

Short Article

Research to Saint Petersburg State University: Strategic and Achievement

Hendra Kaprisma
Sylff Fellow from Universitas Indonesia

“If we knew what it was we were doing,
it would not be called research, would it?”
(Albert Einstein)

Starting from my desire to find out something then became a research. My interest in Russian society and literature is opening the gate to start this research. The mystery of writer's fight and rebellion in Soviet regime became the focus of this research. Therefore, *Arxipelag Gulag* (1973) by Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn (1918–2008) is corpus of the research that I did.

Overview of *Arxipelag Gulag* by Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn

Arxipelag Gulag is the most important work of Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn which told us about the cruelty of Soviet regime through GULAG concentration camp (Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei). This novel influenced Solženicyn's life and work, especially in Soviet era. In 1970, Solženicyn received Nobel Award for his novel *Odin Den' Ivana Denisoviča*. Then, in 1974 Solženicyn exiled to other country because the publication of *Arxipelag Gulag*. Through *Arxipelag Gulag*, Solženicyn told us about the arresting operation, sensor board, Orthodox Church, servitude camp, prison camp, and the mental situation and physical suffering of prisoner that happened in Soviet Regime. Woman and children, the prisoner who try to escape, the people who surprisingly had firmness to struggle facing the oppression and torture, and his life in exile were also narrated in this novel. Solženicyn highlighting the moral aspect from the problem that he narrated in this novel.

Through this novel, Solženicyn described the morality game which showed us the portrait of human life under Stalinism regime. The cruelty and repression from that regime colored the character's life in Solženicyn's novel. The disclosure of cruelty that done by the Soviet regime is not enough only seen as a political problem, but also as a moral problem which bring the reader to the fundamental question about the nature of human life itself.

Research's Strategy

The beginning of this research is through data finding. I found data through literature review regarding corpus and context of research. I found some

of my material research through books and internet, but still it's not enough. The Russian-languages books are very difficult to find and almost not exist in Indonesia either in the book store or in library. The internet access only guides me to public sources. The access to get more deep information is very limited. The correspondence with Russian's colleague became an important thing that I have to get more knowledge related to the research.

Through correspondence with Prof. Dr. Alexander K. Ogloblin, professor and lecturer in Saint Petersburg State University, Russia, he advised me to have field-research in Russia. The purpose of this field-research is to know deeply about the condition of Russian society and literature. The searching of research material will be easier found in various libraries in Russia. Besides that, I can meet directly with some lecturer and researcher from various Universities in Russia to consult about my research.

It has been my target and my wish to do the field research in Russia. I tried various ways and efforts to make my wish come true. The big amount to fund the research is one of problem that I had. Therefore, I made my research proposal and applies to various institution to get fund for my field research but still I didn't get the happy result.

In the beginning of January 2012, I saw "a ray of light" when The Tokyo Foundation visited Universitas Indonesia. The Tokyo Foundation held Sylff Research Abroad program for Sylff's fellows who are doing the dissertation research. I did not waste this opportunity and applied for this program. Finally, the happiest news was coming, The Tokyo Foundation will funding my research. Then, the research is begun.

Research Experience in Russia

The opportunity given by The Tokyo Foundation to do this research is the most beautiful thing that happened to me in this year. Long flight hours from Universitas Indonesia to Saint Petersburg State University—which spent 20 hours in the plane—was not problem anymore when I arrived in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Saint Petersburg is the most beautiful city in Russia, and maybe in the world. I was impressed with the beauty of architecture and history of this city.

I made my field research schedule for 3 (three) weeks in Russia. This schedule was contain with the schedule to visit various library and research's consultation with Professor at Saint Petersburg State University. This schedule was very important to make my timework effective and efficient.

There are 3 (three) libraries in Saint Petersburg (Saint Petersburg State University library, Akademi Nauk library, and Russian National library) and a library in Moscow (V.I. Lenina public library) that I visited. A recommendation letter from Prof. Dr. Evgeni Zelenev, the Dean of Oriental Faculty Saint Petersburg State University, became my ticket to visit those libraries. The studying experience and finding research material in library was very interesting. The library room has Soviet Union style (with hammer and sickle symbol) and the method of books finding is very classic. We have to find the books that we

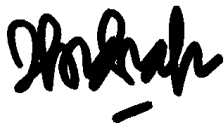
want to read in catalogue room, write it on the order form, and give the order form to the library's staff then I have to waiting for around two hours to get the books. It was very unforgettable experiences.

The Russian people well-known as "cold" people, but I feel different about that. The hospitality of Saint Petersburg people made my days ran so fast. My 3 (three) weeks in this city was over so fast and I had to leave Saint Petersburg to Moscow. In Moscow, I did field research for 3 (three) days. Moscow is the most expensive city in Russia and even it was the most expensive city in the world. As the capital of the country, Moscow is a crowded and busy city and it makes its citizen become not friendly to a foreigner like me. The hospitality of Saint Petersburg people is contrary with the hospitality of Moscow people. Therefore, the beauty of buildings in Red Square made Moscow is unique city with the charm of East-West mixed architecture. The V.I. Lenina public library which located not far from Kremlin showed that this city not only beautiful but also rich of knowledge.

The research experience in Russia is the most unforgettable experience. Russia is a unique and special country for me. It's captured in Fyodor Ivanovich Tyutchev (1803—1873) poem,

*One cannot understand Russia by reason,
One cannot measure her by a common measure
She has a special kind of grace
One can only believe in Russia*

Finally, I would like to say my biggest thank you to The Tokyo Foundation for its support and funding my research. Without this support and funding, this research would not begin.



Hendra Kaprisma

July 27th 2012

Date of submission