



CRIMINAL JURISDICTION IN SVETLANA ALEXIEICH'S *VOICES FROM CHERNOBYL* (2005)

Dodi Zuyandi¹, Kurnia Ningsih², and An Fauzia Rozani Safei³

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

State University of Padang

email: dodizuyandi995@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this analysis are to expose the issue about criminal jurisdiction which is done by Soviet Government and to know the contribution of the implied author in revealing criminal jurisdiction. This analysis is related to the concept of *power* by Michel Foucault that is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows the Soviet Government commits the criminal jurisdiction that can be seen from hiding the truth and ignoring the victims of nuclear explosion.

Key words: Criminal, Jurisdiction, Distortion.

A. INTRODUCTION

After World War II, science and technology progressed rapidly. The situation brings a great change to human life. Many experts conducted research that produces products that can help human work. This condition brings great benefits to anyone. The advancement of scientific and technological has an impact on all aspects of life. Science and technology create many new theories, change the mindset of human being as well as produce better qualified product. Many people become more complex. Human ambition has crossed the line and tends to be pointed to criminality. This atmosphere creates intense competition between one people to another, a group to another group, even between one country to another. The competition makes disputes that rise to destruction. It creates a frightening impact to humans.

The scientific and technological advancement brings positive and negative impact. Generally, this advancement makes the world to be better, but there are still people who use this advancement in the wrong way. The situation gets worse since people have big ambitions, knowledge and power and use them too much. Unfortunately, people who do this thing are people or leaders in the government that understand about law, but they ignore it and make the problem as if it is not danger. It makes them easy to set the rule that make what they have done is

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on March 2018

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

³ Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



something that officially. This atmosphere brings the chaos even misery. This problem shows there is the act of crime.

Svetlana Alexievich has created a literary non-fiction genre that is entirely her own. She writes "novels of voices." She has developed this genre book after book, constantly honing the esthetic of her documentary prose, which is based on hundreds of interviews. Her skill at this allows her to intertwine the original voices of her subjects into an artful condensation of a panorama of souls. Some people argue that Alexievich understands the victims on all sides. In her books, she tried to shows the true reality to the victim of war. She imagine the injustice of the government.

The analysis about criminal jurisdiction in this novel is related to the concept of power by Michel Foucault. According to Sara Mills in her book Michel Foucault (2003:9), the concept of power related to the institution and knowledge. Power also has connection to people who have a position and authority. Power can run well in the government because society assumes that they are leaders and society believes them. This condition is utilized by some people or leaders to get personal gain. They use their power to do some what they want regardless of the bad impact on society. This problem can be categorized as distortion which is related to a crime. Unfortunately, power is used as a protector and makes their distortion is not clear. Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983:124) (1983) states that some surface behavior can be understood as a distortion of significances which the actor senses but is motivated to ignore. This situation is supported by the power which makes a distortion tend to be neglected even looks like it is not a distortion. It triggers to a criminality.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of novel *Voices From Chernobyl* (2005) is done through text and context based interpretation. Implied author as a strategy is used to analyze the novel. It reveals the way criminal jurisdiction by analyzing the effects of accident toward people. Implied author can be understood in two ways. They are reconstructing the problem in the text and bringing description and interpretation together. This analysis uses the concept power by Micheal Foucault and supported by Sarah Mills.

C. DISCUSSION

This section reveals the *criminal jurisdiction* by using implied author. There are two issues that show the Soviet Government committed the criminal jurisdiction. They hides the truth of accident and ignores the victims.

1. Hiding the Truth

Hiding the truth is one of strategies in covering the crime. The government keeps the nuclear explosion of Chernobyl as a closed topic. There are four points to show that. They ban the society to talk about Chernobyl, the doctors to explain about the danger of radiation, block government line and control the media.

The first point is the government bans the society to talk about Chernobyl. They put all information about the explosion into the secret. It can be seen from the following quotation:

Chernobyl blew up when we weren't prepared and also there wasn't any information. We got stacks of paper marked "Top Secret." "Reports on the accident: secret" ; "Result of medical observation: secret"; "Reports about the radioactive exposure of personel involved in the liquidation of the accident: secret." And so on. (p. 85)

The implied author shows that the quotation is an articulation of victims which is represented by the word *We* who know nothing about the accident. The words *wasn't any information* explain that the victims are blind to the accident. This condition describes that the victims keep questioning since the government hides all of the information about the accident. The government wants to make the accident look as if it is a pure accident. The word *secret* was repeated in four times means that the government seals the information. It reveals that the government blocks all the information about accident to cover the crime.

The second point to hide the truth, the government blocks the government line. It can be seen from the following quotation:

I'm calling over a government line, but they're already blocking things. As soon as you start talking about the accident, the line goes dead. (p.106)

The text describes that the government really does not let the victims to communicate with all the line which is related to the accident. The word *line* was built by the government to listen any claim information from citizen. Ironically, the government blocks all the lines and seals all of information about the accident strictly. It makes the people get nothing. It means the government hides something to society.

The last strategies to hide the truth, the government controls the media. It can be seen from the following quotation:

I've wonder why everyone was silent about Chernobyl, why our writers weren't talking much about it—they write about the war, on the camps. But here they're silent. Why? Do you think it's an accident? If we'd beaten Chernobyl, people would talk about it and write about it more. Or if we'd understood Chernobyl. (p.47)

The implied author reveals that the government has a power to control the media. The sentence *why our writers weren't talking much about it—they write about the war, on the camps* explains that they can set up the situation to cover the crime. They can change the topic about nuclear explosion to another topic. They stop the journalist to discuss about the accident. There is no information about the accident. This condition shows that the government is sly in hiding the truth of accident.

This event also can be seen in this following quotation:

In the papers—on the radio and
television they were yelling.
Truth! Truth! At all the
meetings they demanded:
Truth! Well, it's bad, it's very
bad. We're all going to die!
(p.101)

The quotation gives information that there is a contradiction between voices which were articulated by the government and the victims. The repetition of the word *Truth!* in three times describes that what government has said is a fact. It means that there is nothing to be scared. The condition is safe. On the contrary, the sentence *We're all going to die!* emphasizes that the victims will be ended in death. The government never talks about that and just saying about the lies of accident. There is no attention to the victims. The sentence *There were no medical bulletin, no information.*(p 47) supports that the government really does not expose anything about the danger of radiation. They ignore the victims to keep the information. The victims get suffering. However, the government does not pay attention even does not give help to society.

Briefly, hiding the truth is a strategy to cover the crime. The implied author contributes in revealing the act of criminal jurisdiction. From the voices of the victims, it can be realized that the government hides something. It can be seen from the way the victims keep questioning about the truth of accident. Ironically, the government ignores about it and their act seems like nothing happens. What the government done can be categorized as a distortion. They change the condition of Chernobyl a pride for the state. They block the government line if someone ask about the accident. They had banned the doctors explain about the dangerous of accident. By using their power, they control all media even the apparatus of the government. It is related to the crime and it is a criminal jurisdiction.

2. Ignoring the Victims

Ignoring the victims is another strategies in covering the criminal jurisdiction. The government ignores the radioactive impact to society's health and not caring about the radiation which spreads out into the air, the water and the plants. There are two points to show that. They do not pay attention to people who consume the food which was emerged by radioactive and do not prepare the soldiers who go to Chernobyl completely.

The first point is the government does not pay attention to people who consume the food which was contaminated by the radioactive. It can be seen from the following quotation:

Sometimes I turn on the radion.
They scare us and scare us with
the radiation. But our lives have
gotten better since the radiation
came.I swear! Look around:
They brought oranges, three
kinds of salami, whatever you
want. (p. 30)

Trough the implied author, it can be understood that the government does not care to the victims even they give the contaminated food to the victims. It means that they have no humanity. They do not handle the danger of radiation. What they have done looks as if they help the victims. They care to them. Unfortunately, it is a murder. The radiation will kills the victims slowly.

Another quotation that the government does not pay attention to victims can be seen from the following quotation:

The atom is everywhere. In the
bread, in the salt, we breathe
radiation, we eat it. . . .
.Everything's poisoned? Then how
can we live? In the first months
there was fear. The doctors,
teachers, in short, the
intellegentsia, they all dropped
everything and left. They just
hightailed it out of here. But
military discipline—give up your
party card—they weren't letting
anyone out. Who's to blame?
Who? The csientists or the
personel at the station? The
director? The operators on duty? . .
. .We demand that all atomic
station can be closed, and the
nuclear scientists be put in jail?
We curse them! We curse them!
But knowledge, knowledge by it's
self can't be criminal. (p.63-64)

The implied author gives the informatian that the victims are dangerous and they can not join with another group of society. The sentence *they weren't letting anyone out* supports that the victims are isolated by the government. They do not let the people who was contaminated spreading out to environment. The victims are put in one place without handling to the radiation and more information about radiation. It is the destruction of government. They do not give any medicine to

help the victims even they ignore the victims. It means the government does not take a full responsibility to the accident.

The next quotation that supports the situation can be seen from the following quotation:

They have bad diseases, they're invalids, but they don't leave their jobs, they're scared to even think of the reactor closing down. Who needs them now anywhere else? Often they die. In an instant. They just drop—someone will be walking, he falls down, goes to sleep, never wakes up. He was carrying flowers for his nurse and his heart stopped. They die, but no one's really asked us. No one's asked what we've been through. What we saw. No one wants to hear about death. About what scares them. (p.16)

The text describes that there is no attention to the victims. The society assumes that the victims look as they are not human. They scare society. The sentence *they're invalids* explains the victims are not part of society. The victims can not be socialized to another people. The society does not need people who were contaminated by radioactive even let the victims die without carrying to them. The victim's death is fast. The victims are ignored by the government even society itself. The situation can be seen from this sentence *They're afraid of us. They saw we're infectious*(p.39). The text shows that the victims are horrible. This condition describes that the victims are like refugees in their own place. It is supported by the sentences *We all call ourselves Chernobylites. We're from Chernobyl. I'am Chernobylite. As if this is a separate people. A new nation*(p.64) that explains the victims are like an outcast.

The last point is the government does not provide the soldiers with equipment to protect them from radiation. It can be seen from the following quotation:

The most reliable "robots" were the soldiers. They were christened the green robots. Three thousand six hundred soldiers worked on the roof of the ruined reactor. They slept on the ground, they tell of how in the beginning they were throwing straw on the ground in the tents—and the straw was coming from stacks near the reactor. (p.60)

The implied author in this text reveals that by using the power, the government can apply anything they want. The word *most* can be interpreted as something that can be used and controlled easily. It means the government can set the soldiers to do anything. The word *robots* emphasize that the soldiers are a tool and the first line for protecting the government. It also can be interpreted that the soldiers are like a toy for the government. Unfortunately, the soldiers are not protected by the government. They are not given enough supply for saving their life from the radiation. The government wants the soldiers do their orders without caring the soldier.

Another quotation that shows how the government commits the crime can be seen from the following quotation:

Everyday they'd put out a new "Action Update": men are working courageously." We will survive and triumph. They gave me a medal and one thousand rubles.
(p.26)

The text describes that how sly the government to change the topic. They influence the people, especially for the men, to believe the government. The sentence *Everyday they'd put out a new "Action Update": men are working courageously* shows the strategy of government in covering the crime. They try to campaign about the bravery of men. They want to make the men support and work for them. The sentence *We will survive and triumph* explains that men as representative of soldiers do not understand what they face. It shows that the soldiers do not have knowledge about radiation. The government puts them as the first line who are going to die. In this problem, the men do not survive to save the situation after the accident, but this is an action to die accidentally. They are lied by the government. The sentence *They gave me a medal and one thousand rubles* only has function as another strategy to get attention of men.

Briefly, ignoring the victims becomes the next strategies to cover the crime. Through the implied author, it can be revealed the government done toward the victims. The government does not take responsibility to the victims. They ignore the radioactive impact to health. The government does not care about the contaminated area. They neglect to the radioactive that was spreading out into the air, the waters and the plants. They do not pay attention to people who eat the food which is merged by radioactive. They isolate the victim. They do not provide the soldiers with equipment to protect them from radiation. They even do not concern about the welfare of soldiers and their family.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The novel *Voices From Chernobyl* (2005), written by Svetlana Alexievich, reflects criminal jurisdiction. The analysis of this novel deals with the concept of power by Michel Foucault. It refers to the government efforts to cover the crime. It can be seen from the way the government treats the victims after the accident. The government hides the truth of accident and ignores the victims. The government seems not feel guilty and responsibility completely to the victims.

They just say that it was just disaster. They keep telling that the explosion was not serious problem. These incongruities make people realize about there is a criminal jurisdiction in the government.

Note: This article is written based on the Dodi Zuyandi's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A., 1st advisor, and Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Safei, M.A., 2nd advisor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexievich, Svetlana. (2005). *Voices From Chernobyl*. Unites State: Dalkey Archive Press.
- Cutler. L Brian. 2008. *Encyclopedia of Psychology & Law Volume 1 & 2*. California: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Dauksite, Aurelija. (2013). *Hunger Trauma in Herta Muller's The Hunger Angel*. European Academic research
- Kind and Muller. 1980. *The Implied Author: Explication and Use of Controversial Concept*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, Sara. (2003). *Micheal Foucault*. London: Roudledge
- Strickland. Bonnie. 2001. *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice 2nd edition*. United State of America: Gale Group.
- THEFAMOUSPEOPLE. (2016). *Svetlana Alexievich Biography*. THEFEMOUSPEOPLE.com. Web.August 05, 2017.