by Stalin as well as a decoder that can identify a speaker by his voice. But throughout the novel, we see how the individual conscience reacts to the demand for 'compromise' with the system. Prisoners like Nerzhin, Bobynin, Gerasimovich and Khorobrov dare to defy the 'Authorities' at an ideological level. Nerzhin (a fictional person sharing affinities with the author), a skeptic by nature, is the most uncompromising ideologue, who realizes that he was arrested for his "turn of
mind" (48), and declares, "Let them admit first that it's not right to put people in prison for their way of thinking, and then we will decide whether we will forgive them (50). Bobynin is asked by Abakumov (Chief of State Security, a real life character) to inform on the progress of the decoding schedule behind the backs of the other bureaucrats. Bobynin reacts with absolute contempt:

You took my freedom away a long time ago and you can't give it back to me because you haven't got it yourself. . . . . you are strong only as long as you don't deprive people of everything. For a person you've taken everything from is no longer in your power. He's free all over again. (96)

The physicist Gerasimovich refuses to invent an infra-red camera, knowing well that this act is bound to condemn both himself and his wife. He retorts to Oskolupov (Head of the Special Equipment Section of the Ministry of State Security, another real life character) that setting "traps for human beings" was not his "field" (583). Khorobrov refusing to work more than the twelve hours required by the Soviet Constitution, gets transferred to the labour camps. The First Circle not only throws into relief the ideological pressure upon the prisoners but also its working even among the governing members of the prison.
But the ultimate authority that is pervasive is exercised by Joseph Stalin — the "little old man with a dessicated double chin" whose "name was baked on the lips of dying prisoners of war" and "on the swollen gums of camp prisoners" (99). Solzhenitsyn presents a Stalin "growing old like a dog", "an old age without friends . . . without love . . . without faith . . . without desire" (134), a lone man who "refused to believe" that "death had already made its nest in him" (134), and had "begun to be afraid of space" (113). Stalin, "like a legendary hero", "had all his life been cutting off the hydra's ever-sprouting heads" (105). Only he "knew the path by which to lead humanity to happiness, how to shove its face into happiness like a blind puppy's into a bowl of milk . . ." (130). In describing Stalin, Solzhenitsyn uses a varied animal imagery to bring out the almost beastly being lurking behind Stalin the so-called Leader. Solzhenitsyn compares Stalin's ageing process to that of a dog. In presenting the "terrifying" person of Stalin, he refers to the latter's "yellow tiger eyes" (117), "owl-like malice" (119), "tiger-like gleam" (127). And Stalin's head "cocked like a crow with a wrung neck" (126). The ideological oppositions to this "Omnipotent" (113), "Wisest of the Wise" (110), "Leader of the Peoples" (14), the "Plowman" (41), "Leader of nations" (45), "Father of Peoples" (51), "Leader of All Progressive Humanity" (54), "Wise Teacher" (56), "Greatest Genius of
Geniuses" (62), "Most Brilliant Strategist of All Times and Peoples" (81), "Great Generalissimo" (81), "Best Friend of Counterintelligence Operatives" (81), "Corphæus of Sciences" (87), the "Absolute Ruler" (117), and "Little Father" (124), find their expressions in their own individual ways. Solzhenitsyn in The First Circle, summons up a list of adjectives to denote Stalin. (The list given here does not include all the adjectives contained in the novel). His purpose in setting up a series of qualifiers for Stalin is to invert their moral implications. For example, Stalin is referred to as a "Plowman". This archetypal image is placed in the Christian tradition where Jesus Christ is viewed as the "Plowman". In The First Circle, the use of this word implies just the opposite. Stalin can be a Plowman only by way of his digging the mass graves for millions. Solzhenitsyn uses a historically modern word when he refers to Stalin as "Leader", "Little Father" etc. Such words are an example of modern political rhetoric. In employing the language of glib accolades (as noted above) in contrast to medieval, archetypal Christian imagery and symbols, Solzhenitsyn succeeds in invoking an altogether different picture of Stalin from what has been projected before. Solzhenitsyn's fictional portrayal of Joseph Stalin indeed invokes the real life Stalin. Apart from describing the terrifying personality of Stalin, Solzhenitsyn attempts to penetrate the mind of Stalin,
which almost amounts to a kind of loud thinking. He comments quite sarcastically that "mistrust was Iosif Djugashvili's [Stalin's] determining trait" and it was also his "world view" (122). Solzhenitsyn gives an elaborate list of those whom Stalin distrusted which include _ "his own fellow Party members", "his fellow exiles", the "peasants", the "workers", "members of the intelligentsia", "soldiers and generals", "his wives and mistresses" and his "children" (122). Stalin had "trusted one person, one only, in a life filled with mistrust, a person as decisive in friendship as in enmity" (122). "Alone among Stalin's enemies, while the whole world watched, he had turned around and offered Stalin his friendship" (122).

Solzhenitsyn's punch lines follow:

And Stalin had trusted him.

That man was Adolph Hitler. (122)

Ethical Socialism

Though the immediate backdrop of Cancer Ward is not a Stalinist one but the setting in of the post-Stalinist period, the novel does not leave behind the issue of Stalinism. Though a lot of discussion is centred around 'life' and 'death', and the Tolstoyan debate about 'What Men Live By', the implications of the Stalinist legacy are not to be missed. The novel brings together people from several layers of society and nationality — doctors, patients, workers, peasants, Russians, ethnic minorities, Communists and non-Communists,
within the confines of a hospital. In this novel Solzhenitsyn concentrates on the metaphysical issues raised by Stalinism, anticipating the post-Stalin era. The main antagonists are Rusanov, a bureaucrat and Kostoglotov, an exile. Shulubin with his peasant wisdom acts as a kind of spiritual mentor who propounds his notion of "ethical socialism". He declares that "there's only one true socialism, and that's ethical socialism" (445). The Stalinist legacy is perpetuated through hardcore bureaucrats such as Rusanov, who strongly believe that "there are questions on which a definite opinion has been established, and they are no longer open to discussion" (138). A victim of the Stalinist era like Oleg Kostoglotov, sentenced to perpetual exile, is simply lost, unable to forget the past nor able to fit into the changing society. But this does not preclude him from questioning the process that has affected the lives of so many whose predicament is similar to his. Discharged from hospital, Oleg Kostoglotov goes to the railway station. There is a rush to get into the train. He notices a "wild, racing creature" fighting to get in first, but recognizes him as a "self-styled camp hoodlum" (534). Kostoglotov yells, "Hey! You! I'm from 'out there' too!" (534); in response the maniac asks, "where's that?" (534). Kostoglotov answers, "The place where ninety-nine weep but one laughs" (534). Such a bitter impression haunts him throughout. He was "chained to his exile . . ." (171). Kostoglotov, aware
of the sinister implications of his deprived status, confesses to Zoya, a nurse, about his exile:

... In perpetuity ... Those were the words used on the documents. If it was a life sentence, well, I suppose my coffin could be brought back home to Russia, but since it's perpetual, it means even that won't be allowed back. I won't be allowed back even after the sun goes out. Perpetuity is longer. (167)

Solzhenitsyn in confronting his version of Soviet history (pre-Stalin, Stalin and post-Stalin) is inevitably caught between his historical sense and his role as a writer. On the one hand he reveres the rich tradition of Russian history and on the other hand, he perceives painfully the distortion of such a venerable tradition in the name of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. Though he was an 'insider' in the geo-political sense at this point, Solzhenitsyn was always an outsider for attempting to expose the truth about the Soviet Union. His dialogue with the immediate past brings out its inherent defects shrouded safely in Marxist jargons. It is through such an intellectual dialogic process that Solzhenitsyn's inner critical vision has evolved.

The basic problem of the relationship between an individual and his society occupies the attention of Solzhenitsyn and is expressed powerfully in his Nobel Prize
speech, \textit{One Word of Truth}. In 1970 Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He decided not to go to Stockholm to receive the Prize for fear of being refused permission to reenter Russia. The prize was given to him in absentia. In \textit{One Word of Truth} he spelt out his overall view of Art, Literature and writers and their roles. In so doing he raised a number of questions about the problems of facing mankind. He stressed the responsibility to "create a single evaluative system", explain the "dilemma" to people and "reconcile values". He asserts that "the means to convey all this to us does exist in the world. It is Art. It is literature. Art and literature can perform the miracle of overcoming man's characteristic weakness of learning only by his own experiences, so that the experience of others passes him by" (14).

In the Nobel Prize Speech Solzhenitsyn deplores the plight of nations "whose literature is interrupted by the interference of force" (16). This is an implied criticism of the attempt to impose a cooked up version of Soviet history on the Soviets. Solzhenitsyn cites Anna Akhmatova and Zamyatin as examples of geniuses who have been silenced by Russia. If they are "walled up alive for the duration of their lives", "condemned to create in silence until the grave" without a response, then this is a "deep tragedy of the whole nation" and a "threat to the whole world" (16). It stands as a danger
to the "whole mankind" when "the whole of history ceases to be understood because of that silence" (16). Solzhenitsyn seizes the aporia in the official representation of the Soviet Union, exalting the 'silenced creativity' of writers like Anna Akhmatova and Zamyatin. In the process, the self-styled history of Russia is deconstituted — allowing the scope for an enquiry into the represented history. In pressing the aporia, Solzhenitsyn deconstructs the myth of the State. Soviet Regime has given a falsely totalized view of the state of affairs in the Republic. Solzhenitsyn by deconstituting the myth proves the fallacy of totalization.

In Russia politics has been a potent force from the time of the Revolution of 1917. In any country, a writer's ideology is shaped largely by the socio-political and economic forces operating in that society. Thus a true artist, willingly or unwillingly becomes a critic of his times. Vasili Mikhailovich in his "Soviet Literature Today: The Struggle Between David and Goliath" (1970) recalls that

Literature in the Soviet Union was born in the throes of a revolution and developed under the most trying circumstance: the ties with the past were mercilessly cut off; a brutal dictatorship was established; bloody purges were carried out . . . (277)

The context is that of Leninism and Stalinism. Solzhenitsyn recaptures the mood of his period in his first three novels
and the Gulag volumes. Functioning largely within the immediate context of Stalinism enhanced his perception as an 'insider'.

Solzhenitsyn's Letter to the Soviet Leaders was written before his The Gulag Archipelago was confiscated (he mentions this detail in the preface to his Letter) and sent to its addressees (vii). As there was no response, Solzhenitsyn confesses that he had to "make the letter public" (vii). He also identifies the well-spring out of which his "Letter" emerged: "how to avoid the catastrophe with which we as a nation are threatened" (viii). He categorically states that the "chief dangers" facing his "country in the next ten to thirty years" are "war with China, and our destruction, together with the Western civilization, in the crush and stench of a befouled earth" (3). He considers the "weakening of the Western World and the whole of Western civilization" as a result of the "outlook" "conceived at the time of the Renaissance" which reached the zenith of its expression with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment (1). At this point of Solzhenitsyn's evolution, we can notice how his approach towards Russian history has slowly broadened into a wider concern, which finds a sharper expression after his expulsion to the West. Solzhenitsyn's concern is with the West as well as Russia. Marxism and its perverted form of ideology become Solzhenitsyn's prime targets. He comes down heavily on
"ideology" and holds it responsible for the obstacles to the building of a "healthy Russia" (50). Communist doctrine is viewed as "dead ideology" (34), "a primitive, superficial economic theory" (55) which was "mistaken when it forecast that the proletariat would be endlessly oppressed and would never achieve anything in a bourgeois democracy . . . ." (55-56). In the Letter to the Soviet Leaders Solzhenitsyn faults Marxism as being inaccurate which cannot by any stretch of the imagination aspire to be a science. He reveals Marxism's ineffectual status for having "failed to predict a single event in terms of figures, quantities, time-scales or locations" (57). He calls for a "rejection of Marxism" and that he terms as "patriotism" (61). Soviet Marxism, according to Solzhenitsyn, has failed miserably to explain the "most subtle of creatures the human being, and even more complex synthesis of millions of people, society" (57). Seeing Marxism as a "sham, cardboard, theatrical prop" upon which "nothing constructive rests" (62), Solzhenitsyn urges his countrymen thus:

Cast off this cracked Ideology! Relinquish it to your rivals, let it go wherever it wants, let it pass from our country like a storm cloud, like an epidemic, let others concern themselves with it and study it, just as long as we don't! (64)
As Solzhenitsyn rightly puts it, what Russia has to do is rid Marxism of its benefactor — the state and let it survive on "its own feet" (65).

**Manipulation of Soviet History**

The history of Soviet Russia has been 'monologic' in all senses, as reflected by itself as well as the way it is interpreted by its supporters. Any understanding of history in the land has been unfortunately influenced by a distorted monologic ideology with Marxism as the 'Master Code', established through the means of the perverted official ideology, the creation of a power apparatus and structures. In *The Gulag Archipelago* I Solzhenitsyn shows how arrests could be made irrespective of any real charges. Arrests could be made for "concealment of social origin" or "former social origin" (40). Solzhenitsyn puts it rather crudely:

> Arrests rolled through the streets and apartment houses like an epidemic. Just as people transmit an epidemic infection from one to another without knowing it, by such innocent means as a handshake, a breath, . . . so too, they passed on the infection of inevitable arrest by a handshake, by a breath, by a chance meeting on the street. (75)

Language was used as an important tool in the creation and establishment of the "Power structures". There were several codes and laws whereby, people were arrested, sentenced, and
even exterminated. There were several "directives" by which the judges passed their judgements. For example, the directive of 1937: ten years, twenty years; execution by shooting; the directive of 1943: twenty years at hard labour; hanging. In 1945 it was ten years plus five of "disenfranchisement, and by 1949 - everyone got twenty five years. In "Solzhenitsyn's Literary Experiment" Clare Goldfarb rightly spells out the issue when he says, "language condemned the individual" (175). Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago I locates 1934 as the year when the term "treason to the Motherland" became a blanket term. Article 19 of the criminal code was broadened with the application of "via intent" (61). Under this clause, if an interrogator "envisioned an intention to betray" defected in the accused, it was treated as "actual treason" (61). A list of sections under Article 58 can be helpful here:

Section 2 - armed rebellion, seizure of power in the capital or provinces

3 - assisting foreign state to war with Russia

4 - aid to international bourgeoisie

5 - inciting foreign state to war with USSR

6 - espionage

7 - subversion of industry, transport, trade, and the circulation of money

8 - terror

9 - destruction

10 - propaganda, agitation etc.
11 - criminal joining an organization
12 - conscience of citizen --> failure to make a denunciation
13 - service in Tsarist secret police
14 - failure of duty (64-67).

Solzhenitsyn shows how language was desecrated and rewritten during the Revolution, for creating a false front behind which a rule of terror was established. He recalls that the "Revolution had hastened to rename everything, so that everything would seem new" (436). For example "death penalty" was "no longer" a "punishment but a means of social defense" (436). The word "kulak" was used as a pretext for sentencing people to death. Solzhenitsyn explains that "in Russian a kulak is a miserly dishonest rural trader . . ." (55). Before the 1917 Revolution, such Kulaks were few, but after the Revolution "by a transfer of meaning, the name Kulak began to be applied (in official and propaganda literature, whence it moved into general usage) to all those who in any way hired workers, even if it was only when they were temporarily short of working hands in their own families" (55).

When an accused was arrested, he was simply dumbstruck by the language of the documents and legal charges framed against him. People were terminated for their "social prophylaxis" (77) and this left the "population" "shaken up, forced into silence, and left without any possible leaders of
resistance" (77). Even the very concepts of guilt and innocence were redefined as "rightist opportunism" (76) at the beginning of the thirties. The courts were of three types — the "people's courts, the circuit courts, and the Revolutionary Tribunals — the Revtribunals" (301). Non political crimes were handled by the people's courts; they could not pass death sentences, but pass sentences up to two years (302). On the other hand the circuit courts and the Revtribunals could pass death sentences.

Solzhenitsyn in his preface to The Gulag Archipelago I develops a distinct metaphor to underscore his reason for writing a history of the Soviet penal system. He recounts coming across a "noteworthy news item in Nature, a magazine of the Academy of Sciences" (ix). In 1949, during an excavation on the Kolyma river, frozen specimens of "prehistoric fauna" were found, and they were eaten by the people who found them. The readers of this news item no doubt were surprised at the preservation of this "fish or salamander" for "tens of thousands of years". Solzhenitsyn points out that only camp survivors could decipher the genuine significance of such an event:

We understood because we ourselves were the same kind of people as those at that event. We, too, were from that powerful tribe of Zeks, unique on the face of the earth, the only people who could devour prehistoric salamander with relish. (ix)
He then declares:

I have absorbed into myself my own eleven years there not as something shameful nor as a nightmare to be cursed: I have come almost to love that monstrous world, and now by a happy turn of events, I have also been entrusted with many recent reports and letters. So perhaps I shall be able to give some account of the bones and flesh of that salamander — which, incidentally is still alive. (x)

Solzhenitsyn's works especially his novels, attempt to break the monologic use of language. In his Gulaq volumes he has used the terminology of the Soviet system only to be punctured with his critical observations. In his Letter to the Soviet Leaders Solzhenitsyn avows that he has taken upon himself "a heavy responsibility to Russian history" (81).

Consciousness, Marxism and Solzhenitsyn

Earlier, Solzhenitsyn's delineation of the manifestation of the distorted Marxist ideology, has been illustrated along with the possible ways of a counter (in a fictionally representative manner). The theoretical implications of Marx's doctrines regarding society may be taken up here.

Solzhenitsyn's "dialogic" approach towards Russian history is in discord with the Marx's concept of history.
Soviet history has been shaped by Karl Marx's view of history. In *The German Ideology* (1845) Marx and Engels set forth a materialistic conception of history defining the "first premise of all human history" to be the "existence of living human individuals" (*Selected Writings* ed. David McLellan 160). Since the "first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature", they argue that one cannot delve into the "physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself - geological, orohydrographical, climactic, and so on" (160). Therefore the "writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modifications in the course of history through the action of men" (160). Now, consciousness, religion and the like distinguish men from animals. Men also set themselves apart from animals once "they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization" (*Selected Writings* 160). In "producing the means of subsistence" men "indirectly" produce "their actual material life" (160). According to Marx and Engels "life involves before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things" (*Selected Writings* 165). Therefore the "first historical act is . . . the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself" (165); and this indeed is "an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history,
which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life" (Karl Marx, ed. David McLellan 165). Marx saw society as divided into the base and superstructure, where the former determines the latter. The goal of history was seen as the development of productive forces, which was viewed as more important than the development of ideas and consciousness. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) Marx claimed that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (*Selected Writings* 222). Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag* II comes down heavily on the superficiality of Marxism in which "there is always that sanctifying lofty theory for everything" (419). He scoffs at the pose of Marxism as the "One and Only True teaching which explained all the iridescent life of humanity... in terms of the class struggle and it alone" (419). This comment arises in turn from Solzhenitsyn's observations on the power given to thieves in the gulag prisons. Solzhenitsyn attacks the silencing of the press in Russia. For the press in Marxist Russia is 'silent' in the event of a murder while, in the West, a murder invites a lot of publicity. In his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" of 1844, Marx claimed that Communism is the genuine solution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man. It is the true solution of the struggle between existence and essence, between
objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution to the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution. *Selected Writings* 89

History has proved the contrary. At least in the case of the riddle of Russia history has only become more bedevilled on all fronts.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels set their premises in such a way that "in direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth", they were to "ascend from earth to heaven" (*Selected Writings* 164). They were not to proceed from "what men say, imagine, conceive, in order to arrive at men in the flesh"; they were to proceed from "real, active men, and on the basis of their real-life process . . . demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process" (164). Regarding the "phantoms formed in the human brain" as "necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process" they saw them as "empirically verifiable and bound to material premises" (164). They thus negated the independent status of "morality, religion, metaphysics" and "all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness . . ." (164). These had "no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the
products of their thinking" (164). Hence the famous declaration of Marx and Engels:

Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness. (Selected Writings 164)

In The Gulag Archipelago II Solzhenitsyn counters this through M.A. Voichenko's opinion:

In camp, existence did not determine consciousness, but just the opposite: consciousness and steadfast faith in the human essence decided whether you became an animal or remained a human being. (608)

Solzhenitsyn contends that the 'camps are not merely the 'dark side' of our post revolutionary life but . . . very nearly the very liver of events" (128). Solzhenitsyn sets forth his thesis on the origin of the camps: they have indeed been generated from Marx and Engels' notion of corrective labour. In the Soviet regime it took an inhuman form and manifested itself in ruthless annihilation of the self.

In the chapter "What the Archipelago stands on" (The Gulag II), he assails Engels's supposition that the human being had evolved " not through the perception of a moral idea
and not through the process of thought, but out of happenstance and meaningless work" (129). Solzhenitsyn believes that Marx "declared with equal conviction that the one and only means of correcting offenders was not solitary contemplation, not moral soul-searching, not repentance, and not languishing (for all that was superstructure!) but productive labour" (129) (Solzhenitsyn traces this concept to Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program" 1875; but that essay does not seem to contain any such formulation). Solzhenitsyn counters Marx's alleged concept of corrective labour as being justifiable and humane. To Solzhenitsyn it is "to limit his [prisoner] confinement to a prison cell, courtyard, and vegetable garden, to give him the chance to read books, write, think and argue during these years meant to treat him 'like cattle'" (129).

Solzhenitsyn thus holds Marx responsible for creating the gulag prisons. However there is no warrant for reading into Marx the premises for the creation of the abhorred concentration camp, though, this is what Solzhenitsyn does. This can be explained only by his obsession with Stalinism. We sense that Solzhenitsyn during his insider phase, is so involved with Stalinism (being its victim), that it functions as a kind of prism through which he interprets Soviet history. Solzhenitsyn has been driven to such extremity that he cannot but view Marx too through the medium of Stalin. What we find
The essay of Marx cited by Solzhenitsyn is the pragmatic acknowledgement of the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual when the communist state is in the process of transition. Perhaps the nearest that any remark that Marx makes on turning labour into a concentration camp is the following and even that only remotely implicating the German thinker:

What we have to deal with here is a Communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birth of marks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society - after the deductions have been made - exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labour. For example, the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work; the individual labour time of the individual produces is the part of the social working day contributed by him, his share in it. He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of
means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour. The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another. *(Selected Writings 568)*

Marx's analysis of society was based on his materialistic conception according to which men so reorganize themselves as to fulfil their material needs. Thus an 'economic' system alone governs life. In his "Preface to A Critique of Political Economy" (1857-58) Marx states:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. *(Selected Writings 389)*
But for Solzhenitsyn Marxism with its "ideological lies" (Letter 72), has led, rather misled history on with the hope of a future society based on material abundance leading to happiness. In Cancer Ward Solzhenitsyn presents a varied range of views on Marxism. In one of the core chapters "Idols of the Market Place", the argument between Oleg Kostoglotov and Shulubin sheds light on the ambivalence of Marxism. Shulubin comes down heavily on Marx when he declares that

One should never direct people toward happiness, because happiness too is an idol of the market place. One should direct them toward mutual affection. A beast gnawing at its prey can be happy too, but only human beings can feel affection for each other, and this is the highest achievement they can aspire to. (447)

Solzhenitsyn unequivocally implies that material abundance alone (life based on economics) cannot bring about a complete sense of happiness. Marx in his *Towards a Critique of Hegel's even describes religion as the "opium of the people"* (Selected Writings 64). In yet another early essay which is also seminal, "On the Jewish Question" (1843), Marx gives his reasons for relegating religion to the private sphere, stripping it of the public importance it enjoyed in erstwhile Christian states. Marx believes that "Man emancipates himself politically from religion by banishing it from the field of public law and making it a private right
... [Religion] has become the expression of separation of man from his common essence, from himself and from other men..." (Selected Writings 47). In The Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engels categorically state that "Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience" (236). Solzhenitsyn, on the other hand, cannot give up his inherent faith in religion, ethics and morality, and the emphasis on these is felt in almost all his works. This aspect is discussed later in the last chapter.

Solzhenitsyn's canon of individual values when thus posed against Marx's predominantly collective values reflects the slant of Solzhenitsyn's conviction as an intellectual. When we look deeper, we might be surprised to find that after all both Marx and Solzhenitsyn had a similar motivation in arraigning the existing order. They were deeply sensitive to the fact that the majority are held at bay by the minority. Marx was inspired into his critique by the phenomenal imbalance in class structure in the capitalist bourgeois society. As an intellectual Marx formulated his ideas in terms of the prevailing economic inequality. By the time of Solzhenitsyn this concern for inequality was superseded by the dominant political concern of the right of the state to determine the stuff of life the majority shall lead.
Solzhenitsyn, given his overwhelming sense of outrage at Soviet atrocities, vows to create an alternate consciousness. In the sixth chapter of his *Capital* Marx was assured that "Man can live if he produces means of subsistence, but he can only produce these means if he holds the means of production, the material conditions for labour" ("Results of the Immediate Process of Production", *Selected Writings* 509). In his "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts" (1844), Marx expounds his theory of alienated labour:

... labour is exterior to the worker, ... it does not belong to his essence. Therefore he does not confirm himself in his work, he denies himself, feels miserable instead of happy, deploys no free physical and intellectual energy, but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. Thus the worker only feels a stranger. He is at home when he is not working and when he works he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but compulsory, forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs outside itself. How alien it really is very evident from the fact that when there is no physical or other compulsion, forced labour is avoided like the plague. (*Selected Writings* 180)

But we find that this kind of alienation is subverted in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Here
Shukhov who is supposed to be alienated from himself through his labour, transcends his condition, and finds a joy in his work. Instead of giving in to despair, he feels recharged, finds meaning in a good job done well, creates his own rules despite chaotic conditions, overcomes isolation by directing his gang and realizes himself in self-congratulation. He succeeds in retaining an elemental decency. It is in surviving and transcending the contagious and corrupting camp atmosphere that Shukhov's protest stands out. On the day described in the novel, Shukhov intends to report sick, and being refused permission he goes to work, and it transforms him. Only his work occupies his mind. In this novel, the primary narrator is a kind of disembodied omniscient presence who speaks in the person as a surrogate for the author himself. The narration is frequently supplanted by that of Shukhov, usually in the form of an interior monologue, conveyed through indirect speech. The reader shares Shukhov's point of view by seeing through his eyes, but is simultaneously provided the other side too—of the narrator. In a short, simple passage Solzhenitsyn portrays the tragedy of survival in a harsh camp:

The cold stung. A murky fog wrapped itself around Shukhov and made him cough painfully. The temperature out there was – 17\(^\circ\); Shukhov's temperature was +99. The fight was on. (34)
Such a double-sided presentation is "dialogic". Shukhov reveals everything about camp life with a peasant wisdom, but is also pathetically naive about its larger implications. As a result of this delicately manipulated double point of view, the novel conveys with intense sympathy, the bias of the central character or rather "voice".

Frederick Engels in Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, comments on the "materialist conception of history" that it begins from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life — and next to production, the exchange of things produced — is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. (Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ed. Lewis Feuer 90)

In The First Circle Gleb Nerzhin acknowledges that he personally holds the view that "people don't know what they are striving for. They waste themselves in senseless thrashing for the sake of a handful of goods and die without realizing their spiritual wealth" (40). This "spiritual wealth" has been allegedly ignored by Marx, and therefore foregrounded by Solzhenitsyn.
It is imperative here to reflect on Solzhenitsyn's response to Marx and Marxism. First we have to bear in mind that Marxism has to be viewed at two levels, namely, as an ideology and as a movement. It is evident that the distorted Marxism which Solzhenitsyn hits at, belongs to the second level, and we cannot hold Marx responsible for this in any way. The distortion of Marxism may be due to historical accretions and manifestations. During Solzhenitsyn's insider phase, though his works are authentic, we see that his reciprocation to Marxism is conditioned by his response to Stalinism of which he was a victim. We have to point out that at dispassionate moments, Solzhenitsyn's limitation stands out when he has fundamental differences with Marxism at the conceptual level. Solzhenitsyn's reactions are whipped up by a particular historical situation (eg camp). At such moments, Solzhenitsyn is obsessive to the point of obliviousness, and he tends to make sweeping judgements on the central Marxist ideals and supplants the original Marxist humanist ideology.

Solzhenitsyn, during the 'insider' phase has, however, justly condemned the evil nature of "ideology" and its influence on Russian history. He feels compelled to go from Stalinism, back to Leninism and Marxism; and beyond all that to pre-Revolutionary Russia. Stalinism functions as the immediate context but Solzhenitsyn is able to penetrate deeper.
Manipulation of Language, Truth

Michel Foucault in his "Truth and Power" draws attention to the fact that in regard to the "Soviet socialist power", the opponents termed it "totalitarianism" but "the mechanics of power in themselves were never analysed" (Power/Knowledge 116). It is no exaggeration to claim that Solzhenitsyn has accomplished this in One Day, The First Circle, Cancer Ward, and more extensively in his The Gulag Archipelago. Let us examine how he does it.

In turning his encounter with the gulag camps into a meta-political experience, Solzhenitsyn goes through a purgatorial process. He differentiates the "truth of power" from "the power of truth", (to draw from Foucault), thereby giving a new dimension to "Truth", "Power" and the Soviet system of history. The power apparatus that dominates individuals, creates its own "truth", which never is exposed. But a writer like Solzhenitsyn is able to unravel the socio-political and historical reality submerged under ideologically conditioned power organizations. The Gulag Archipelago is a result of a dialogue between Solzhenitsyn and two hundred and twenty seven prisoners. It depicts how a "regime of truth" was established as an "Apparatus" (in Althusser's sense) by Lenin, Stalin and their successors at the helm. This power structure imposed itself upon the Soviet people, justifying its existence by its ideology. The monologic discourse of the
Regime awed people into submission. Legal codes were rephrased. Language was abused for rationalizing the terror that was unleashed. Solzhenitsyn tries to recreate and recast language to bring out the void of the monologic discourse. The Gulag Archipelago is subtitled "An Experiment in Literary Investigation". Solzhenitsyn's attempts at a regeneration of language (from its death brought about by Lenin and Stalin) leading to a revitalization. Earlier in this chapter examples of the mutilation of language, and its distorted form have been given (Vide The Gulag I). In his fictional works Solzhenitsyn uses apt metaphors to illustrate his point. The Stalinist dehumanizing attitude is sensed distinctly in the concluding part of The First Circle. Several prisoners are transferred from the privileged Mavrin prison to the harsher labour camps as a result of the prisoners' refusal to toe the party line. The van that transports them is marked on the outside in four languages "Myaso/Viande/Flasch/Meat" (673). A correspondent of the "progressive French paper Liberation", reads the sign in his own way and writes in his note book:

On the streets of Moscow one often sees vans filled with foodstuffs, very neat and hygienically impeccable. One can only conclude that the provisioning of the capital is excellent. (674)
This kind of a decoding is made possible by Solzhenitsyn by a contrast in language and intention. The very word "meat" quite fits the kind of attitude taken by the authorities towards the prisoners. Even earlier, in the second chapter of *The First Circle* Valentine Pryanchikov, a zek radio engineer, explains to a new-comer about the sharashka (prison): "You need only remember the newspaper piece that said: 'It has been proved that a high yield of wool from sheep depends on the animals' care and feeding'" (10). Here also, Solzhenitsyn's metaphor of "sheep", explains the attitude the authorities take towards the prisoners. One notices Gleb Nerzhin occupying himself in revaluing Russian history. He has his "notes on the post-Lenin period, the first formulations which contained his finest thoughts" (68). Comparing Lenin's and Stalin's style of writing Nerzhin concludes that "all that pretentiousness, the didactic condescension of his [Stalin] proclamations, drive one mad" (42). Nerzhin confesses that he had "discovered errors, distortions" and "crude oversimplification" in the texts and that (43) had landed him in prison. The heading of chapter 19 "Language is a Tool of production" offers the typical Marxist view of language. It delineates the inner workings of Stalin's mind, with its incoherent rumble of thoughts.
The Pastness of the Past and of its Presence: A Moral Overview of Soviet History

Solzhenitsyn's scrutiny of Soviet history shifts from the immediate context of Stalinism to a retrospective view. This shift in approach begins to take a distinct shape in his *August 1914*. The authorial voice typically intervenes to pose a vital question after a statement:

From the very first our spirits were damped, and our self-assurance was never regained . . . from the very first, too, the doubt was awakened in us: did we have the right generals, did they know what they were doing? (440)

He characterizes Soviet history as a dominant structure forcing itself through an ideological construct in order to create a 'regime of truth'. Now he not only sees the discontinuities in Russian history but looks for the setting right of the twisted paths of history. Gerhart Niemeyer in "Solzhenitsyn's Three Achievements" (1975) observes:

Solzhenitsyn has not merely filled his books with human characters of flesh and blood, emotions and spirit, but has managed to see the world as a cosmos of things and their relations, an order of being with an ultimately moral structure. (6)

Throughout his works Solzhenitsyn's innate preoccupation with things of 'higher order' is evident. Even in his approach towards history he believes in a transcendent force in it that guides the course of events.
In the second volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* he stresses explicitly the dictum that "the meaning of earthly existence lies not . . . in prospering but . . . in the development of the soul" (595). Solzhenitsyn passionately believes that a spiritual development can help an ailing society. Even as early as 1970 he has acknowledged his obligation to society and his responsibility to "straighten the twisted paths of man's history" (*One Word of Truth* 15).

Solzhenitsyn's proposals for an alternative social organization are on moral, ethical and religious planes. In *Cancer Ward* Shulubin speaks of "ethical socialism". Kostoglotov and Shulubin discuss the "riddle" of the "changing periods of history" (443). Shulubin admonishes Kostoglotov not to "blame socialism for the sufferings and the cruel years" (444) he had lived through. Talking about the capability of socialism to persist, Shulubin censures "democratic socialism" as "superficial" for it does not get to the "essence of socialism" but "refers to the form in which socialism is introduced, the structure of the state that applies it" (444). (This, incidentally anticipates a post-Marxist stand). Shulubin also points out that one "can't build socialism on an abundance of material goods . . . Nor can you have a socialism that's always drumming on about hatred, because social life cannot be built on hatred" (445). (This is a counter to Marx's dictum of class antagonism). Shulubin then
talks of his "ethical socialism". Kostoglotov wants to know whether it is "Christian socialism". Shulubin denies it, . . . for Russia in particular, with our repentances, confessions and revolts, our Dostoyevski, Tolstoy and Kropotkin, there's only one true socialism and that's ethical socialism. That is something completely realistic. (445)

This "ethical socialism" goes far beyond both a visionary and idealistic and a vulgar religion in as much as it transcends any abstract system of socialism. There is a need for an intermediary stand, and that is offered by "ethical socialism". In religious affairs one feels fearful of revolting against dictates, dogmas and doctrines. At the ethical level, this questioning is possible and that too at a human level. It goes beyond hierarchies which are inherent in religion. Ethics can question doctrines imposed by religion.

(This view of Shulubin is also a Post-Marxist stand where one can question the very making of a doctrine. For example, what constitutes socialism?). Shulubin demands further that one has to show to the world . . . a society in which all relationships, fundamental principles and laws flow directly from ethics, and from them alone. Ethical demands must determine all considerations . . . As for scientific research, it should be conducted where it doesn't damage morality . . . (446)
Shulubin, when questioned by Kostoglotov about the "material basis" for the scheme of "ethical socialism", refers to Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), a Russian religious thinker, who held the view that "an economy could and should be built on an ethical basis" (446). Solzhenitsyn's ethical bent of mind is reflected by Shulubin's words about the existence within him of "something ... sublime, quite indestructible, some tiny fragment of the Universal spirit" (486). Though Solzhenitsyn's religious sentiments have been closely related to Christianity, especially of the Russian Orthodox Church, it would be vulgar to hold it as the only base of Solzhenitsyn's religious thought. The faith which Solzhenitsyn professes is beyond humanism and religion, beyond everything denominational. Shulubin's "ethical socialism" is echoed in Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* when he asserts: "Let it be an authoritarian rule, but one founded not on inexhaustible 'class-hatred' but on love of your fellow men ... ." (74).

In his same letter Solzhenitsyn, no doubt, speaks of Christianity as "the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia" (78). But Christianity alone is not Solzhenitsyn's panacea for the riddle of mankind. Solzhenitsyn's humanism does at no point neglect the role of religion and ethics in determining the function of an individual in society. On the other hand,
Western humanism has finally narrowed itself to secular humanism in the modern age. Solzhenitsyn's humanism is a strata in his hierarchical view of the system of the Universe. So he affirms humanism in order to denounce the dehumanism of the Soviet system.

As an 'insider' Solzhenitsyn was attuned more to Russia (especially Stalinist), but with his *August 1914* a dialogic view was latent. Even at this earlier phase a wider perspective of history is evident. In some of his works Russian history relates to Western history. This feature is noticeable in his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* and his *One Word of Truth*. In the former work he warns against the danger which surrounds Western civilization. He sees the "catastrophic weakening of the Western world" as 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 the peak of their expression with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. (9)

He regards the Western world-view as a negative influence on Russia and condemns "the murky whirlwind of Progressive Ideology" from the West for it "has tormented and ravaged" the soul of Russia (19). In his *One Word of Truth* he sees the extent of "violence" swinging "to and fro within Western society . . . ." (18). He attacks the United Nations
Organisation as growing up "immoral" in "an immoral world", "jealously" guarding "the liberty of certain nations" and neglecting "the liberty of others" (21).

Normon Podhoretz, the influential American critic, in "The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn" (1985) noted: "To the Russian people he is returning their stolen or "amputated" national memory, reopening the forcibly blocked channels of communication between the generations, between the past and the present . . ." (23).

The other parts of the world receive this "condensed experience" (23) of Solzhenitsyn to remind themselves that they must avoid "making the same mistake themselves: the mistake of submitting to Communism" (24). The degeneration of Russia cannot be totally attributed to the West. The impact of the West on Russia features prominently in Solzhenitsyn's "Harvard Address". The allegation of Solzhenitsyn against the West will be discussed in the next chapter dealing with his 'outsider' phase.

History has placed Solzhenitsyn in an ambivalent position, as one caught between his patriotic allegiance to his country and his conscience as an artist. In this battle the humanist in Solzhenitsyn emerges to the forefront. He passionately responds to the subjection of individuals by a perverted "ideology" engineered by history. Throughout he
speaks for the affirmation of the individual. During his 'insider' phase his essential approach to Russian history does not cast history in an impersonal mode. Rather the focus is more on the role of the individual in society.

Solzhenitsyn's values when pitted against the Marxist background only function as an index to the complexity of his ideology. No doubt Solzhenitsyn's ideology during the earlier phase explicitly concerns itself more with the immediate context. The focus at this point is naturally on the dent ideology has made on the individual. The role of the individual is reiterated in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist context, challenging the various manifestations of Stalinism. In *The Gulag Archipelago II* Solzhenitsyn graphically characterizes the de-humanization process:

Philosophers, psychologists, medical men, and writers could have observed in our camps, as nowhere else, in detail and on a large scale the special process of the narrowing of the intellectual and spiritual horizons of a human being, the reduction of the human being to an animal and the process of dying alive. (emphasis added 194)

It was a "stream that was dissolving the personality into feces and ash" (194). Such a process was set in motion by Lenin. Solzhenitsyn recalls Lenin's directive in December 1917 wherein the latter suggested as punishments "confiscation of
all property . . . confinement in prison, dispatch to the front and forced labour for all who disobey the existing law" (The Gulag II: 10). In August 1918, some days before an attempt on his life by Fanya Kaplan, Lenin's telegram to Yevgeniya Bosh a Bolshevik Revolutionary, and to the Penza Provincial Executive Committee read: "Lock up all the doubtful ones in a concentration camp outside the city" (The Gulag II: 17). Solzhenitsyn is quick to seize the blank term "doubtful" which should at least have been "guilty".

Solzhenitsyn's hope for opening up the closed society lay in re-defining the meaning and purpose of the Soviet individual. In his first three novels, though several "voices" are heard on the value of life and human existence, the "voices" of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, Gleb Nerzhin and Oleg Kostoglotov are the most persuasive. Shukhov's and Gleb Nerzhin's visions are directed towards the importance of existence and the need for survival but Kostoglotov confesses that he is not a "clinger to life" (Cancer Ward 80). For Shukhov, the past is memory and the present is to be concerned with 'survival'. But his instinct for survival does not impel him to transgress human values. He believes in God but does not believe in hell and heaven. His practical attitude makes him remark that "however much you pray it doesn't shorten your stretch" (One Day 155). Even "eight years as a convict hadn't turned him into a jackal — and the longer he spent at the
camp the stronger he made himself" (142). Gieb Nerzhin in The First Circle appears to his Marxist friend Rubin as an "eclectic" who "plucks bright feathers from everywhere" (39). Nerzhin counters this charge of eclecticism by commenting that he draws his conclusions "not from the philosophy" he has read but from "the stories about real people" that he has heard in prison" (39). Nerzhin's sense of joy at existence is expressed as follows:

I haven't had any real life for many years, but I've forgotten about that. I'm weightless, suspended, disembodied. I lie there on my upper bunk and stare at the ceiling. It is very clear, it's bare, the plasterwork is bad — and I tremble with the utter joy of existence. (39)

Both Shukhov and Nerzhin represent the resurrected individual in the Stalinist ethos. Oleg Kostoglotov is one caught in the transition period. He is an exile who feels that all his life he has "hated being a guinea pig" (Cancer Ward 32). He confesses, "To be frank, I'm not much of a clinger to life. It's not only that there's none ahead of me, there's none behind me either" (80). The importance of 'individuality' is reflected by these fictional representatives. In his nonfictional works also, Solzhenitsyn never deters from placing a high value on human life. In his Nobel Prize Speech at the early part of the speech he says:
I have mounted this platform from which the Nobel Lecture is delivered — a platform made available to by no means every writer and that only once in his lifetime — not by means of three or four well-carpeted steps, but by climbing up hundreds, even thousands of steps, unyielding, steep, slippery with frost, steps leading up from the darkness and cold where fate decreed that I should survive, while others — perhaps more gifted and stronger than I — perished. (7)

It is because of his intense humanity that he remembers those who have perished in the gulag islands. He affirms that

We Russian writers have long had an innate belief that a writer is capable of achieving much among his people — and that it is his duty to do so. (17)

Solzhenitsyn has found himself in a very precarious position during his 'insider' phase, being quite uncertain about his place in the Soviet Union, and the fate of his works. Though the year 1962 propelled him to fame, with promises of a prosperous future, it proved to be a short-lived dream, placing Solzhenitsyn in a far worse situation. Eventually, it resulted in Solzhenitsyn's expulsion. Solzhenitsyn's 'insider' phase is characterised by several alternating shifts, from a period of hiding to one of recognition, and then back to one of degradation and anonymity. Yet Solzhenitsyn had used his predicament creatively in deep introspection. The alternating
shifts, though detrimental to the spirit of any individual, can be said to have only strengthened Solzhenitsyn's. He was actually living out what he declared in his Nobel Prize Speech that "the simple step of a simple, courageous man is not to take part in the lie, not to support deceit" (27), and that once writers "have taken up the Word, there is no evading it afterwards . . . ." (22).

Even in the face of severe trials, Solzhenitsyn doggedly held on to his obsessive inquiry into Stalinism. No socio-political pressure blocked this preoccupation. Thus Solzhenitsyn's view of Russian history (here predominantly Stalinist) is at a temporal level, and mostly a subjective analysis. But a prominent feature of this analysis concerns itself with the subjection of an individual in the Communist Russia. Solzhenitsyn attempts to reason out the cause for such a state of affairs, and concentrates on the process of the institutionalisation of history. His view of Stalinist history is almost monologic but a dialogic enquiry is beginning to take shape.

During the 'insider' phase Solzhenitsyn is ironically more of an outsider within his country itself. His ideological position at this point in his life is mostly anti-Stalinist, but even now, this obsession begins to give way for more than a surface level evaluation. This does not mean that
Solzhenitsyn forgives Stalin for his crimes. Solzhenitsyn's concern is with the individual caught in the socio-political forces of Soviet history, plagued by a distorted Marxist ideology. This concern brings out the humanist in Solzhenitsyn, who desperately wishes a reaffirmation of the individual. He attempts this through a recasting of the monologic State language into a critical discourse which in itself is a revelation of truth.

Solzhenitsyn's affirmation of the Soviet individual as against the Stalinist destruction of individuality, brings out his conception of the individual as a moral, religious and ethical being. The transcendental quality of Solzhenitsyn's ideology is latent even during his insider phase, and in his Nobel Prize Speech he bemoans that "man, who has declared himself to be the centre of existence, has been unable to create a balanced spiritual system" (4).

Rosette Lamont in "Solzhenitsyn's 'Maimed Oak'" declares that "great Russian literature has always inscribed itself under the sign of a spiritual quest" (179). Solzhenitsyn's works produced during his 'insider' phase constitute the beginning of such a "spiritual quest" in the face of socio-political upheavals. In this process, the humanist in Solzhenitsyn surfaces. Where Western humanism has made man the ultimate measure of all things, Solzhenitsyn's
humanism shows the individual as a unique force, but always answerable to Higher Dictates.

Solzhenitsyn as an insider creatively transforms his inevitable misfortunes into a strengthening force not only to counter the same, but to get to their root.