

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

(11 December 1918-)

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The life and literary career of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn are nothing short of extraordinary. He is a veteran of frontline duty during World War II and a survivor of eleven years of Soviet prisons, forced-labor camps, and internal exile.

Solzhenitsyn also endured a near-fatal bout with cancer before achieving world fame in 1962. That year his short novel *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (translated as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, 1963) was published in the journal *Novyi mir* (The New World). Other works soon followed, including *V krughe pervom* (1968; translated as *The First Circle*, 1968) and *Rakovyi korpus* (1968; translated as *The Cancer Ward*, 1968), both of which could be published only in the West because of the increasingly hostile attitude of Soviet regime toward Solzhenitsyn, a defiantly independent writer. In 1970 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, raising the ire of the regime further still; a 1971 plot by the Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti (KGB, State Security Committee) to assassinate Solzhenitsyn was discovered after the fall of the Soviet Union. In the mid 1970s he was on the verge of achieving even greater renown with the publication, again in the West, of *Arkhipelag GULag, 1918-1956: Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniia* (1973-1975; translated as *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, 1974-1978), a massive indictment of the Soviet penal system. The regime retaliated by arresting Solzhenitsyn and charging him with treason; he was expelled from the U.S.S.R. in 1974. He spent the next two decades in the West. At first he made many high-profile public appearances but mostly worked on *Krasnoe koleso: Povestvovanie v otmerennykh srokakh* (The Red Wheel: A Narrative in Discrete Periods of Time, 1983-1991), a cycle written partially in the tradition of the historical novel; it traces the descent of Russia into the revolutionary chaos of 1917. He returned to post-Communist Russia in 1994 and has continued to speak out on important public issues while adding to his corpus of writings, which includes fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction. Many of Solzhenitsyn's literary works are autobiographical. They provide authoritative information about, in particular, the first thirty years of his life, and for that reason a discussion of his works in the order of the autobiographical events as they occurred is necessary.

As a writer and a public figure, Solzhenitsyn has evoked strong reactions—although one must add that the ideological sympathies of the commentators have often shaped the opinions expressed. Accordingly, responses have ranged from crude abuse to uncritical adulation; rarely have they risen above a perfunctory or tendentious analysis of the nonpolitical core of Solzhenitsyn's message. Beyond the predictable political commentary, however, lies a more fundamental philosophical issue that has caused discerning critics to agree or disagree with the author. Solzhenitsyn is a committed adherent of the Russian literary tradition that took shape in the nineteenth century, and as such he rejects the idea of a discontinuity between

literary art and the world of moral values. Therefore he is unapologetic about presenting many issues in what might be called an ethically absolute manner-with the urgency and power characteristic of his talent. This stance is at odds with the tendency toward moral relativism that permeates modern thought and is incompatible with the belief of postmodernist critics, who dismiss all absolutist convictions in principle.

Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn was born on 11 December 1918 in Kislovodsk, a resort town in the Caucasus. Both parents came from peasant families but were educated. His father, Isaakii Semenovich Solzhenitsyn, served with distinction as an artillery officer in World War I but died as a result of a hunting accident six months before Solzhenitsyn was born. Following this tragedy, his mother, Taissia Zakharovna (Shcherbak) Solzhenitsyna, the daughter of a prosperous Ukrainian farmer, was forced by circumstances to seek employment in Rostov-on-Don; she left her son in the care of her sister, Mariia, and sister-in-law, Irina Shcherbak. The latter, a feisty and deeply religious woman with literary interests, influenced the young Solzhenitsyn's love for the Russian classics and his appreciation of Russian Orthodoxy. At age six he was reunited with his mother in Rostov, where, destitute, the two lived for the next twelve years in a rickety shack without plumbing. The boy often spent summer vacation at the home of his Aunt Irina.

Solzhenitsyn relates several episodes from this period of his youth in *Dorozhen'ka*, a long autobiographical poem written in 1947-1952 (published in 1999). In each case he emphasizes his inability at the time to draw conclusions from the ominous scenes he happened to witness. These scenes include the brutal intimidation of his mother and visiting grandfather by the political police, as well as the arrest of his best friend's father and of the most popular and brilliant boy at the school Solzhenitsyn attended. (In 1926 Solzhenitsyn entered the former Pokrovsky College, referred to as the Malevich Gymnasium, after its headmaster. The school was considered the best in Rostov.) Despite such portents, the well-orchestrated and all-pervasive Soviet propaganda succeeded in winning him over by the time he was a teenager. A chapter in *Dorozhen'ka*, titled "Mal'chiki s luny" (Boys from the Moon), describes a leisurely boat ride taken by the autobiographical protagonist and his equally indoctrinated friend down the Volga River; the two idealists remain blithely insensitive to the implications of the sights around them, from the throngs of cowed prisoners to the visible injury to rural life wreaked by collectivization.

Solzhenitsyn's literary ambitions manifested themselves early, and some surviving juvenilia show that he was composing short stories already at age nine.

The years when Solzhenitsyn finished at the gymnasium and when he entered secondary school are not known, but by 1936 he had graduated from the latter.

That year he undertook his first serious attempt to write on what he considered the greatest event in modern history, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The epic scale of his intentions required months of historical research into the antecedents of the revolution, starting with the catastrophic defeat of the Russian army in Eastern Prussia at the outset of World War I. These early writings have survived, and Solzhenitsyn has said that several decades later he was able to incorporate much of it into his *Avgust chetyrnadtsatogo* (1971; translated as *August 1914*, 1972), the first part—what he called an *uzel*, or knot—of the multivolume *Krasnoe koleso*.

Although Solzhenitsyn wished to pursue literary studies, this option was not available at Rostov University, where he had enrolled in 1936 in order to stay close to his ailing mother. He majored in mathematics and physics, choices that in time were providential; later, during his imprisonment in the labor camps, this specialty was his ticket out: it enabled him to enter an institution that housed technically trained prisoners. While studying the exact sciences at Rostov University, he nevertheless was also able to take up literary studies through a correspondence course offered by the prestigious Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature, and History (MIFI). At this time, too, Solzhenitsyn began seeing a fellow student, Natal'ia Alekseevna Reshetovskaia, a chemistry major with strong musical interests; in 1940 they married. He graduated with distinction in 1941 and resolved to apply for admission to advanced study at MIFI.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, however, put an end to these plans. When Solzhenitsyn attempted to enlist, he was unexpectedly rejected for medical reasons. Yet, four months later he was called up and assigned to a horse-drawn transport unit far from the front lines. In an autobiographically based short novel, *Liubi revoliutsii* (Love the Revolution—originally conceived as a sequel to *Dorozhen'ka*, written mostly in 1948, and published as an unfinished work in 1999—Solzhenitsyn describes the shame and humiliation of the protagonist when he is turned away by the military in his attempt to volunteer. He is mortified even more when he finds himself attached to an enormous train of horse-drawn wagons and surrounded by middle-aged men who have no interest in the revolutionary ideals he holds sacred and who are amused by the protagonist's inability to handle horses. After much effort, he is able to transfer to artillery school. *Liubi revoliutsii* includes a chapter describing the protagonist's phantasmagoric trip through a war-torn country afflicted by disrupted rail schedules and general chaos.

Solzhenitsyn's mathematical training landed him in an accelerated course in sound ranging—also known as instrumental reconnaissance, a technique whereby dispersed microphones are used to pinpoint enemy gun emplacements. By early 1943 he was commanding his own battery and was soon engaged in frontline action. As in his schooling, in the army Solzhenitsyn compiled a record of excellence, earning decorations for heroism and a promotion to captain. At the same time, there were serious moral challenges to his convictions, but his overall faith in Marxist dogma appears to have survived intact throughout the war. *Dorozhen'ka* makes clear, nonetheless, that he was shaken to learn of the existence of Russian military units fighting against the Soviet forces alongside the Germans. In addition, he was deeply troubled by a chance meeting with members of a Soviet unit made up of political prisoners deliberately employed in an operation in which survival was unlikely, and the wild rampage that characterized the Soviet advance through German territory in early 1945 repelled him. The latter theme is developed at some length in a chapter of *Dorozhen'ka*. Published separately as *Prusskie nochi* (1974; translated as *Prussian Nights*, 1977), the work emphasizes the protagonist's anguished remorse at his participation in the rape and pillage of a Germany left defenseless by its collapsed army.

Another work directly based on Solzhenitsyn's wartime experience is *Pir pobeditelei* (written 1951; published 1981 in *Sobranie sochinenii*, translated as *Victory Celebrations*, 1986), a drama in verse. Subtitled *Komediia* (A Comedy), it started as a chapter in *Dorozhen'ka*. Set early 1945, the bitterly satirical work centers on the unexpected appearance of Gridnev, a representative of a military counterintelligence directorate known as SMERSH (short for the Russian expression "smert' shpionam" [death to spies]), at a feast prepared by a group of Soviet army officers in celebration of their victorious advance through Eastern Prussia. The SMERSH man poisons the festivities by voicing suspicions about a beautiful girl who has been invited to the party (and who has resisted his amorous advances), as well as about the "social provenance" of the officer Gleb Nerzhin—the name used for the autobiographical hero here as well as in *Dorozhen'ka* and in two later works, *Plenniki* (written 1953, published 1981 in *Sobranie sochinenii*, translated as *Prisoners*, 1986) and *Respublika truda* (The Republic of Labor, written 1954, published 1981). Solzhenitsyn's goal in *Pir pobeditelei* is to show the tension between the visceral dislike that Gridnev generates and the sinister power over everyone that he nevertheless wields. The tension is resolved when the Germans launch a sudden counterattack and Gridnev,

instead of remaining to keep an eye on Soviet troops, reveals his cowardice by fleeing.

Solzhenitsyn's military career ended disastrously. He and Nikolai Vitkevich, the true-believing Rostov friend with whom he had sailed down the Volga some years earlier and who was now serving in the military at a neighboring section of the front, began to exchange correspondence that included disparaging comments on Joseph Stalin's leadership. More dangerous to their reputations was the platform they drafted for a reform-minded and "purely Leninist" political party. Their letters were intercepted by military censors, and arrests of the two men followed. In *Dorozhen'ka* and the first volume of *Arkhipelag GULag*, Solzhenitsyn describes how he was seized by SMERSH operatives in February 1945 and taken under guard to Moscow, where, after he spent months in prison, a perfunctory investigation was followed by a foreordained guilty verdict. For "malicious slander" and setting up a "hostile organization," Solzhenitsyn was sentenced to eight years of forced-labor camp, followed by "perpetual exile" to a remote area of the U.S.S.R. He was entering the world of the gulag, a term that originates from GULag, the acronym for the Soviet prison-camp system (Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei, or Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps).

In a sense Solzhenitsyn completed his education in the GULag. His faith in Marxism, to some degree already mitigated by his wartime experiences, was taxed now by his new learning, and it collapsed completely. He was impressed by the fortitude and personal decency of fellow prisoners who held views radically unlike his earlier convictions, as in the case of the quiet but unshakable commitment to democratic values exhibited by his Estonian cell mate Arnold Susi or the Christian beliefs fervently argued by Boris Gammerov, a young Moscow intellectual.

An early work that communicates some of the intellectual tumult that Solzhenitsyn experienced during the initial period of his incarceration is the drama *Plenniki*. The play is a mixture of poetry and prose, a stylistic feature that appropriately echoes the jumble of ideologies voiced in the text. The action takes place in a Soviet prison in mid 1945 and is based on Solzhenitsyn's experience of being thrown together with a diverse group of individuals when he was first incarcerated. His fellow prisoners included Soviet soldiers and officers liberated from German POW camps and then promptly rearrested as alleged security risks; men who had fought with the Wehrmacht-directed Russian Liberation Army; Russian emigres snatched from the streets of Western Europe; devout Christians; and a few diehard Communists. The arguments among these men are presented as a cacophonous

montage in which everyone's opinions clash. But *Plenniki* also diverges in a significant way from the autobiographical tendency of Solzhenitsyn's early works. The most prominent character in the play is not the familiar Gleb Nerzhin but a former colonel in the tsarist army named Georgii Vorotyntsev, who is in prison for fighting, on the German side, against the Soviet Union. Years later Vorotyntsev returns as a character when Solzhenitsyn makes him the protagonist of the *Krasnoe koleso* epic. Thus, *Plenniki* was the earliest hint of the way Solzhenitsyn was visualizing *Krasnoe koleso*, and it served as an epilogue to the still unwritten cycle (which Solzhenitsyn was to set during the ancien regime). (In the play Vorotyntsev refuses a chance to commit suicide in order to escape the gallows that await him, arguing that the responsibility for his death must fall on his executioners, not on him.)

Solzhenitsyn experienced forced labor soon after his sentence was pronounced. He spent almost a year in camps of the "mixed" type, so designated for holding political prisoners together with common criminals. In the second volume of *Arkhipelag GULag* he relates some of the difficulties and moral quandaries that bewildered and humiliated him during this period. Much of this experience been condensed into a play titled *Respublika truda*. (The "republic of labor" is an ironic echo of the supposed workers' paradise.) It is about a recently arrested frontline officer, Gleb Nerzhin, who is unexpectedly placed in a position of authority and tries to undo some of the flagrantly corrupt, unfair, and unsafe practices that characterize the operation of the camp. (Prison camps played an important role in the Soviet economy, and the authorities cared only about maximizing productivity.) Nerzhin's attempts at reform are shown to be hopelessly naive, and by challenging many vested interests he generates so much hostility that he is demoted and marked for transportation to a far more lethal camp. He is saved from this fate by the intervention of a girl with whom he has fallen violently in love, but she is able to help only by a self-sacrificing act: she agrees—without Nerzhin's knowledge—to join the "harem" of the camp doctor, who has many connections. Like most writers who employ the realistic mode to project images related to actual fact, Solzhenitsyn has selected, condensed, rearranged, and highlighted data stemming from his own experiences. In *Respublika truda* his aim is to depict the utter helplessness and demoralization of the protagonist in the face of the bottomless corruption he encounters in the camp system. While there is no reason to question the psychological veracity of that central theme in terms of the author's real-life attitude, the plot—in the narrow sense of the term—remains a fictional construct.

Many years later, in the wake of the publication of *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, Solzhenitsyn hoped to receive permission to stage *Respublika truda*. For this purpose he prepared a politically toned-down version, titled *Olen'i shalashovka* (written 1962, published 1969 in the journal *Grami* [Facets]; translated as *The Love-Girl and the Innocent*, 1986); he also renamed the protagonist Rodion Nemov. The latter change presumably was made to avoid drawing attention to the link between the play and the novel *V krughe pervom*, in which the central character is once again named Gleb Nerzhin.

V krughe pervom reflects the radically changed circumstances in which Solzhenitsyn found himself in mid 1946, when he entered a closed prison institute, or *sharashka*. As had been the case in his wartime transfer to the artillery, his mathematical training was the reason why he was plucked out of the regular camp system and brought into the institute, which was then engaged in developing a telephone encryption device. The novel is based on his four years at the Marfino *sharashka*, located outside Moscow. Just as the "first circle" in the *Inferno* section of Dante's *La Commedia* (1472; translated as *The Divine Comedy*, 1802) housed virtuous pagans who were spared the torments of the lower circles of hell, so the inmates of the prison research institute received relatively privileged treatment – such as better working conditions, enough food, and access to books. The novel represents Solzhenitsyn's first use of what he has called the "polyphonic" principle of construction: in this approach sections of the work, typically a chapter or group of chapters, are presented from the point of view—and often in the language-of a particular character, not necessarily a major protagonist; all the while the third-person format of the basic account is retained. The technical term for this type of narrative mode is *erlebte Rede* (experienced speech, in the sense of a represented discourse or a narrated monologue), and the polyphonic aspect points to the presence of several individual viewpoints and voices within the text. This technique is highly effective for bringing out the fundamental worldview of each character.

The action covers only four days, the symbolically charged period of Christmastide, 24-27 December 1949, which followed the extravagant celebrations of Stalin's seventieth birthday (21 December 1949). The gallery of characters in the work is huge. It cuts across the whole of Soviet society and ranges from a portrait of the *sharashka's* humble janitor to a study of the aging Stalin, a prisoner of his megalomania. Among other historical personages appearing in fictionalized guise are Viktor Semenovitch Abakumov, the minister of state security during this period, and Eleanor Roosevelt, who is caricatured by the prisoners as the prototype of a blind

Western "do-gooder"-she is easily misled by the mendacious facade erected for her benefit at a prison she visits.

Solzhenitsyn began working on *V krughe pervom* in the mid 1950s and brought it to completion in 1968. But after the success of publishing *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, he pruned the ninety-six-chapter work down to eighty-seven chapters, readjusting the plotline and "softening" various parts of the book in the hope that it, like *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, might slip past the censors. The Moscow journal *Novyi mir* accepted the novel in its shortened version in 1964, but publication proved impossible. In 1968 the author allowed a similarly "lightened," eighty-seven-chapter version to circulate privately, and it soon appeared abroad, in Russian as well as in translation. The full ninety-six-chapter Russian version, including late emendations, was published only in 1978 in Solzhenitsyn's twenty-volume *Sobranie sochinenii* (Collected Works, 1978-1991); it remains untranslated into English.

The most significant difference between definitive and the "lightened" versions of *V krughe pervom* concerns the character Innokentii Volodin, a Soviet diplomat with a conscience, whose action at the beginning sets the plot in motion. In the definitive version Volodin telephones the United States embassy in Moscow in an unsuccessful attempt to warn of an impending Soviet espionage operation in New York involving nuclear-bomb technology. (A similar phone call actually was made in the fall of 1949 by a Soviet diplomat about to be posted in Canada.) The, "lightened" version replaces this overtly anti-Soviet act with the diplomat's decent gesture of attempting to caution a doctor acquaintance against sharing an experimental drug with Western colleagues, since the authorities, in their paranoia, would consider this act a betrayal of Soviet science. In both versions the phone call is monitored and recorded, and the Marfino prison institute is charged with identifying the caller. In addition, the complete *V krughe pervom* touches on several other politically sensitive issues, including the long-held suspicion that Stalin had been a double agent for the tsarist secret police.

These differences, however, are eclipsed by the thematic continuities between the two versions. The most important continuity entails the complex interrelationships among three prisoners, Gleb Nerzhin, Lev Rubin, and Dmitrii Sologdin, each of whom is based on an actual person-Solzhenitsyn, Lev Zinov'evich Kopelev, and Dmitrii Mikhailovich Panin, respectively. (Kopelev and Panin have published accounts of their friendship with Solzhenitsyn; through these memoirs the process whereby Solzhenitsyn transmutes real life into fictional representation can be traced.) The overarching theme of what being human means comes into fullest play through the characterizations of these three figures. Rubin, a committed Marxist who remains

loyal to the official collectivist ideology of the state even after he enters the camps, is, however, also a man of genuinely humane instincts, and these contradictory tendencies give rise to Utopian visions. Thus, in order to imbue citizens of an atheist society with traditional morality, Rubin proposes to institute compulsory attendance at "civic temples," which, despite his denials, are essentially "Christian temples without Christ." Sologdin, Rubin's main ideological adversary, delights in challenging his opponent by reciting the evils of the Soviet system. But in what is probably an exaggeration of the real Panin's views (embellished for the sake of highlighting philosophical differences), Solzhenitsyn has Presented Sologdin as a spokesman of radical individualism. Nerzhin, apparently much like Solzhenitsyn during his time in the *sharashka*, takes a middle ground between philosophical antipodes represented by his two friends. Refusing to adopt either of their positions, he sets out to develop his own personal point of view, which to him is "more precious than life itself". As he asserts, "Everyone keeps shaping his inner self year after year. One must try to temper, to cut, to polish one's soul so as to become *a human being*." As if to distinguish his position from Sologdin's proud elitism, however, Nerzhin immediately adds, "And thereby become a tiny particle of one's own people." Nerzhin's personal-ism thus places the individual within a community while remaining free of both monolithic collectivism and isolated individualism.

Of the many subsidiary themes in the novel, a particularly noteworthy one concerns language. The Marfino prisoners study the physical properties of speech in their work on a voice scrambler and through their efforts to perfect a reliable method of voice recognition. Sologdin labors to purify the Russian by inventing substitutes for foreign words. Rubin seeks to buttress Marxist theory through comparative etymology. Stalin attempts to write an essay on linguistics but is stymied by his failing mind. In addition, Volodin's failed attempt to transmit a warning by telephone; the lies that are told at every turn by prisoners and Soviet officials alike; and the inability of a husband and wife to establish an understanding in the sharply limited time allotted to them by prison rules are all examples of ideology-spawned obstacles that disrupt and pervert normal communication.

For Solzhenitsyn, the four-year stay at the Marfino *sharashka* provided the opportunity for profound self-examination. Temporarily shielded from the physical hardships and psychological stresses of the camps, he now began reevaluating his past and constructing a new worldview upon the ruins of his former Marxist convictions. During this time he began writing the narrative poem *Dorozhen'ka*, its prose sequel, *Liubi revoliutsiiu*, and several poems.

In the spring of 1950 Solzhenitsyn's relatively privileged existence came to an abrupt end when a conflict with authorities at the *sharashka* caused him to be expelled from Marfino. He was cast back into the labor-camp system. Two years earlier Stalin had decreed that political prisoners (deemed much more dangerous than thieves and murderers) be segregated in so-called Special Camps with a particularly harsh regime, and Solzhenitsyn was transported accordingly to Ekibastuz, a huge new prison camp for "politicals" located in the arid steppe of central Kazakhstan. He was destined to finish out his term there and to try his hand at several physical tasks—from laying bricks to working at the foundry. His experience is distilled in *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* (titled in manuscript "Shch-854," a prison identification number of the protagonist), although Solzhenitsyn chose to distance the narrative from any direct autobiographical reference.

He has stated that he conceived the idea of the story on a dreary workday in the winter of 1950-1951.

When he sat down to write the work in 1959, he reports, it "simply gushed out with tremendous force" (quoted in volume ten of the 1978-1991 *Sobranie sochinenii*) and was done in forty days. The central character is a peasant, Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. His name and mannerisms were derived from a soldier who had served in Solzhenitsyn's military unit (and who was never in prison); the soldier's biography was typical of the vast majority of inmates in the Special Camps—they were innocent of any real crimes. In the narrative Ivan Denisovich is charged with being a German spy (he had fallen briefly into German hands during the war and had managed to escape). Many of the other characters— are modeled on specific camp acquaintances.

The story follows Ivan Denisovich and his fellow *zeks* (derived from *z/k*, an abbreviation for prisoners), from reveille to taps, in a single day in early 1951. The narrative structure is a "monophonic" version of the *erlebte Rede* mode employed by Solzhenitsyn in *V krughe pervom*, with a third-person account presented as if through Ivan Denisovich's eyes and in his peasant idiom. This method allows Ivan Denisovich's subjective outlook to be expressed in an unmediated and understated form, perhaps the most affecting aspect of the story. Ivan Denisovich and his labor brigade spend the long workday laying cinder blocks in the bitter cold. Though devoid of loyalty to his overlords, he takes such pride in his work that he risks punishment by staying beyond quitting time in order to finish laying one last row of bricks in a way that will affirm his sense of self-worth as a skilled craftsman. All his other small successes of that day are cast in physical terms as well: he keeps his

boots in good repair, sneaks through inspection a blade that he can make into a knife, finagles an extra portion of gruel, and buys tobacco.

But deeper issues of a spiritual nature underlie the response to physical hardships, and these matters come into clearest focus in the critically important conversation between Ivan Denisovich and Alyoshka, a fellow prisoner arrested for his Baptist faith. While some innate yet unarticulated life force allows Ivan Denisovich to survive with his humanity intact despite the merciless and degrading pressures of camp life, Alyoshka's serene faith in God provides a vocabulary that Ivan Denisovich lacks for understanding the triumph of the human spirit. Even though Ivan Denisovich is not prepared to embrace Alyoshka's view of the world, the sympathetic hearing he gives to the Baptist's arguments points toward the implicit religious foundation of Solzhenitsyn's moral vision.

In *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* Solzhenitsyn aspires to depict camp life in the way it was commonly experienced by the majority of prisoners; as a result, he has deliberately eschewed any direct identification of the main protagonist with himself. Autobiographical information on his experiences in the Ekibastuz camp is given in *Arkhipelag GULag* including a vivid account of the trip from the Moscow area to the new destination and a portrayal of the spirit of defiance that began to take hold of the political prisoners in the Special Camps. This spirit gathered strength rapidly, leading first to the systematic assassination of camp informers and, in early 1952, culminating in a general strike, which at first was met with concessions on the part of the authorities but soon was crushed with repressive measures. (This episode, together with a much more serious mid-1954 uprising that occurred in the nearby Kengir camp, is reflected in Solzhenitsyn's screenplay *Znaiut istinu tanki* [Tanks Know the Truth, written 1959, published 1981 in *Sobranie sochinenii*].) Although he had participated in the 1952 strike, Solzhenitsyn escaped retribution because at the time when the authorities were reestablishing control, he underwent an emergency operation for what apparently was abdominal cancer. According to Solzhenitsyn, he lay in a postoperative haze in the recovery room of the hospital, and one of the doctors, Boris Nikolaevich Kornfel'd, sat on his bed and spoke fervently of his recent conversion to Christianity. The doctor was murdered by unknown assailants that same night, probably on suspicion that he had been an informer, and his ardent words at Solzhenitsyn's bedside—the last words he said in his life—weighed upon the writer "as an inheritance." Solzhenitsyn states that this extraordinary sequence of events precipitated his conscious return to a belief in God, formally marked by a poem

written in 1952, in which the writer rededicates himself to the faith in which he was brought up.

Solzhenitsyn was released from the Ekibastuz camp in early 1953, but he was now compelled to begin his "perpetual" exile in Kok-Terek, a small settlement in southern Kazakhstan, where he supported himself by teaching mathematics and physics in a local secondary school. Every moment free of pedagogical duties was spent writing the works that he had accumulated in his head during the preceding years, beginning with what he had composed in verse and committed to memory: the narrative poem *Dorozhen'ka*, the two plays that grew out of specific chapters of that work, *Pir pobeditelei* and *Plenniki*, as well as many poems.

In late 1953 Solzhenitsyn became seriously ill—the abdominal swelling that had necessitated the earlier operation had returned—and terminal cancer was diagnosed. He was permitted to travel to Tashkent, a major city some three hundred miles away, and there he underwent massive radiation treatment, which succeeded in shrinking the tumor. Once again Solzhenitsyn transmuted his personal experience into art and wrote about the period of treatment in a novel-length "tale" (*povest'*) titled *Rakovyi korpus*. He says that this work was conceived on the day he left the Tashkent clinic after being pronounced cured.

The main protagonist of *Rakovyi korpus* is Oleg Kostoglotov, who, like Solzhenitsyn, has known war, prison, and cancer but can be viewed as an authorial alter ego only in part. As in *V krug pervom*, the narrative is presented in the *erlebte Rede* mode and in a polyphonic setting, and the gallery of characters is large and diverse. Cancer patients are necessarily in extremis, and the prospect of dying, while universal, has an unavoidable immediacy for each of them. In some cases cancer seems to "match" the patient—a malignancy is diagnosed in the breast of a sexy girl and in the tongue of a liar—but the mystery of suffering is the dominant theme. A noisy patient, Podduev, reads Leo Tolstoy's "Chem liudi zhivy" (1882; translated as "What Men Live By," 1901) and is jolted into an awareness that he has lived unworthily. When he asks others what they think men live by, he receives shallow answers: rations, air, water, one's pay, one's professional skill, one's homeland. To the physical suffering that afflicts these cancer patients is added the deformity of character produced and magnified by an aggressively ideological system. This deformation is seen most clearly in Rusanov, a self-important and mean-spirited government functionary whose Communist faith leaves him with insufficient resources to cope with the prospect of death. Rusanov serves as a foil to Oleg Kostoglotov, the only ward mate who, amid the individualized responses to

suffering, achieves philosophical depth in meditating upon death. Rough-hewn and uneducated, Kostoglotov has learned in the camps that survival "at any price" is an unsatisfactory way to live. Seemingly cured and free to make a new life at age thirty-five, he discovers that his hormone treatments will render him impotent. He fathoms his cruel plight just as two attractive women, the vivacious nurse, Zoia, and the ethereal doctor, Vera, reciprocate his interest in them. Both women offer him a place to stay when he leaves the hospital, but instead of imposing his sexual limitations upon either of them, Kostoglotov chooses renunciation as the only honorable path to follow and heads off to his place of exile. By an act of will, he transcends despair and achieves spiritual liberation, and the undeviating focus on moral values that animates Solzhenitsyn's fiction again is confirmed.

The years 1956 and 1957 are particularly significant in Solzhenitsyn's life. In February 1956 Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev delivered an address to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in which he denounced Stalin's excesses. This speech marked the beginning of the "Thaw," a cultural liberalization that proved to be short-lived and lacking in clear guidelines. Nevertheless, it was a major departure from the stifling rigidity of the Stalinist era, and profound political changes followed almost immediately. In April 1956 Solzhenitsyn's sentence of "perpetual exile" was annulled, and at the end of the school year he moved to Mil'tsevo, a Russian village about a hundred miles east of Moscow. His day job continued to be school teaching, but he continued what became his lifelong habit of pouring every free moment into his writing. Mil'tsevo supplied the setting for his celebrated short story "Matrenin dvor" (first published 1963 in *Novyi mir*; translated as "Matryona's Home," 1963). In early 1957 he was officially "rehabilitated," which meant that the 1945 charges against him were formally erased from his record. This change of status was followed by his remarriage to Natal'ia Alekseevna, who had divorced Solzhenitsyn in the early 1950s to protect herself (by severing her ties to an "enemy of the people"). The couple then moved to Riazan', a provincial city south of Moscow, where he again taught school.

In 1958-1960 Solzhenitsyn wrote seventeen prose poems. Titled "Krokhotki" (miniature stories) and first published in the emigre journal *Grant* in 1964, the poems range in length from a dozen lines to a page and a half and display exquisite attention to rhythmic structure. They also reveal his pensive, even gentle side. Typically, they move from a single episode or observation to a broad philosophical insight. Among the values embraced by these prose poems are joy in the beauty of nature, recognition

of the life force at all levels, respect for simple peasant life, and an attachment to the old Russian towns and domed churches that dot the rural landscape. Although he scrupulously avoids romanticizing old Russian ways, he does use them as a yardstick for judging the sterility of modern Soviet society, which has desecrated the land of the nation and despiritualized the life of its people. A particularly memorable prose poem, "My-to ne umrem" (translated as "'We Will Never Die'" in *Stories and Prose Poems*, 1971), shows the materialist ideology of Marxism sharply at odds with the natural rhythms of life and death that faith allows religious persons to accept.

"Matrenin dvor," written in 1959, is Solzhenitsyn's best-known short story; some commentators consider it his most accomplished literary production. It is also autobiographical. The narrator is a former prisoner (referred to only by his patronymic, Ignatich) who has returned to European Russia after forced residence in Central Asia and tries to obtain lodging in a backwoods village. He yearns to find peace by losing himself in the Russian heartland, but his melancholy discovery is that most of the villagers, including a bearded elder of dignified and imposing appearance, turn out to be greedy, quarrelsome, and petty. The one exception is Matrena, a poor and sickly middle-aged widow in whose house Ignatich has lodged. With a work ethic not unlike that of Ivan Denisovich but combined with an altruism that is all her own, she helps neighbors with their tasks whenever she is asked. Moral but not observably religious, Matrena has had a life filled with tragedy and suffering but has not become bitter. She accepts injustices with equanimity and does no one harm. With an unreflective natural piety, she respects the life-giving earth and loves animals, especially her lame cat. Her grasping relatives, needing wood for a construction project, dismantle part of her log cabin. The cart carrying the wood gets stuck on the railroad crossing, and a train kills Matrena, who, characteristically, had been trying to help. The story concludes by describing her as "that one righteous person without whom, as the saying goes, no city can stand." The saying is based on a biblical text: Abraham's entreaty to God to spare the city of Sodom in Genesis 18.

In 1960 Solzhenitsyn wrote a play titled *Svecha na vetru* (written 1960, first published 1969 in *Grani*; translated as *Candle in the Wind*, 1973), published in the West in 1973. It is the only belletristic work by him that is not set in Russia—it has instead a vaguely international setting. In the opinion of both Solzhenitsyn and the critics, the play was not a successful work.

Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign peaked with the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU in October 1961. The denunciations of Stalinism that were sounded there emboldened Solzhenitsyn to risk submitting some of his writing for

publication. The manuscript for *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* made its way from the author to Kopelev, Solzhenitsyn's old friend from their *sharashka* days, then through other intermediaries, and on up to Aleksandr Trifonovich Tvardovsky, editor in chief of *Novyi mir*. Solzhenitsyn, meanwhile, suffered serious misgivings about the possible consequences of coming out of hiding as a writer.

Tvardovsky's strategy for seeking permission to publish the work was to pass it on to Khrushchev, a Personal acquaintance with peasant roots like his own, to suggest that the premier could use the book in his de-Stalinization campaign. While the book can be seen as antiti-Stalinist, it is a protest against any dehumanization wherever perpetrated. Khrushchev had copies of the manuscript made for each member of the Politburo; he asked them to declare at the next meeting whether they were in favor of, or opposed to, publication. Those in favor he counted as political supporters, and those in opposition, he viewed as foes. Thus, the first public use of a Solzhenitsyn work was as a political tool. *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* was published in November 1962 in a huge overrun of *Novyi mir*. Within months it was reprinted in *Roman-gazeta* (a monthly periodical that specialized in publishing entire short novels), a mass-circulation magazine, and then in book form. Reader response to it was enormously positive, and published translations followed promptly. Solzhenitsyn immediately passed from anonymity to global fame.

By authorizing the publication of *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, Khrushchev had set the terms for its initial reception, and establishment Soviet publications slavishly followed the leader's instrumental approach. In contrast, Tvardovsky gave priority to the literary quality of the work, including the moral force of its truthful account of human nature. The profuse Western responses to the book were enthusiastic, and generally they followed the Tvardovsky approach of highlighting its aesthetic and moral achievements. A decade later the tables turned, however, and the politicizing approach of Khrushchev became, willy-nilly, the more common approach among Western critics-and the bane of Solzhenitsyn's reception ever since.

. Whereas Khrushchev had hoped to satisfy readers that the Stalinist terror was a thing of the past, he and his entourage were not prepared for, nor were they pleased by, the explosive reaction to *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*. In the West, Solzhenitsyn was hailed as a champion of freedom who revealed hitherto-unknown truths about Soviet atrocities. The domestic response was even more significant. Few Soviet citizens had been spared the disappearance of a family member into the gulag, but only with the publication of this story was official silence about camp life challenged by a forthright account. Letters flooded in to Solzhenitsyn, and many of them

described personal experiences of the camps. This correspondence led in 1963-1964 to his meetings with hundreds of former *zeks*, who agreed to be interviewed about their experience. At one point he had set aside as overly ambitious the idea of writing a history of the gulag system, but now he was receiving detailed material of the sort that he needed for this project. These eyewitness accounts returned him to his task, and many of them made their way into *Arkhipelag GULag*.

This period of lessened restraint in the press did not last long. Two months after *Novyi mir* published *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, it featured "Matrenin dvor" and another short story, "Sluchai na stantsii Krechetovka" (translated as "Incident at Krechetovka Station," 1963). The latter is about a military officer and his humane impulses, which are overridden by his Soviet indoctrination when, in an excess of vigilance, he orders the arrest of an innocent man. Later in 1963

Novyi mir ran a rather long story by Solzhenitsyn, "Dlia pol'zy dela" (translated as *For the Good of the Cause*, 1964), which he and the critics have come to consider as inferior. The only other works by him published in the Soviet Union before his expulsion were a 1965 essay on language and the story "Zakhar-Kalita" (published 1966 in *Novyi mir*; translated as "Zakhar the Pouch," in *Stories and Prose Poems*, 1971). Then the Soviets stopped allowing the publication of his works.

In 1964 Solzhenitsyn was nominated for the Lenin Prize, but his candidacy was sabotaged by the deliberately false, last-minute charge that he had collaborated with the Nazis during the war. In retrospect, however, the rejection was probably good fortune, for winning the prize would have pressured him toward more-compliant behavior. Khrushchev fell prey to a coup and was removed from office in October 1964, and a hardening of the party line followed. This tightening of measures, together with the failure of his efforts to get the "lightened" version of *V krug pervom* published at home, moved Solzhenitsyn to have a copy of the novel smuggled out of the country for safekeeping, though not yet for publication. The unauthorized appearance abroad of other works by him, however, also began in 1964, starting with the publication of the miniature stories "Krokhotki." During the mid 1960s, as more and more of his activities transpired in the public arena—where the KGB could track them—he kept strictly secret the composition of his most dangerous book, *Arkhipelag GULag*. (He later revealed this story of secrecy in "Nevidimki" [first published in English as *Invisible Allies*, 1995; published in Russian in book form, 1996].)

Direct harassment began in 1965 when the KGB raided the apartments of two of Solzhenitsyn's friends and took possession of a large trove of his notes and unpublished manuscripts. Included in this haul were early plays such as *Pir*

pobeditelei, in which Solzhenitsyn's opposition to the regime was undisguised. Soon the authorities added selective references from the confiscated material to their ongoing effort to discredit Solzhenitsyn. He responded by resorting to samizdat, that is, distributing typed copies of protests, statements, or entire works through an informal network of fellow dissenters. The first work that he knowingly allowed to circulate in samizdat was *Rakovyi korpus*. His increasingly combative public statements were now usually published in the West and then broadcast over Radio Liberty.

Solzhenitsyn spared no effort in his attempts to get *Rakovyi korpus* published at home. Like *V krughe pervom* before it, *Rakovyi korpus* was accepted by the editorial board of *Novyi mir* and awaited clearance by the censors. In late 1966 Solzhenitsyn met with the prose section of the Moscow branch of the Writers' Union to discuss the manuscript. These writers showered the novel and the novelist with praise; Solzhenitsyn expressed his gratitude and his willingness to consider making recommended revisions. No movement toward publication ensued, however, and in May 1967 he wrote an open letter to the upcoming Fourth Congress of the Soviet Writers' Union. In the letter he chastised the Union for its servility before the regime—especially its cringing assent to the persecution of hundreds of writers—and its similarly silent acquiescence to the draconian censorship. He also appealed to the union leadership to respond to his repeated entreaties to support the publication of *Rakovyi korpus* in the Soviet Union. It was his first major act of public defiance, but the congress was not permitted to discuss these general topics. Denunciation of Solzhenitsyn soon became the prevailing note, and in the wake of this episode he believed that a record of his version of his conflict with the regime would be necessary, in case action was taken against him. Thus began the autobiographical accounts that eventually appeared in 1975 as *Bodalsia telenok s dubom: Ocherki literaturnoi zhizni* (translated as *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union, 1980*).

In 1968 Solzhenitsyn completed *Arkhipelag GULag* and arranged for a copy of it to reach the West for safekeeping. Also in that year *V krughe pervom* and *Rakovyi korpus* were published in the West within weeks of each other, both in Russian and in translation, although Solzhenitsyn had authorized publication of only *V krughe pervom*. The two novels received a warm welcome from Western reviewers; high praise in the vein of that lavished upon *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* continued to be the norm, with disagreement among reviewers largely limited to which work was the greater, *V krughe pervom* or *Rakovyi korpus*. In addition, world opinion was running strongly in his

favor, and his public-relations success gave him a relative sense of invulnerability from any initiatives against him by the regime.

In 1969 Solzhenitsyn turned to the work that as a youth he had projected to be his magnum opus. He began intensive work on *Avgust chetyniadtsatogo*, the first installment of the literary rendering of the events that took place before the Bolshevik Revolution. *Avgust chetyniadtsatogo* was published in Paris in 1971 and the next year in English translation. A greatly enlarged version in original Russian appeared in 1983, but not until 1989 did an edition of this version come out in English. Despite the severe distractions that interrupted his work on this ambitious project in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he never wavered from his commitment to it. One such distraction occurred on 12 November 1969: the Riazan' local branch of the Writers' Union expelled Solzhenitsyn for "antisocial behavior". A technically unemployed writer was subject to arrest for "parasitism," but the vociferous protests in his defense by Western writers made clear that, at least for the time being, the author was safe from more-energetic measures.

In 1970 Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature "for the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature." His name appeared in the headlines of newspapers around the world, and sympathetic attention from the West bolstered his position. As the Soviet press hotly protested the selection of Solzhenitsyn for the prize, he was faced with the likely prospect that if he traveled to Sweden, he would not be allowed to return home. The Swedish government, wishing to avoid the wrath of the Soviet Union, refused to permit the award to be presented publicly at its embassy in Moscow. Solzhenitsyn then made an attempt to have the ceremony held at the Moscow flat of Moscow mathematician Natal'ia Dmitrievna Svetlova, but the Soviet regime denied an entry visa to the secretary of the Swedish Academy, who had agreed to make the presentation in this context; this event, too, had to be cancelled. The text of the lecture was first published in 1972 in the Nobel Foundation yearbook, *Les Prix Nobel en 1971*, but was never delivered orally. In December 1974, by which time Solzhenitsyn was already living abroad, he traveled to Stockholm and received the Nobel insignia in person from King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden at the formal presentation ceremony.

The Nobel address, published in book form as *Nohelevskaia lektiia po literature 1970 goda* (1972; translated as *Nobel Lecture*, 1972), is Solzhenitsyn's most sustained statement on the meaning and function of literature. The lecture opens with a contrast between two kinds of writers—a comparison that at the start reveals Solzhenitsyn's spiritual orientation: one writer "imagines himself the creator of an independent spiri-

tual world," while the other "acknowledges a higher power above him and joyfully works as a common apprentice under God's heaven." The artist of the second kind will not allow literature to be strictly self-referential but will seek to relate literature to life. In a world riven by irreconcilably conflicting worldviews, Solzhenitsyn hopes that perhaps beauty can move and persuade when goodness and truth no longer suffice and that through aesthetic instrumentation beauty might even titivate goodness and truth and in that sense "save the world." Because literature is capable of transmitting condensed and irrefutable human experience" from generation to generation and from nation to nation, Solzhenitsyn thinks of world literature as "the one great heart that beats for the cares and misfortunes of our world."

The years 1970-1972 mark the period of the most intense conflict between Solzhenitsyn and the Soviet authorities, especially the KGB. The nuclear physicist Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, who had developed reservations about the Soviet role in the world, and Solzhenitsyn were thrown into an alliance as the two leading dissenters in the land. Each of these men has described the significant differences of perspective that made their alliance a somewhat uneasy one, with Solzhenitsyn challenging Enlightenment principles to which Sakharov was committed; for the most part, however, mutual respect characterized their relationship. While Western support provided crucial cover for both men, official harassment of each turned physically threatening in 1971; in Solzhenitsyn's case KGB agents ransacked his summer cottage and severely beat a friend of his; visited Solzhenitsyn's birthplace in search of compromising information about him; and even tried to assassinate him. (The last episode is recounted by a KGB operative and included in an appendix to "Nevidimki.")

In 1972 Solzhenitsyn's religious commitments came into clear public view. To Patriarch Pimen of the Russian Orthodox Church he wrote an open letter (first published 1972 in the newspaper *Russkaia mysl'* [Russian Thought]), in which he challenged the collaboration of the Church with the atheistic regime. In addition, a 1962 prayer that Solzhenitsyn had written as a prose poem appeared in 1972 in the magazine *Time*, as well as in other Western magazines; it begins, "How easy for me to live with you, Lord, / How easy to believe in you!" Also, the first version of *Avgust cheiyrnadtsatogo*, Solzhenitsyn's emphatically Russian and most explicitly Christian piece of fiction, was published in translation.

The guarded reception of *Avgust cheiyrnadtsatogo* marked the first significant decline of Solzhenitsyn's standing. As Michael Scammell observes in his *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (1984), reviews of the book were decidedly mixed, and its appearance

"disrupted the unanimity of opinion that had enveloped his earlier works." A few highly favorable reviews did appear, but more reviews expressed ambivalence, with a dominating note of disappointment. Solzhenitsyn himself later dated "the schism among my readers" and "the steady loss of supporters" (quoted in *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*), both at home and abroad, with the appearance of this book. Mary McCarthy, writing for *The Saturday Review* in 1972, gave the most plainspoken explanation for the defections: Solzhenitsyn was "rude and unfair" toward "the 'liberals' and 'advanced circles' of 1914." Confident that she knew her audience, she added, "He has it in for those people, just as he would have it in for you and me, if he could overhear us talking."

During this time Solzhenitsyn's marriage was in trouble. He and Natal'ia Alekseevna had been drifting apart for several years. The radical alteration in his worldview since their marriage in 1940 and his increasingly complicated life in open confrontation with the regime did not suit her. He began a relationship with Natal'ia Dmitrievna Svedova; Solzhenitsyn's wife made a failed attempt at suicide. Though initially turned down by the authorities, a divorce petition was finally granted in early 1973. The KGB-controlled press agency Novosti offered to help Natal'ia Alekseevna write a memoir about her former husband. Published in 1975, *V spore so vremenem* (translated as *Sanya: My Husband Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*, 1975) was intended to damage Solzhenitsyn's reputation. Yet, he did not try to exculpate himself from blame for the break-up of his marriage; both parties were responsible. In his second wife he found a woman with a capacity for work and an intensity of spirit equal to his own.

An ominous development in the campaign against Solzhenitsyn came in mid 1973 with the arrest of Elizaveta Denisovna Voronianskaia, who was prominent among his "invisible allies," in that she had typed many of his manuscripts. Against his express order to destroy all copies of the typescript for *Arkhipelag GULag* in her possession, she kept one copy—in the event that all the other copies were destroyed. After five days of nonstop interrogation, she broke down and told the interrogators where her copy was located. *Soon* after this incident she died, either by suicide or, as Solzhenitsyn has guessed, by murder. With a copy of this work in the possession of the KGB, Solzhenitsyn's hand was forced. Through a Swiss lawyer, he set out word to publish the work in the West. The first volume in Russian appeared in Paris by the end of 1973 and translations of all parts of the work followed shortly thereafter. Solzhenitsyn's name again made front-page headlines.

Few books rival *Arkhipelag GULag* for its impact on the consciousness of its contemporary readers. To begin with, Solzhenitsyn introduced the word *gulag*, which

became a universally recognized linguistic emblem of the horrors of twentieth-century totalitarianism. The image of archipelago in the title suggests that the network of prisons and camps that dotted the Soviet Union—but were cut off from outside life by barbed wire—resembled a multitude of islands surrounded by an alien element. Against official efforts to deny the very existence of the gulag universe, this nonfiction work aims to reveal its reality and its horrendous impact on Soviet history. Spanning eighteen hundred pages, the book consists of seven parts divided into three volumes. In an effort to come as close as he could to an exhaustive treatment of a vast subject matter, Solzhenitsyn collected testimonies from more than two hundred former *zeks*. Combining factual information with interpretive commentary, he built an overwhelming "case" against a state that had liquidated millions of its own citizens and against the ideology that drove it to do so. (Estimates of the number of victims vary widely for the book Solzhenitsyn borrowed an emigre demographer's figure of sixty-six million.)

The concept of "literary investigation" asserted by the subtitle of the work, *Opyt khudozhestveimogo issledovaniia*, is an unusual phrase and accurately expressed Solzhenitsyn's intention of bringing the methods of literary art to bear on the task of revealing an official nonexistent but looming reality. Metaphors such as the archipelago of the tide, the comparison of the camps with a sewerage system, or the pervasive animal imagery—employed to suggest dehumanization—are some obvious examples. But the main feature borrowed from literary art is the ever-present authorial voice with its impressive repertoire of rhetorical strategies. This voice holds together the huge text, in which masses of facts are presented with a running commentary that is by turns lively, outraged, sarcastic, bitterly ironic, or sorrowful. The tone shifts constantly, disturbing, challenging, or startling the reader; as a result, preserving the stance of an uninvolved observer, in the face of the facts and images marshaled by Solzhenitsyn, is made difficult. For example, the voice explains the transportation of *zeks* to the camps in a sentence that parodies logic and deflates hope for a compensating factor, which is teasingly implied by the structure: "They don't heat the car, they don't protect the other prisoners from the thieves, they don't give you enough to drink, and they don't give you enough to eat—but on the other hand they don't let you sleep either." A chapter on forced collectivization opens with a deliberately misleading understatement: "This chapter will deal with a small matter. Fifteen million souls. Fifteen million lives." The chapter on children narrates some particularly vile episodes of child torture, then concludes, "And let any country speak up that can say it has loved its children as we have ours!" The brisk and energetic

language of Solzhenitsyn's voice is at a far remove from the usual idiom of scholarship. Filled with parentheses and dashes, given to authorial asides, frequently elliptical in the extreme, and everywhere enriched with camp slang and folk speech, it is a mix that is designed to counter, and sometimes to ridicule, the stilted idiom of Marxist-influenced Russian.

The organization of *Arkhipelag GULag* poses its own problems. Structuring the material according to chronology or a similarly straightforward principle might impose rational order on a methodically perverse and nightmarish world. The chapters that do trace the historical development of the gulag from 1918 to 1956^{arc} interspersed with sections devoted to Solzhenitsyn's personal experiences or to generalized accounts of typical progression through the harsh world of prisons and camps: arrest, interrogation, transport, backbreaking labor and death. Other chapters describe disparate such as guards, thieves, women, children, and religious believers. Sometimes a series of consecutive chapters elucidates a single theme, such as escape. Overall, *Arkhipelag GULag* moves from a long recitation misery and grief to a climactic celebration of hope. Solzhenitsyn's characteristic ending on a note of hope – constant feature of his essays and speeches – is an organic by-product of his religious convictions.

While *Arkhipelag GULag* might invite analysis in political terms, Solzhenitsyn emphatically warns against that approach: "Let the reader who expects this book to be a political expose slam its covers shut right now." He proceeds to explicate the moral vision that governs all of his writing, including this book. In a passage of central importance he writes of "the line dividing good and evil" and states that this division passes not between good and bad classes of people, as Marxists and other ideologues prefer, but "through the heart of every human being." Solzhenitsyn fingers ideology as the ultimate culprit. (For him, "ideology" is likely not a neutral term synonymous with "worldview" but represents a sociopolitical program rooted in utopianism and committed to social engineering.) In classic literature villains generally recognize the immoral nature of their acts, he explains, but ideology can justify evil and allow the evildoer to "believe that what he's doing is good" and to receive praise and honors. The moral vision of the work reaches its clearest expression in the chapter titled "The Ascent." Although prison corrupts many, others grow through suffering, and Solzhenitsyn is not alone in coming to say "*Bless you, prison*" for having opened his eyes to moral reality. This seeming apotheosis is, however, immediately followed by an acknowledgment of the extraordinary fortune that allowed him to reach this quintessentially Christian conclusion-and to be able to tell

about it: "But from the burial mounds I hear a response: 'It's very well for you to say that—you who've come through alive.'" This qualification is an archetypal example of Solzhenitsyn's resolutely unsentimental view of the world as well as of the inner dialogue that energizes the entire text.

At the time of its publication Solzhenitsyn predicted that *Arkhipelag GULag* was destined to affect the course of history. He cited with relish responses in Western newspapers recognizing the historical significance of the work, such as a 1974 editorial statement from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*: "The time may come when we date the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet system from the appearance of *Gulag*." Reviewing *Arkhipelag GULag* that year for *The Atlantic Monthly*, Harrison Salisbury predicted of Solzhenitsyn that "one hundred years from now all the world (including the Russian world) will bow to his name when most others have been forgotten." Western enthusiasm for *Arkhipelag GULag* approached that for *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* of more than a decade earlier. Although much of the basic information about Soviet prison camps had already appeared in scholarly studies and various memoirs, this work broke through a shell of skepticism and imprinted upon Western consciousness the enormity of the atrocities perpetrated by the Soviet regime upon its own citizens. The image that had been painstakingly cultivated by the regime received a blow from which it never fully recovered, and accounts of the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union regularly mention *Arkhipelag GULag* and *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha* as contributing factors. In France a whole generation of young intellectuals abandoned Marxism upon reading the book. Thus, not by coincidence did former Marxists in France eventually produce *Le livre noir du communisme: Crimes, terreur, repression* (1997; translated as *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, 1999), a collection that corroborates much of what Solzhenitsyn first revealed. *Arkhipelag GULag* has been translated into thirty-five languages, and more than thirty million copies of the book have been sold.

The publication of *Arkhipelag GULag* was the immediate cause of Solzhenitsyn's expulsion to the West. On 12 February 1974 a sizable cadre of KGB operatives came to his apartment to arrest him. They took him to Lefortovo prison, where he endured the manifold indignities that he had described in "Arest" (Arrest), the opening chapter of *Arkhipelag GULag*. He was charged with treason and stripped of his citizenship. The next day he was put on a plane bound for West Germany; he learned where he was going only when he saw the airport sign for Frankfurt am Main. The Western press carried daily installments of the drama of his exile. Upon his departure Solzhenitsyn left behind for the public a brief statement, "Zhit' ne po lzhi" (published

14-16 February in several emigre newspapers; appeared in translation as "Live Not by Lies," in *The Daily Express* [London], 1974). In his lexicon "the lie" is a synonym for ideology.

Accolades were heaped upon Solzhenitsyn when he arrived in the West, and they ran to superlatives. For example, on 15 February 1974, in *The Times* of London he was called "the man who is for the moment the most famous person in the western world." This adulatory mood was not to last, for as he arrived in the West he was plagued by what may be called "the Solzhenitsyn question." This phrase refers to the controversy aroused by his essays, speeches, and interviews exploring nonliterary themes. The first significant episode virtually coincided with the date of his banishment and involved *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuzu* (1974; translated as *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, 1974). Solzhenitsyn had sent the letter privately to the Kremlin on 5 September 1973; receiving no reply, he then released it to the public shortly before his arrest. Thus, Western readers had two new publications to consider—the massive *Arkhipelag GULag* and the brief letter.

In the letter Solzhenitsyn, turning practical in the modest hope that his advice will be taken to heart, recommends that Soviet leaders retain their power but abandon Marxist ideology. This suggestion, offered in the spirit of compromise as the first stage of a post-Soviet scenario, dovetails with his suggestion to the citizenry in "Zhit' ne po lzhi" to leave the falsehoods of ideology behind. Once rid of the mandates of an ideology of world revolution, the leaders could attend to domestic reforms, and to that end Solzhenitsyn offers such proposals as husbanding natural resources according to the insights of the then-prominent Club of Rome (an international think tank of scientists, economists, business professionals, civil servants, and politicians); developing the underpopulated northeastern region of Russia; and reducing Soviet military might to the level needed only for defense against possible Chinese encroachments. The leaders could afford to turn their attention inward, he explained, because the West, having lost its spiritual moorings, had become too weak in will to take Cold War advantage of a Soviet shift to domestic priorities. The explicitly political suggestions of the letter are moderate and gradualist in nature—reformist rather than revolutionary. Without the prop of ideology, Solzhenitsyn suggests, totalitarianism will give way to authoritarianism, serving as an intermediate arrangement during the course of increasing liberation for individuals and social institutions.

Shortly after *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuzu* appeared, Solzhenitsyn explained that he foresaw an era of transition and that his real audience consisted of leaders to

come—that is, after the "stagnation" of Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev's rule. At the time that the letter was published, however, his suggestions shocked many Western readers. William Safire, writing on 18 February 1974 in *The New York Times*, announced himself "the first on my block to feel misgivings" about the newcomer, and he correctly predicted that the hero worship the moment was mere trendiness and would soon dissipate. Liberals unaccustomed to defending the United States expressed resentment at Solzhenitsyn's disparagements at the moral fiber of their country. Many commentators fixed their attention more on what the letter did not say than on what it did say — for example, it did not urge democracy upon the Soviet leaders. The Western reception of the text caused issues of genre (pamphlet) and audience (Soviet leaders) to be overlooked. As a result, at the very time when Solzhenitsyn was being lauded for *Arkhipelag GULag*, he was rebuked for *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuza*. Moreover, in an incongruous twist, reaction to the modest pamphlet outweighed the reception for *Arkhipelag GULag* in determining subsequent Western attitudes toward the author of both. In a 1974 piece for *The Columbia Journalism Review*, human-rights activist Jeri Laber, who earlier had written appreciatively about Solzhenitsyn's fiction, now asserted that "he is not the 'liberal' we would like him to be." That Solzhenitsyn was not a liberal was a judgment that many commentators came to repeat with only slight variations in wording. Laber added, "Reactionary, authoritarian, chauvinistic—hardly adjectives that sit comfortably with the typical image of a freedom-fighter and Nobel Prize winner." Other commentators underwent much the same shift and supplemented Laber's list of adjectives: Solzhenitsyn was theocratic, fundamentalist, messianic, monarchist, medieval, Utopian, and fanatical. These reevaluations were in the process of merging into a negative consensus that later became conventional wisdom among molders of Western opinion. This new climate provided the context for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's decision to recommend against welcoming Solzhenitsyn to the White House for a visit.

Also in 1974 Solzhenitsyn edited a collection of articles titled *Iz-pod glyb* (translated as *From Under the Rubble*, 1975). His intention with this publication, which comprises eleven essays by seven contributors—one of them Solzhenitsyn, who wrote three pieces—was to set forth a vision of spiritual renewal for Russia. It was designed to update two well-known collective manifestos published in the prerevolutionary and immediately postrevolutionary periods, *Vekhi: Sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsii* (1909; translated as *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, 1977) and *Iz glubiny: Sbornik statei o russkoi revoliutsii* (1918; translated as *Out of the Depths=De Profundis*, 1986). Members of each of the groups had journeyed

from socialist convictions to spiritual beliefs. Just as the contributors to *Vekhi* and *Iz glubiny* endeavored to spare Russia the ideology-induced calamities looming on the horizon, so did their heirs in the late Soviet period seek to point the way out of the misfortunes that had befallen their homeland. The 1974 collection includes Solzhenitsyn's "Raskaianie i samoogranichenie & kategorii natsional'noi zhizni" (translated in *From Under the Rubble* as "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations"). By his own reckoning it is one of his most important essays, in which the universal moral principles widely seen as applicable to individuals are applied to whole nations.

Not long after his exile began, Solzhenitsyn settled in Zurich, Switzerland, where his wife and their family—which by now included sons Yermolai, Ignat, and Stephan—soon were allowed to join him. (Natal'ia Dmitrievna's son by a previous marriage and her mother also were part of the household.) Two years later, in 1976, Solzhenitsyn purchased a chalet on fifty wooded hillside acres outside the village of Cavendish, Vermont, and there the family lived for the next eighteen years. This location brought the advantages of substantial privacy; access to rich American library holdings; and for his sons—as Solzhenitsyn pointed out repeatedly—exposure to a major world language. He had a chain-link fence put up around the property to keep out hunters and snowmobilers; Natal'ia Dmitrievna later semiphrastically added journalists to the list. (This fence evoked press speculation about Solzhenitsyn's alleged need for prison-like enclosures.)

Invitations for interviews and public appearances flooded in, and, relishing his newfound freedom to speak out, Solzhenitsyn at first consented to many of them. Although heretofore he had written almost exclusively about his homeland, on these occasions he satisfied his hosts' curiosity to know what he thought about the West. In 1975 he participated in a symposium for French television, spoke in Washington and New York under the auspices of the AFL-CIO (the leading labor organization in the United States), and addressed the United States Congress. In 1976 he made two appearances on British television and radio. Also in 1976 he gave a speech at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, which had designated him an honorary fellow and provided him access to its rich archives for his research; for this occasion he and his wife drove across the United States. These and other public events brought him considerable attention but a decidedly mixed reception. Among Solzhenitsyn's views that were perceived as contentious were his unremitting enmity toward Marxist ideology, his belief that United States foreign policy of detente toward the Soviet Union was based on illusion, his judgment that moral laxity and shaky political

courage characterized Western political behavior, and his accusation that the West sometimes failed to implement its vaunted principles of democracy and freedom of speech. Generally lost in the largely defensive reactions of Western auditors were the nuances in his arguments and his expressions of broad appreciation of Western ways. His frequently combative tone also impaired the persuasiveness of his message; in particular, it obscured the fundamental moderation that has characterized his political views. The writer who had been honored for his revelations about Soviet realities was mostly rebuffed when he turned his attention to Western issues. He soon retired from the field of public pronouncements and turned his attention to the main work of his life, the historical cycle that had commenced with *Avgust chetyrnadtsatogo*.

Despite the distractions accompanying his status as a celebrity, Solzhenitsyn kept his attention trained on Russian themes. In 1975 *Bodalsia telenok s dubom*, a personal account of his running battle with the Soviet authorities, was published. The title comes from a Russian proverb about a calf who tries in vain to butt down a great oak tree. The title is not only self-deprecating but also implicitly tongue-in-cheek, in that Solzhenitsyn did not consider his odds of success as hopeless as the proverb suggests. He avoids calling these reminiscences "memoirs," supplying instead the subtitle *Ocherki literaturnoi zhizni*. Several sections of *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* were written intermittently from 1967 onward, and the book ends with a rousing section on his 1974 arrest and forced departure from the U.S.S.R. There is also a large appendix of invaluable documentary materials, including many letters. Taken together and described by Solzhenitsyn as an "agglomeration of lean-tos and annexes," these reminiscences cover the years 1961- 1974.

Bodalsia telenok s dubom is the essential source of information about key events such as the publication of *Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, the efforts to follow up that success with other approved publications, the ceaseless rounds of struggle between Solzhenitsyn and literary and political authorities, and his ongoing work on major projects, including *Arkhipelag GULag* and *Krasnoe koleso* (which was first called "R-17"). Throughout, Solzhenitsyn is acutely conscious of his mission as a truth-telling writer. He is equally aware that one false step vis-a-vis officialdom could imperil his mission and even his life. Not infrequently, he resorts to military imagery to convey his sense of being locked in mortal combat with an implacable foe. Even as he justifiably revels in his impressive successes, he is unsparing about his missteps and humiliating failures. The dual nature of such self-analysis is most clearly on display in his account of the climactic event of the plotline of *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* - his arrest and expulsion from the Soviet Union in early 1974. He pitilessly describes the

"state of witless shock" that left him confused and unsteady when KGB officers arrived at his door to take him away. He regains control of himself soon enough, however, and the prevailing tone during the crisis is one of defiance towards the authorities.

Another prominent focus of this work is Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novyi mir* and Solzhenitsyn's first and most important publisher. Solzhenitsyn was delighted by the peasant core of Tvardovsky's personality, encouraged by his support, and thrilled by his exquisite literary taste. Yet, Tvardovsky's inability to shake free of his loyalty to the Party frustrated Solzhenitsyn; the editor's alcoholic excesses also bewildered him. Despite the complications and conflicts in the friendship, their mutual admiration was genuine. The general culture of *Novyi mir* was another matter. Despite the reputation of the journal for liberalism, the petty office intrigues and what Solzhenitsyn considered exaggerated caution created an atmosphere that he found stifling. By the time *The Oak and the Calf* was published in 1980, the Western reception of it—which fell along predictable ideological lines—was mixed. One common reason for disapproval was Solzhenitsyn's allegedly excessive harshness toward Tvardovsky. For the most part, however, the book won Western reviewers over with its lively style; some critics placed it near the top of Solzhenitsyn's canon.

In 1975 Solzhenitsyn published *Lenin v Tsiurikhe* (translated as *Lenin in Zurich*, 1976), a classic example of how he subsumes history into literature. In this volume he collocates the series of chapters on Lenin, eleven chapters in all, from three "knots," or fascicles, of *Krasnoe koleso*. Solzhenitsyn published *Lenin v Tsiurikhe* when he did because the appearance of the complete *Krasnoe koleso* was then still years away, and the idea of coming to terms with Lenin was part of the conversation about the nature of the Soviet system that Solzhenitsyn was trying to foster. With the completion of the historical cycle, these chapters have been restored to their rightful places and can be read in their contexts. As four consecutive chapters of *V krughe pervom* had rendered a portrait of Stalin, so the chapters in *Lenin v Tsiurikhe* depict the character of Lenin. For both portrayals Solzhenitsyn relied on extensive research and tried to render a faithful account of both the external events and the inner lives of his controversial subjects. In these works he uses internal monologue as a means to reveal the essence of each man. The portrait of Lenin is fuller than the portrait of Stalin—as befits Lenin's more multifaceted personality and Solzhenitsyn's view of his greater historical importance. Solzhenitsyn's Lenin is a fully realized, three-dimensional character with believable motives who bears moral responsibility for bringing much evil into the world; in his case the line dividing good and evil is pushed far to one side.

In 1977 Solzhenitsyn announced the establishment of the Russian Memoir Library, conceived as a depository of unpublished materials that would keep alive the truth of modern Russian history in the face of ongoing Soviet efforts to distort or erase factual evidence. Many Russian emigres sent in their memoirs, letters, and photographs. Solzhenitsyn eventually funded the publication of more than a dozen book-length manuscripts considered to be of the greatest interest.

On 8 June 1978 Solzhenitsyn came out of seclusion to present the commencement address at Harvard University. Press coverage was enormous, and the speech was destined to become the best-known of his many public addresses in the West. In the speech, after a brief preface of congratulations to the graduates and a characterization of himself as a friend of the West, Solzhenitsyn launches into a critique of the current moral condition of the West, taking issue with such epiphenomena as commercial advertising, "TV stupor," "intolerable" popular music, excessive litigiousness, and a lack of energetic resistance to crime and terrorism. He rebukes both the press and the intelligentsia—the former for its hasty and superficial judgments, the latter for its loss of willpower and decline of courage. After an extensive cataloguing of the problems of the West, the peroration of the address reveals Solzhenitsyn's religious cast of mind, in that he proposes remedies to the problems in overtly spiritual terms. Specifically, he urges the West to move beyond the "autonomous irreligious humanistic consciousness" that it embraced at the time of the Enlightenment and to reach "a new level of life," in which both physical and spiritual aspects of human existence can be cultivated equally.

The denunciation of secular humanism at Harvard, a citadel of enlightened thought, did not curry favor with an audience that had gathered for the purpose of celebration. A clamor of responses to Solzhenitsyn's address, most of them sharply negative, ensued. Most reviews conceded his personal greatness but passed quickly into argumentation against various of his points. Few of the respondents acknowledged that his criticisms of Western weakness were offered in friendship to help the West strengthen its resolve, and scant attention was paid to the climactic concluding paragraphs of the speech. This event marks a defining moment in the Western elites' rejection of Solzhenitsyn.

In 1978 the text of the commencement speech in English was published in a bilingual edition titled *A World Split Apart*; the speech in original Russian, featured in this edition, is called "Raskoloty mir." Two years later *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard* was published. It has a series of early reviews, and appended are six longer reflections, which were written later and are less defensive, more appreciative, and considerably

more nuanced than the reviews. The organization of the book suggests that the press had been hasty and superficial in its reaction to the speech, but the damage to Solzhenitsyn's reputation had been done. His writings have continued to attract sympathetic readers in substantial numbers, but antipathy, in varying degrees, informs most Western journalistic commentary about him.

During the 1980s Solzhenitsyn permitted himself relatively few interruptions from his work on *Krasnoe koleso*. In 1980 he wrote a long essay titled "Chem grozit Amerike plokhoe ponimanie Rossii" (published that year in *Vestnik R. Kh. D.*; translated in *Foreign Affairs* as "Misconceptions about Russia Are a Threat to America," 1980) for the journal *Foreign Affairs*. In 1981 the essay came out in book form as *The Mortal Danger: How Misconceptions about Russia Imperil America*. This highly critical foray into the field of Russianist scholarship in the American academy did not help his reputation among Sovietologists. In 1983 Solzhenitsyn received the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion and traveled to London to give an acceptance speech. This speech succinctly summarizes Solzhenitsyn's fundamental understanding of the distinctive nature of the twentieth century as a whole. Great disasters befell Russia, he declares, because "men have forgotten God." Moreover, the same "flaw of a consciousness lacking all divine dimension" affects the world as a whole and is the "principal trait" of the century.

In the second half of the 1980s the Soviet Union underwent momentous changes as Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev rose to power. The new policy of glasnost paved the way for renewed attention to Solzhenitsyn. In 1988 one Moscow periodical urged that the treason charges against him be dropped and his citizenship restored. Other Soviet publications explored the possibility of publishing his works. *Novyi mir* arranged with him to publish selections from *Arkhipelag GULag* in 1989, with *V krug pervom* and *Rakovyi korpus* to follow. Literary gatherings were scheduled to celebrate his seventieth birthday in 1988; the Politburo interfered with these plans, however, and several events were simply canceled. Permission to publish any part of *Arkhipelag GULag* was also denied.

Yet, the foundations of the Soviet edifice were already weak, and *Arkhipelag GULag*, though not legally published in the Soviet Union, already had played a part in the process of undermining them. In Soviet hegemony over large parts of Eastern and Central Europe came to an end, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November most visibly symbolizing the demise. In the wake of these events the U.S.S.R. itself disintegrated into its constituent parts, and on Christmas Day of 1991 the red flag over the Kremlin was lowered for the last time. Whether Gorbachev should be

credited for liberalizing the society over which he governed or faulted for ineffectually in pursuing his announced goal of reforming the state system remains debatable. Similarly, how much credit for the breakup of the Soviet Union should go to the pressures for change that emanated from Western governments is an open question. A strong contributing factor, perhaps a governing one, is that the Soviet Union suffered from a loss of faith, even among its leaders, in the ideology that had justified its vast social experiment. Solzhenitsyn had made exactly this point long before, in *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuzu*. As for the role of Arkhipelag GULag in bringing down the Soviet Union, American diplomat George Kennan's 1974 remarks about the work sounded like fulfilled prophecy in 1991: "It is too large for the crawl of the Soviet propaganda machine. It will stick there, with increasing discomfort, until it has done its work."

Foreseeing as few did that the collapse of the Soviet Union was imminent, Solzhenitsyn wrote an essay on the reconstruction of Russia. It appeared in September 1990 in the Moscow-based periodicals *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and *Literaturnaia gazeta* and was published in book form as *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiia? Posil'nye soobmzheniia* (1990; translated as *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals*, 1991). With the Soviet system crumbling, Solzhenitsyn offered advice about how to avoid being crushed beneath the rubble. The essay must be seen as a sequel to the 1973 *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuzu* in its sketch of a pragmatic political program, but the audience now addressed not the leaders but, as with "Zhit' ne po lzhi," the citizenry at large. The two halves of the essay address short-term and long-term needs, respectively. Solzhenitsyn makes clear his commitments to democracy (developed from the ground up, rather than imposed by fiat from above); a free market (but with a social safety net); and private ownership of land (introduced gradually). He devotes considerable attention to post-Soviet relationships between Russians and non-Russians. He recommends that Russia develop by stages its own indigenous form of democracy, rather than borrow procedures directly from the modern West, by drawing on such historically embedded elements as the nineteenth-century zemstvo system, in which the populace chose its local leaders. The picture that emerges is similar to early American republicanism, with local leaders selecting their best members for the next largest unit of government, all the way up to the central government. Throughout, the tone of the essay is solicitous and earnest, as befits the moderate positions it espouses. The range of responses to the essay fell along predictable lines, predetermined by the commentators' political views and their

attitudes toward the author-though with the balance this time tipping toward respectfulness, somewhat more so in Russia than in the West.

Solzhenitsyn's concern with the manifold losses suffered by Russia in the twentieth century extends to language in the technical sense, and he is renowned for leavening his writing with words outside the familiar lexical terrain as a way to counteract what he considers the radical impoverishment of the Russian vocabulary. Apart from items that he himself has formed in accordance with the inherent rules of Russian word formation, Solzhenitsyn has diligently collected what he calls "unjustly forgotten" words culled from special dictionaries and various literary works, with his favorite source being Vladimir Ivanovich Dai's four-volume *Tolkovyĭ slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka* (Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language, 1863-1866). In 1990 Solzhenitsyn published his collection in the form of an alphabetical compilation that included some thirty-five thousand items, under the title *Russkii shvar' iazykovogo rasshireniia* (Russian Dictionary of Lexical Augmentation). It joins several other statements on language, notably Solzhenitsyn's essay "Nekotorye grammaticheskie soobrazheniia" (Select Observations on Grammar, published 1983 in his *Sobranie sochinenii*).

The fall from power of the Soviet leaders cleared the way for Solzhenitsyn to send to press those parts of *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* that he had initially held back to protect the identities of various individuals. These missing parts bore the title "Nevidimki" and appeared in late 1991 in two issues of *Novyi mir* and thereafter in translation. A 1996 edition of *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* incorporates "Nevidimki" as a "fifth supplement."

"Nevidimki" comprises fourteen sketches, each focused on an individual or a group who had been part of the secret network of helpers involved in all phases of Solzhenitsyn's work. The network expanded to include foreigners-among them journalists, who also maintained the trust. The manifold tasks undertaken on Solzhenitsyn's behalf included typing texts; transporting and hiding manuscripts; retyping texts (before the advent of computers) to accommodate the nearly endless flow of revisions and emendations; keeping track of the manuscripts and their various locations; destroying caches of outdated material; and transmitting finished works to their intended recipients in the West. The literary element of characterization, a strength in Solzhenitsyn's fiction, is on full display in these sketches. Most of the helpers were women. The longest sketch describes the author's right-hand ' intimate, Elena Tsezarevna Chukovskaia, granddaughter of Kornei Ivanovich Chukovsky, a well-known writer of children's literature. Through

collaboration they came to the painful realization that their worldviews were in serious conflict. In another sketch the reader learns that one of the helpers became the author's second wife; the highly discreet narration of the love story between Solzhenitsyn and Natal'ia Dmitrievna b among the most memorable sections of the book. Some of the personages are the real-life prototypes for fictional characters such as Potapov of *V krughe pervom* and the Kadmins of *Rakovyi korpus*. Others are old gulag friends, most notably Arnold Susi and Georgii Tenno who helped provide Solzhenitsyn with a safe haven in Estonia for writing *Arkhipelag GULag*. The story of the furtive work on this book is highly dramatic. At his Estonian "Hiding Place" during the winters of 1965- 1966 and 1966-1967, Solzhenitsyn wrote at a feverish pace. The cumulative 146 days of labor-in typical fashion he gives an exact figure-marked for him "the highest point in my feelings of victory and of isolation from the world." Not once as he composed did he have the whole manuscript on his desk. At one time all copies of the work were in the same place, and had the KGB confiscated that cache, he declares, he could never have reconstructed the whole work. The main character in these sketches is, of necessity, the author himself. Despite the high stakes of his underground life, he relishes the conspiratorial game. The exhilaration of outwitting deadly but lumbering foes creates a rare camaraderie among all of his intimates.

At this time, as the U.S.S.R. verged on collapse, Solzhenitsyn's prerequisites for returning to his homeland were soon met. All of his works were published: the charge of treason was dropped; and his citizenship was restored. Nothing remained but the trip home. His popularity in Russia soared. One poll in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) listed him as the runaway first choice to become the president of the new Russia: 48 percent were for him (with Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin as a runner-up at 18 percent). Yet, Solzhenitsyn delayed his return to Russia, and impatience with him grew. One reason for the delay is that he had no interest in pursuing political office. More important, however, was that he was closing in on the completion of *Krasnoe koleso*. What he considered the chief work of his life had to be finished before he became ineluctably caught up in the public life of the nation. The widespread perception in both the West and the East about the timing of Solzhenitsyn's move to Russia is that he missed his magic moment and waited too long.

In 1993, with the work on *Krasnoe koleso* behind him, Solzhenitsyn gave speeches and interviews of farewell to the West. All but one of these interviews were delivered in Europe rather than in the United States, his home for eighteen years; in

his view the American elites had shown little interest in listening to him. His travels in Europe that year included a visit to France, the country where his impact on intellectual life was felt most strongly; in the Vendee region he spoke to an audience of thirty thousand. He had an hour-and-a-half-long audience with Pope John Paul II. His most important address on this trip was delivered to the International Academy of Philosophy, a Roman Catholic institution in Liechtenstein. This speech reiterates several of the themes presented in his 1978 address at Harvard, with the criticism of the Enlightenment now focused on the doctrine of progress and the divorce of morality from politics. In terms of political themes in the speech, he praises the West for its stable rule of law. If the end of the Cold War had rendered obsolete some of his earlier warnings to the West, it also had vindicated, in his opinion, his understanding of the twentieth century as a whole. In addition, the speech shows to a certain degree a shift away from the political and toward the personal. Instead of the stridency that irked some commentators about his earlier speeches, a softened, measured tone prevails on this occasion.

Two months before his departure for Russia, Solzhenitsyn wrote his last work in exile, *"Russkii vopros" k kontsu XX veka* (published in *Novyi mir*, 1994; published in book form, 1995; translated as *"The Russian Question" at the End of the Twentieth Century*, 1995). Whereas *Krasnoe koleso* took nearly six thousand pages to cover four years (1914-1917), the new book allots a little more than a hundred pages to cover four centuries of Russian history. The purpose of this historical sketch is to explain how Russia arrived at what Solzhenitsyn terms its third "Time of Troubles" – the early seventeenth century and the year 1917 are the two occasions that precede "the Great Russian Catastrophe of the 1990s." In his view the resources for coping with the crisis were so severely limited that the Russian question now was, "Shall our people *be* or *not be*?" If Russia is to survive as a people, he concludes, "We must build a Moral Russia, or none at all-it would not then matter anyhow."

In May 1994 Solzhenitsyn returned home to Russia. He reentered through the "back door" of the country: rather than using the standard portal of Sheremet'ev airport in Moscow, he flew across the Pacific Ocean. Some reporters believed that in using a different route, he was snubbing Moscow, but all were struck by his dramatic gesture of landing first in Magadan, the capital of the Kolyma region, where the harshest prison camps had been located – thus the symbolic capital of the gulag. The next stop was Vladivostok, the main Pacific port city in Russia. There he received a hero's welcome from four thousand citizens, who had been standing in the rain for hours waiting to hear him speak. This public address was his first ever to a large

audience of fellow Russians. He then launched a fifty-five-day train trip westward across Russia, with frequent stops to talk with citizens. When possible, he reminisced with other former *zeks*. A crew from the British Broadcasting Company went along and filmed the whistle-stop tour. He filled his notebook with statements by the people, and he promised to deliver their words to the leaders once he reached Moscow. A turnout estimated at ten thousand to fifteen thousand people met Solzhenitsyn's train as it pulled into Yaroslavsky Station in Moscow. In contrast to the warmth expressed toward him by most ordinary citizens, his ensuing reception by the Moscow intelligentsia tended toward the negative, in this sense mirroring the viewpoint of Western intellectuals. After a trip to his former home territory in southern Russia, Solzhenitsyn and his wife settled on the outskirts of Moscow.

During his first year back on Russian soil, Solzhenitsyn maintained a relatively high profile. In the first month he gave a speech in which he used the word *oligarkhiia* (oligarchy) to describe the real power structure in the new Russia. In the late summer and early fall of 1994 he made another tour—to Mil'tsevo, Riazan', and Rostov to visit his old haunts. In October 1994 he addressed the Duma. He scolded the leaders for sham reforms and an absence of authentic democracy—in short, for pursuing the worst possible path out from under the rubble of communism; the legislators were tepid in their reactions. He met privately with President Yeltsin, began appearing in a fortnightly television program on issues he considered crucial, and continued giving public addresses. He condemned the privatization scheme devised by Deputy Prime Minister Anatolii Borisovich Chubais for allowing insiders to snap up property that should have been distributed equitably to citizens, gave strong support to the principle of local governance at a Moscow conference for regional leaders, and pursued the same theme at a similar conference held in Samara. Within a year of his return home, Solzhenitsyn lost the limelight of public attention, but not until he had made nearly a hundred public appearances. In October 1995 his television program was dropped; the stated reason for the cancellation was not his sharp criticism of the authorities but the allegedly low ratings. (The texts of Solzhenitsyn's talks on television have been collected in *Po minute v den'* [A Minute a Day, 1995].) Whereas earlier the intellectual elites at home and abroad had commonly considered Solzhenitsyn misguided, after his homecoming they increasingly pronounced him irrelevant.

Solzhenitsyn did continue to participate in public life, though with decreasing frequency. A certain decline in health, starting with a 1997 hospitalization for heart trouble, constrained his activities. In May 1997 he was elected to the Russian Academy of Sciences, to which he gave a speech in September of that year. In

October 1997 he established an annual literary prize to honor contemporaries who were contributing to the preservation and development of the Russian literary tradition. The prize came from the worldwide royalties for *Arkhipelag GULag*; the same source funds a large program of assistance to thousands of needy survivors of the gulag. As another example of his selective public appearances, he spoke on the occasion of the unveiling of a monument honoring Anton Pavlovich Chekhov at the Moscow theater that bears the playwright's name. In 1998 Solzhenitsyn's eightieth birthday was publicly celebrated in several events, including a theatrical adaptation of *V krug pervom* by director Iurii Liubimov a concert given by cellist and conductor Mstislav Leopoldovich Rostropovich, an old and valued friend President Yeltsin offered Solzhenitsyn the Order of st. Andrei, the highest honor awarded to civilians in Russia, but the octogenarian, in a sharply worded rebuke, declined on grounds that there was little to celebrate in contemporary Russia.

That Solzhenitsyn continued to write abundantly is noteworthy, given his public activities and the inevitable burdens of old age, including serious back trouble. Returning to the genre of the short story, he experimented with a format he has called a "binary tale" (*dvuchastnyi rasskaz*). This term refers to narrative structures divided into two distinct parts that are only tenuously connected in terms of plot; instead they are linked on the level of theme or thematic contrast. "Abrikosovoe varen'e" (Apricot Jam, published 1995 in *Novyi mir*) is the most interesting example of this genre among the eight binary tales that appeared in Russian periodicals in 1995-1996. In this text, part 1 consists of a letter from a deported and terminally ill former kulak, who describes the suffering experienced by him and his family after they are driven from their homestead. He also mentions in passing the apricot jam his mother used to make from the fruit of a tree that was cut down during the forced collectivization process. Part 2 juxtaposes this tale of misery and loss to the luxurious life of the recipient of the letter, an unnamed Writer (capitalized in the text); he can be identified easily with Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi, a former aristocrat who managed to reach the summits of success, Soviet style, by writing extravagantly mendacious hosannas to Stalin and his regime. The story depicts the Writer mouthing some of Tolstoy's notorious statements while enjoying tea with apricot jam-the clarity and beautiful amber color of which, he suggests, would make a good model for literary language. He plans to make use of the lexical turns of phrase from the letter he has received, but he obviously has no intention of responding to the kulak's desperate plea for help.

Two stories of a different type evolved from unused material originally prepared for *Krasnoe koleso*. Published in *Novyi mir* in 1995, "Ego" (Ego) and "Na kraiaikh" (On the Edge) both concern the so-called Antonov Rebellion of 1920-1922, the last significant armed resistance to Bolshevik hegemony in Russia. Two further stories, "Zheliabugskie Vyselki" (1999) and "Adling Shvenkitten" (1999), are based on Solzhenitsyn's wartime reminiscences. The first of these is a binary tale, with the frontline episode of part 1 juxtaposed with a visit to the same area in 1995.

Another genre to which Solzhenitsyn returned in his later years is the prose poem. He had written seventeen "Krokhotki" between 1958 and 1960. In the 1990s he wrote thirteen more of them, nine of which appeared in *Novyi mir* in 1997. In the foreword to the poems Solzhenitsyn stated, "It was only when I got back to Russia that I found I could write them again; living abroad-I simply couldn't do it." These reflections—mostly on journeys, landscapes, and natural phenomena—are imbued with a contemplative, even elegiac tone.

Solzhenitsyn continued as well to write sustained works of nonfiction. *Rossiia v obvale* (Russia in Collapse, 1998) conveys his view of post-Soviet conditions in Russia. It can be seen as the closing bookend to the 1990 work *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiia*, in which he laid out advice for Russia to follow (advice that was not heeded). *Rossiia v obvale* is filled with alarm, bordering on despair, at the frightening decline in those spheres of life without which civilized existence becomes impossible, such as education and medical care.

Between 1997 and 2004 Solzhenitsyn published thirteen essays of literary commentary on modern Russian authors ranging from Chekhov to Joseph Brodsky, all under the series title "Literaturnaia kolleksiia" (Literary Miscellany) in the journal *Novyi mir*. In some instances Solzhenitsyn comments on multiple works of a particular writer—stories by Chekhov or poems by Brodsky; at other times he focuses on a single literary production, such as Andrei Bely's avant-garde 1913 novel *Peterburg* (translated as *Petersburg*, 1959). In a brief preface to the first installment of the series Solzhenitsyn explains that what he is offering are notes he had made for himself as he reread selected Russian authors and works in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He states that although he originally had not intended these remarks for print, he changed his mind when he became aware of the extent to which the very memory of some outstanding Russian literary works had faded among his countrymen. He agreed to have these notes published on the condition that he would not have to make revisions, and this provision explains the fragmentary appearance of some of his texts. That Solzhenitsyn has chosen to allot considerable attention to the purely lexi-

cal aspect of the works surveyed-to the point of including lists of words and expressions that in his opinion enrich the Russian lexicon – is also quite consistent with his concerns about what he sees as the ongoing impoverishment of the Russian vocabulary. The most pervasive feature of the series is Solzhenitsyn's focus on the cognitive and informational aspect of the works he has chosen to examine. Of specific interest to him is the depiction of physical conditions or historical events that have not received a full portrayal elsewhere, as well as an evaluation of attitudes that, in his opinion, have a significant role in Russian history. An example of the latter is his often-repeated objection to what he considers the hackneyed manner in which many authors have chosen to present prerevolutionary life. One of Solzhenitsyn's essays, a negative evaluation of Brodsky (he criticizes the poet for a lack of emotion and an excessive reliance on irony) has aroused considerable controversy.

Solzhenitsyn then turned his attention to the longstanding troubled relationship between Russians and Jews and produced *Dvesti let vmeste, 1795-1995* (Two Hundred Years Together, 1795-1995), a two-volume investigation of the theme published in 2001-2002. As Solzhenitsyn writes in his foreword, the emotion that guided him throughout was "a quest for all points of common understanding, and all possible paths into the future, cleansed from the acrimony of the past." In the chapters that take the story up to the mid nineteenth century he essentially follows the established mainline accounts of the subject, though never allowing himself to forget the abrupt and catastrophic twist in Russian history (the 1917 Revolution) addressed in the first volume. For this reason he laments the unperceptive, heavy-handed, and often maddeningly obtuse government policies toward the Jews-an approach that ultimately contributed to the 1917 Revolution. The study adopts a more independent, original approach as the narrative enters the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Solzhenitsyn has for several decades immersed himself in the prehistory of the Russian Revolution (his research is reflected in the ten-volume *Krasnoe koleso*), and his unparalleled knowledge of the interplay of social, political, and ideological forces during this period allows him to show persuasively how the Jewish theme fits into the general context. In the second volume Solzhenitsyn traces the vicissitudes of Russian Jewish relations during the seven decades of Soviet rule. In researching this period, he inevitably needed to confront the multitude of bitter charges and countercharges that had accumulated in the collective memory of both groups, doing so with a genuine effort to be fair but, predictably enough, without satisfying the extremists on either side. Apart from the intrinsic value of the material presented in the book, this work also holds interest as the product of an author who has been

accused of anti-Semitic tendencies—a manifestly unfair charge in a debate that nonetheless shows no sign of ending.

Solzhenitsyn also undertook the serial publication of "Ugodilo zernyshko promezh dvukh zhernovov: Ocherki izgnaniia" (The Little Grain Managed to Land Between Two Millstones: Sketches of Exile), which came out in seven installments in 1998-2003 in *Novyi mir*. It consists of his reminiscences of persons and experiences encountered during his years in the West. This work has the same verve and immediacy as *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* and "Nevidimki," the memoir-like sketches of his preexile years in the Soviet Union. With an abundance of vivid details that are based on notes made immediately after the events described, Solzhenitsyn relates his reception in Germany after his expulsion from the Soviet Union; his move to Switzerland and the complications encountered there; his American speeches and the search for a place to settle; the move to Cavendish; the tide of criticism that followed the Harvard speech; and the various travels he undertook during these years—whether for public appearances (in England, Spain, Japan, and Taiwan), research (at Stanford University), or personal interest (in Russian Old Believer communities on the West Coast of the United States). Throughout "Ugodilo zernyshko promezh dvukh zhernovov" he provides rich commentary on his own work and on a variety of current affairs, often presented with humor and startling candor.

As with the tide *Bodalsia telenok s dubom*, the tide "Ugodilo zernyshko promezh dvukh zhernovov" is a Russian proverb. To the extent that the earlier tide evokes youthful naivete (a silly calf butting a mighty oak in the futile hope of bringing it down), the later tide emphasizes helplessness and bad luck. In both works the autobiographical protagonist who is implied in the titles – whether "calf" or "little grain" – is stylized as a distinct underdog, an image contradicted by the energetic and combative figure who emerges from this pages

Standing, apart from the many publications of Solzhenitsyn's own texts that have appeared since his return to Russia, but of greatest relevance to the story of his confrontation with the regime in the 1960s and 1970s, is a collection of formerly top-secret Soviet documents detailing the highly sensitive reactions of the Communist leadership to everything related to Solzhenitsyn. The volume, titled *Kremlevskii samosud* (an idiomatic rendering is "A Kangaroo Court in the Kremlin"), was published in Moscow in 1994 and appeared the following year in a slightly abridged English-language translation as *The Solzhenitsyn Files*. These materials provide a final proof of the absolute incompatibility of Solzhenitsyn's message with Soviet ideology. At the same time, it offers some fascinating glimpses into the inner workings of an

increasingly sclerotic regime, one that Solzhenitsyn had presciently described—in a 1965 conversation monitored by the KGB and duly reported to the Central Committee of the Communist Party—as hopelessly moribund. In terms of Solzhenitsyn's "oak and calf" image, the "oak" was rotten to the core, and the energetic buttings of the "calf" were unquestionably a factor in its ignominious downfall.

Solzhenitsyn has stated repeatedly that he viewed his writings on the camp theme as a fulfillment of a moral obligation to the millions who disappeared into the world of the gulag. Eventually he considered this immense duty completed, and in *Bodalsia telenok s dubom* he speaks metaphorically of *Arkhipelag GULag* (and the works that preceded it) as a huge boulder that he was able to roll aside in order to return, at last, to the chosen "main task" of his life: a fundamental reexamination of the Russian Revolution. This labor yielded a cycle of works that bears the collective title *Krasnoe koleso* and consists of ten volumes published from 1983 to 1991 as part of his twenty-volume *Sobranie sochinenii*. Yet, even the massive assemblage of *Krasnoe koleso* represents only part of the vast original conception. As Solzhenitsyn explains in a note appended to the last volume of the series, he had earlier envisaged writing twenty "knots," or installments, each one dealing with a specific historical period between 1914 and 1922, further supplemented by five epilogues that were to follow the story up to 1945. Contingencies of time forced Solzhenitsyn to cut short this ambitious plan after completing four *uzly*, or knots: *Uzel I. August cheiyrnadtsatogo* (Knot I. August 1914); *Uzel II. Oktiabr' shestnadtsatogo* (Knot II. October 1916, 1984); *Uzel III. Mart semnadtsatogo* (Knot III. March 1917, 1986-1988); and *Uzel IV. April' semnadtsatogo* (Knot IV. April 1917, 1991). The last volume also has a separately paginated section with a 135-page outline of the original plan based on twenty knots. The net effect of not reaching the month of the Bolshevik coup is to focus intently on the period during which, in Solzhenitsyn's opinion, events as they actually unfolded led ineluctably to the success of Lenin's power grab.

The cycle bears the subtitle *Povestvovanie v otmerennykh srokakh*, or "A Narrative in Discrete Periods of Time." Just as in the case of Solzhenitsyn's descriptive subtitle for *Arkhipelag GULag*, his wording here points to the basic method employed in structuring the series. The strategy consists of concentrating on brief and sharply demarcated segments of historical time rather than presenting the full sequence of historical events, which would mean filling in the gaps between these discrete periods. The text allocated to each temporal segment is referred to as a knot, or *uzel*, a term derived from the mathematical concept of "nodal point" and used to refer to

historical moments when many forces intersect in ways that display their potential for significant consequences.

The first knot in the series, *August chetyrnadtsatogo*, (enlarged edition, 1983), is in essence a study in the manifold weaknesses of the ancient regime of Russia. Its main focus is on the catastrophic destruction of an entire army corps in Eastern Prussia at the outset of World War I owing to inadequate planning, bungled operations, and a willful disregard of orders. Whereas many military and civilian leaders are depicted as simply irresponsible, others, notably General Samsonov, have their good intentions stymied by ineffectuality and ignorance of their situation. Chief among the actors in the tragedy is Tsar Nicholas II, a well-meaning but severely limited man whose family and court matters blind him to urgent issues of state. Related to the general theme of the tragic inability of the regime to safeguard the people of Russia is the painful account of the 1911 assassination of Prime Minister Petr Arkad'evich Stolypin. In Solzhenitsyn's view Stolypin's death deprived Russia of the only major political figure experienced and forceful enough to see the state through the critical years that lay just ahead. Here, as elsewhere in his narrative, Solzhenitsyn dwells bitterly on the unreal- hopes and missed opportunities that have figured heartrending frequency in twentieth-century Russian history. To a considerable extent this palpable frustration is personified in a fictional (and recurrent) character named Vorotyntsev, a luminously intelligent colonel the Russian army. Presented as a witness to many of the attitudes and events contributing to the drift of the country toward a revolutionary precipice, Vorotyntsev is an invented literary figure superimposed on actual historical circumstances. He thus remains incapable of affecting the real events Solzhenitsyn depicts – and deplors.

With the second knot of the work, titled *Uzel II. Oktiabr' shestnadtsatogo*, Solzhenitsyn suggests that it need not encompass high action to serve as a nodal point. (The date October 1916 is in accordance with the Julian calendar; conversion to the Gregorian calendar, the calendar in use in Russia since 1917, renders the date as November 1916.) This particular month is a period in which little happens, but Solzhenitsyn uses this knot to describe the listlessness and foreboding that accompany the anticipation of disaster. Squeezed by war abroad and revolutionary ferment at home, Russia needs action in its defense, but no one takes the requisite initiative. With little plot to trace, in this volume Solzhenitsyn undertakes what he does best—namely, characterization. The volume is also strong in capturing a sense of atmosphere, particularly the oppressive stagnation, without which the revolution would not have occurred. The selection of this month also allows Solzhenitsyn to

argue that the revolution was not inevitable. Inactivity has its consequences, too; the action needed to save Russia was not taken, but it could have been.

Krasnoe koleso, like *Arkhipelag GULag* before it, eludes ready classification in terms of genre. While the sections involving Vorotyntsev fit the pattern of an historical novel, much of the text cannot be accommodated within the novelistic tradition. Several sections concern historical figures without any reference to Vorotyntsev; these figures include Stolypin, Lenin, Tsar Nicholas II and his strong-willed wife, and dozens of political actors of the day who are all presented in terms of what might be appropriately called dramatized history. These sections, moreover, have no fictive intent whatever; the actions, words, and thoughts of the individuals depicted in each case are grounded in the prodigious research that had occupied Solzhenitsyn for decades. Yet, even this mode proves incapable of absorbing the immense amount of material that he wishes to present, and he repeatedly digresses into densely written third-person excursions on historical and political circumstances that he considers crucial to an understanding of the state of affairs. Finally, there is the telling fact that in the massive four-volume third knot, titled *Uzel III. Mart semnadtsatogo*, the fictional characters introduced in the earlier knots become peripheral to the narrative. The general movement away from all fictional constructs is consistent with the approach stated in Solzhenitsyn's subtitle: the unconnected gaps in time between the various knots are in fundamental conflict with the literary demands of character development. Solzhenitsyn never minimizes the potency of individuals' actions to produce good or evil social consequences. But because he set himself the goal of tracing the ill-starred convolutions that had shaped twentieth-century Russian history, the focus of his narrative is ultimately not on individual fates but on the greater tragedy that engulfed the nation.

In stylistic terms *Krasnoe koleso* exhibits the characteristic features developed in Solzhenitsyn's earlier work as well as many new literary devices. A prominent example of the former is the polyphonic technique, whereby individual characters are given the opportunity to carry the narrative point of view in the section of the text in which they are the principal actors. This device is used throughout the historical cycle, with an entire chapter typically devoted to a particular character. The technique is especially striking in *Uzel III*, in which shifts of perspective follow one another in rapid succession because of the brevity of most chapters. The result is to accentuate the rising tide of disruption and chaos, key ingredients in Solzhenitsyn's vision of revolutionary turmoil.

Among the stylistic innovations, the most significant is the manner in which Solzhenitsyn intersperses his prose with diverse materials that are visually set off from the main text-documents in boldface, historical retrospectives in eight-point font, collages of excerpts from the press of the time set in a variety of styles and sizes, "screen sequences" arranged in columns of brief phrases intended to mimic actual cinematic effects, and Russian proverbs printed entirely in capital letters. His frequent recourse to proverbs, in this as in his other works, demonstrates a fondness for pithy verbal constructions that convey wry wisdom. Some chapters of *Krasnoe koleso* conclude with freestanding proverbs, which provide a succinct commentary on the preceding text. Solzhenitsyn grants proverbs a privileged position among the many voices of his fiction; proverbs represent an authoritative "folk judgment" and serve a function not unlike that of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Together with the cinematic sequences, they provide further evidence of the deep mark that the principles of drama have made on Solzhenitsyn's prose.

Central to the cycle *Krasnoe koleso* is the question whether one loves Russia. On the one side are those whose sense of organic connection to the land and people causes them to take active role in helping and defending their increasingly enfeebled homeland, whether on the level of Stolypin's valiant struggle as a minister to institute desperately needed systemic reforms or in such instinctive acts as the decision of a would-be pacifist to enlist at the outset of World War I because he feels "sorry for Russia". On the other side are individuals obsessed by ideology-induced hatred or blinded by self-interest, who willingly or unwittingly contribute to the Russian catastrophe. The further the cycle progresses, the less resistance is offered to the surging forces of chaos and demolition, which Solzhenitsyn links to the tide image of a wheel rolling or rotating in a frightening or threatening way. In the end, the life of the Russian people is violently disrupted by a revolution fomented in the name of those very people, and Lenin, who – more than anyone else-hates Russia, comes to power. The revolution, like a wheel broken loose from a careening carriage, unleashes in its furious energy the totalitarian horrors that become the hallmark of twentieth-century life.

Despite its tragic coloration *Krasnoe koleso* is in an important sense a great monument to hope. Solzhenitsyn has acknowledged that a long time will be needed for scholars to focus on a cycle that is at least four times the length of Leo Tolstoy's *Voyna i mir* (War and Peace, 1868-1869). He has devoted the prime of his life to this cycle. In 2001 three separate selections of chapters from the cycle were published: *Stolypin i Tsar'* (Stolypin and the Tsar), which includes chapters from *Avgust*

chetyrnadbatogo; *Lenin: Tsiurikh — Petrograd* (Lenin in Zurich and Petrograd), featuring chapters from all four knots; and *Makonets-to revoliutsiia* (The Revolution at Last), a two-volume compendium of chapters from *Mart semnadtsatogo*. In each case Solzhenitsyn presents only chapters that bear on historical figures and events. In this way he underlines the primacy of his educational and restorative mission: to reassert and disseminate the long-suppressed truth about the events leading up to 1917.

Solzhenitsyn has frequently been described as a grim, Jeremiah-like figure, but he has always thought of himself as an optimist. Beyond the personality trait of optimism lies hope as a habit of his being; his writings, both literary and nonliterary, almost always conclude on a note of hope. Along with faith and love, hope is one of the classic Christian virtues, and Solzhenitsyn's hope is an integral aspect of his religious worldview, in which humanity stands poised on the intersection between time and eternity.

Throughout a long life packed with high drama, Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn has remained vitally engaged with the central issues of his era. Like his great nineteenth-century predecessors Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, he has focused predominantly on Russia, while also addressing concerns and raising questions that resonate far beyond any national boundary. Fiercely independent and possessed of legendary determination and perseverance, he has been in conflict either with the powers that be or with conventional wisdom, frequently with both at once. The political dimension of his worldview, while not to be neglected, has unduly preoccupied the majority of commentators. The political controversies will fade with the passage of time. What will abide is Solzhenitsyn's sheer literary power. This quality gained the attention of the world, and it will ultimately determine the degree to which he attains the status of an enduring classic author.

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