

**ALEKSANDR ISAEVIČ SOLŽENICYN:
THE REALIST**

Hendra Kaprisma
Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia
kaprisma@ui.ac.id

Abstract

The word amnesia history can be considered as a representation of the anxiety of writers when the Soviet Union regime came to power. The regime launched atrocities against its citizens through a system of repression. The atrocities committed by the government against its citizens were "recorded" through words by writers. The form of literary resistance to the nation's repression caused the world of words have the power to influence the course of history. One of the 20th century Russian writers known for their resistance to the Soviet Union's communist regime was Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn (1918-2008). The communist government regarded Solženicyn as a dissident who was against anti-humanism according to Marxism-Leninism. Solženicyn can not be separated from the snares of repression of the government of the Soviet Union. Various searches about Solženicyn's authorship show that he was a realist author and part of the Soviet Union literary group who opposed government interference with literature. *Arxipelag Gulag* which popularized Solženicyn was documentation as well as a reflection of the atrocities that occurred in the Soviet Union during the communist regime in power. The terror system - as part of the system of state repression - narrated in the novel makes the story of the Gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovyx 'Directorate General of Corrective Labor Camp') in Solženicyn version has an appeal that is sought by readers and reviewers of literature.

Keywords: communism, Gulag, literature, realist

Introduction

Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn (1918-2008) was part of a Soviet literary group that opposed government interference with literature. By using literary works, Solženicyn presents the dark side of communist government with its repression system (Applebaum 2004: 281). He opposed the role of the government of the Soviet Union that used literary works as a tool for changing reality so that writers were forced to become guardians of the ideology of communism. For him, Soviet regime appears to be the institution of lie, despotism calls itself liberty, and the press that being controlled by party pretends to be free (Aron in Mahoney, 2012: 28). This is a form of resistance to the domination of socialist realism proclaimed by the government of the Soviet Union. As Nikita Sergeevič Xruščëv said, literature and art are part of the overall struggle of the people for communist glory. Therefore, the social purpose of literature and art the most high and noble is to mobilize the people for the struggle to make progress on establishing the values of communism (Tertz 1984: 164). Xruščëv statement ("For a Close Link Between

Literature and Art and the Life of the People," *Kommunist Magazine*, No. 12, 1957) is taken from the work of Abram's *On Socialist Realism*. Abram Tertz's real name is Andrei Sinyavsky.

Solženicyn was considered a leader - especially for the underground literary movement *samizdat* - which gave a new color in Soviet literature (Moore and Parry 1976: 138). Solženicyn had a considerable influence in the realm of the literature of the Soviet Union and the world. The proof, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature-novel *Один день Ивана Денисовича / Odin den 'Ivana Denisoviča* (1962) -in 1970 (Clark 1976: 118), but he did not have the opportunity to receive the award in person (Freeborn 1976: 14). He refused to go to Stockholm for fear of not getting permission to return to the Soviet Union by the authorities (Anning 1976: 128). The Nobel Day also coincides with the day of human rights. He left the statement, "Let none at this festive table forget that political prisoners are no hunger-strike this very day in defense of the rights that have been curtailed on trampled underfoot." However, the Swedish government does not allow the statement submitted causing response from the people of the Soviet Union who were present. They boycotted the event (Solzhenitsyn 2007: xv). The above statement is seen in the preface of Anne Applebaum-winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize for the book *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (first published by Random House, USA, 2003) in *The Gulag Archipelago 1918—1956, An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (Solzhenitsyn 2007: xv).

On December 28, 1973, the first part of Solženicyn's monumental work, the *Архипелаг Гулаг / Arxipelag Gulag*, was published in Paris (Puvačić 1985: 302) —after the KGB manuscript was seized. *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB) is a state security commission formed on March 13, 1954 with the full name of the KGB SSSR — the Soviet Union KGB — which was under the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. In order to produce the work, Solženicyn had to collect documents, memoirs, oral testimonies, eyewitness accounts, detailed records of the prison network, and stories of suffering in the camp. Initially, when Solženicyn began writing the *Arxipelag Gulag* in 1958, he did not know of the existence of memoirs or other writings about the camp. However, as long as he worked on the novel, he began to learn about the existence of *Колымские Рассказы / Kolymskie Rasskazy* (1978) by Varlam Šalamov (1907-1982). *Kolymskie Rasskazy* was first published by the journal émigré in 1978. This form of writing has a structure such as mosaic and objective perspective. This story has been known by many people before its publication is circulating (Hosking 1995: 550-551).

Solženicyn greatly appreciated Šalamov because his work, *Kolymskie Rasskazy*, gave great significance in the presence of the *Arxipelag Gulag*. The following is the quote in "The Twentieth Century: The Era of Socialist Realism, 1925-52, *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Hosking 1995: 550). Apart from recognizing Shalamov's literary talent, Solzhenitsyn has made this offer: "Shalamov's experience in the camps was longer and more bitter than my own, and respectfully acknowledges that to him and not to give it the depths of bestiality and despair towards which life in the camps dragged us all. For more information, see "Kolymskie Rasskazy," Varlam Šalamov: *Sobranie Sočinenij v Četyrex Tomax* (Šalamov 1998: 1-80). In addition, Solženicyn also found memoirs from Dmitri Vitkovsky, Evgeniya Ginzburg and Olga Adamova-Sliozberg. These literary facts are then quoted by Solženicyn in the narrative of the

Arxipelag Gulag because these literary facts are known to everyone or will be known to everyone in the future (Solzhenitsyn 2004: xxiv).

The method that being used in this paper is criticism method. Criticism in literature is to compare, analyze, interpretate, and evaluate a literature work (Cuddon, 1992: 207). In this matter, this method is used to analyze and interpretate the work of Solzhenitsyn, *Arxipelag Gulag*. Criticism is needed for the continuity of research. It is also important for the responsible result of this research.

Socialist Realism Repression

Socialist realism is an art theory based on dialectical contemplation between artists and the reality of their social environment (Tertz, 1984: 148). Artists are placed not separated from their environment. The essence of socialist realism is the placement of art as a vehicle for "awareness" for the community to raise awareness of their existence as alienated people and able to realize themselves as human beings who have freedom. Many call socialist realism founded by Gor'kij (1868-1936), an influential Russian writer in his time. His works are heavily colored by the spirit of romantic rebellion and the search for values of justice. He also displayed many merchant figures and working class who tried to maintain their lives.

At the First Congress of Soviet Literature in Moscow in 1934, the term socialist realism was officially introduced by Andrei Alexandrovič Ždanov in an opening speech. Socialist realism is a method of literature in which a literary work must be inspired by party ideology and serve as a functional and humanist didactic criticism tool with the wishes of Comrade Stalin. The emergence of Socialist Realism means the author should leave old characteristic that is not in accordance with the progress of socialist society. The literary work should contain a reality of socialist society (Struve, 1972).

The formulation was agreed to be used as a basic conception of Soviet literature. The conception of agreed socialist realism aims to balance the various literary streams that developed at that time. That conception resulted in literature in the Soviet Union entering a new stage in its development (Vázquez, 1973: 19-21).

Since then, Soviet literature has new positions and goals in the Soviet Union. As Xruščev views, the supreme leader of the Soviet Union Communist Party from 1956-1964, literature and art were part of the overall struggle of the people for communist glory. Therefore, the highest and noblest social literary and artistic goals were to mobilize the people for the struggle for progress in building the values of communism (Tertz, 1984: 164). One of the effects of the Soviet Union's repression of writers was the exile of Solzhenitsyn abroad, as a punishment for the publication of *Arxipelag Gulag* in the West (Moore and Parry, 1976: 136). This repression continued and made communism a powerful weapon to censor literary works.

Resistance of The Realist

Gulag is a very frightening word in the mid-twentieth century in the Soviet Union. Gulag is an acronym for *Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovyx lagerej* "Directorate General of

Corrective Labor Camps". Gulag is a branch of the State Security Agency that operates a punishment system in the form of forced labor camps and detention camps. Under the power of Stalin, Gulag trapped an enormous prisoner population on the verge of death. The death couldn't be avoided despite of Stalin's effort to release nearly dead inmates routinely (Alexopoulos, 2015: 500). Although the Gulag had imprisoned millions of people, the Gulag's name itself was only famous outside the Soviet Union when Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn published the *Arxipelag Gulag* (1973).

Arxipelag Gulag which helped popularize Solženicyn was documentation as well as a reflection of the atrocities that occurred in the Soviet Union during the communist regime in power. The novel is not merely a manifestation of resistance to Stalinism, but also a system of terror that has existed since the regime of Vladimir Il'ič (Ul'janov) Lenin (Anning 1976: 128). The terror system - as part of the state repression system - which is told in the novel makes the story of the Solženicyn version of Gulag sought immediately by readers and reviewers of literary works. This terror is a cognitarian experience that seems to be inherent to the readers of the *Arxipelag Gulag*. As a result, the state responded to the work - as a form of fear of the opening of the Pandora's box - by covering it and smashing it. However, the state did not realize that its actions actually triggered curiosity from the community and gave birth to "underground" *samizdat* circulations (Applebaum 2004: 478). This then led to Solženicyn's life being watched in the shadow of the KGB. This information can be seen from the work of Boris Aleksandrovich Ivanov in "From Rostov-on-Don to Moscow or The KGB Versus Solzhenitsyn," *Invisible Allies* (1995: 306-318). This paper appears in a brief form in the Moscow monthly magazine, *Sovershenno skretno*, 1992, No. 4. Ivanov, a professional KGB agent, spent more than three decades in his work as a state security agent located in the North Caucasus, in Georgia and in Lithuania. From 1967-1976, he headed one sub-division regarding the ideology directory in the Rostov KGB administration (Solzhenitsyn 1995: 306).

The *Arxipelag Gulag* was written based on the detention and exile experienced by Solženicyn with evidence gathered by more than two hundred eyewitnesses and archives of the Soviet Union (Hosking 1995: 548). The novel is evidence of the system of repression carried out by the Soviet Union against its citizens, known as the "Gulag islands." The metaphor of the "archipelago" was used by Solženicyn to describe the Soviet Union camp system (Applebaum 2004: 41). The "archipelago" contained deadly camps that had "devoured" tens of millions of the lives of Russians and other peoples who lived in the territory of the Soviet Union in the first half of the 20th century (Applebaum 2004: 104-106). Gulag (Glavnoe Upravlenia Lagerei) is created not just as an institution that manages the system of prison houses, but as part of the Soviet Union itself. According to Solženicyn (2007: xvii), "The Gulag Archipelago was intended to serve as a condemnation not just of the Soviet camp system, but of the Soviet Union itself."

“Как попадают на этот таинственный Архипелаг? Туда ежечасно летят самолеты, плывут корабли, гремят поезда -- но ни единая надпись на них не указывает места назначения. И билетные кассиры, и агенты Совтуриста и Интуриста будут изумлены, если вы спросите у них туда билетик. Ни всего

Архипелага в целом, ни одного из бесчисленных его островков они не знают, не слышали.

Те, кто едут Архипелагом управлять -- попадают туда через училища МВД.

Те, кто едут Архипелаг охранять -- призываются через военкоматы.

А те, кто едут туда умирать, как мы с вами, читатель, те должны пройти непременно и единственно -- через арест” (Солженицын 1991а: 1).

Translation:

“How can people get into this hidden Archipelago? Hour after hour, airplanes were constantly flying there, and trains were passing by rumbling to get there - but inside this Archipelago were hardly any signposts to show where the means of transportation had to go. Employees behind the counters at travel agencies for Soviet tourists or foreign tourists will be amazed if you ask for tickets to go to the Islands. They did not know anything and they had never heard of the Islands, both as a whole and about each island in it.

People who come to the Islands to manage it can get there through Ministry of Internal Affairs' training schools.

People who came there to be guards were recruited through military recruitment centers.

And other people who come there, like us and you, esteemed readers, with the aim to die, must come there solely by force through arrest.”

The story of the arrest told in the *Arxipelag Gulag* is a phenomenon that occurred in the ruling Soviet Union regime. The novel tells of arrest operations, censorship, Orthodox churches, forced labor camps, prison camps, the mood and physical pain of prisoners. Women and children, prisoners who try to escape, people who have surprisingly had moral determination in the face of oppression and torture, and life in exile are also told in this novel. Solženicyn emphasized the moral aspects of the issues raised in the book. Disclosure of atrocities committed by a ruling regime is not enough to be seen as a political problem, but also a moral problem, which leads the reader to the fundamental question of the nature of life of man himself. This causes the *Arxipelag Gulag* to have a high quality existence with Russian-style flavors that need not be doubted; *Arxipelag Gulag's* novel is as good as its history (Hosking 1995: 549).

Solženicyn, outside his country, is considered and known as a humanist, but in his country was the opposite. The communist government regarded Solženicyn as a dissident who was against anti-humanism Marxism-Leninism. The concept of humanism itself became a heated debate during the reign of communist rule, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. The argument about socialist humanism (the version of Marxism-Leninism humanism) is adapted to the concept of class conflict which is the propaganda of the proletariat. This is intended as a form of representation of the Soviet Union's mentality of society. This information can be seen in "Crisis of Soviet Artistic Mentality," *New Directions in Soviet Literature* (Belaia 1992: 10-11).

Solženicyn can not be separated from the snares of repression of the government of the Soviet Union. He was later arrested and thrown into a concentration camp for eight years

(Alexopoulos 2005: 274) on charges of "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation (Anning 1976: 124)." The positive impact of Solženicyn's detention - as a person who felt resident - in several barracks detention camp, of course he can easily describe various forms of life problems in detention camps. This can be seen through various forms of human rights violations that are indirectly similar to the Soviet Union government and depictions of people who still believe and obey Christian teachings. That kind of impression reached the reader, as well as the literature observer and the censorship body in his country.

“Правда, считалось, что арестовывают и судят их будто бы не за самую веру, но за высказывание своих убеждений вслух и за воспитание в этом духе детей. Как написала Таня Ходкевич:

Молиться можешь ты свободно.

Но... так, чтоб слышал Бог один” (Солженицын 1991a: 36).

Translation:

‘True, they are arrested and tried not because they believe in religious teachings, but because they publicly express their religious beliefs and because they raised their children with the teachings of the religion. As written by Tanya Khodkevich:

You can pray freely.

So that only God can hear it“

"В лагерной обстановке люди никогда не остаются людьми, лагеря не для этого созданы. Все человеческие чувства—любовь, дружба, зависть, человеколюбие, милосердие, жажда славы, честность—ушли от нас с мясом мускулов... У нас не было гордости, самолюбия, а ревность и страсть казались марсианскими понятиями... Осталась только злоба—самое долговечное человеческое чувство. Мы поняли, что правда и ложь—родные сестры. Дружба не зарождается ни в нужде, ни в беде. Если дружба между людьми возникает—значит, условия недостаточно трудны. Если беда и нужда сплотили—значит, они не крайние. Горе недостаточно остро и глубоко, если можно разделить его с друзьями. Только на одно различие здесь согласится Шаламов: восхождение, углубление, развитие людей возможно в тюрьме. А ...лагерь—отрицательная школа жизни целиком и полностью. Ничего нужного, полезного никто оттуда не вынесет. Заключение обучает там лести, лганью, мелким и большим подлостям... Возвращаясь домой, он видит, что не только не вырос за время лагеря, но интересы его стали бедными, грубыми" (Солженицын 1991b: 386).

Translation:

"In the camp situation, humans never become human — camps were created for this purpose. All human emotions — love, friendship, envy, faithfulness, compassion, thirst

for fame, honesty — all fall out of ourselves with the flesh of our muscles. . . We don't have dignity, pride, and even jealousy and lust seem strange, like coming from Mars. . . the only thing left is anger — the most enduring human emotion. We become aware that truth and falsehood are siblings. There is only one distinction here agreed upon by Šalamov: the rise of the soul, the maturation of the soul, the development of human beings, are indeed possible in prison, but: . . camp - is a truly negative place to study life. There is not the slightest use we will get from it. The prisoners learn to lick, lie, and small and big crimes. . If he comes home, he will not only realize that he has not grown at all in the camp, but also that his interest has become rude and uncivilized. "

As already mentioned, the *Arxipelag Gulag* is a manifestation of historical reality. The events of the reign of Iosif Vissarionovič Stalin were used by Solženicyn as the background of his work so that it was projected a general picture as well as indirect criticism directed at Stalin's government. This was by the new ruler, Xruščëv - with the de-Stalinization program (Kelley 1999: 212), used as a propaganda medium to destroy Stalin (Marsh 1992: 91-92). However, during the reign of Leonid Il'ič Brežnev, the novel was regarded as a revisionist form of socialist realism. As well as *Доктор Живаго / Doctor Živago* (1957) by Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), Solženicyn's works were later banned from publication and circulation.

When Mixail Sergeevič Gorbačëv's reign was different, the works of the two Soviet writers were allowed to be reissued. This was a consequence of the launch of the *glasnost* policy by Gorbačëv (1986: 113) in the Soviet Union Communist Party XXVII Congress in 1986. *Glasnost's* policy provided a dramatic change for writers to express their ideas freely. This was a "fresh breeze" for writers who have a positive impact on the development of artistic value and literary existence of the Soviet Union. The space for the movement of avant-garde artists was reopened, as a result of the end of the domination of socialist realism as the only principle of art. The realization of the *glasnost* program shows an argument that change will occur in the world of Soviet literature (Applebaum 2004: 501). The change goes towards a positive direction with the reissue of books that were banned from being published in the previous period. One of the impacts was the re-published of *Arxipelag Gulag* in 1989 (Marsh 1992: 95—96).

Conclusion

Various searches about Solženicyn's authorship show that he was a realist author and part of the Soviet Union literary group who opposed government interference with literature. Solženicyn is considered a leader, especially for the underground *samizdat* literary movement. The etymology of the word *samizdat* is formed by the words *sam* and *izdat*. *Sam* means alone and *izdat* (from the word *izdatel'stvo*) means publishing. *Samizdat* means self-publishing. He had a great influence and provided a new color in Soviet literature (Moore and Parry, 1976: 138).

Solženicyn's work which had a major influence on the Soviet regime was the *Arxipelag Gulag*. This novel has narrative characteristics as well as its history (Hosking 1995: 549). The novel is a historical novel that has great power to attack Stalin and also Lenin — for his crimes in human values (Moore and Parry 1976: 136). The novel was the main cause of Solženicyn

being exiled to the West (Freeborn 1976: 14). The novel is called a controversial novel (Anning 1976: 124). The novel is also considered a form of "intellectual minor revolution" in several countries (Applebaum 2004: 7). Thus, through the *Arxipelag Gulag* work it can be concluded that Solženicyn is a realist author. The manifestation of the historical reality expressed in the work is evidence of Solženicyn's realism. By using literary works, Solženicyn presents the reality of the dark side of communist government with its repression system

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