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The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 83, No. 4. (Jan., 1978), pp. 920-939.

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Social Bases of Independent Public Expression in Communist Societies¹

Jeffrey C. Goldfarb

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Owing to official support of cultural traditions, the critical aspects of Marxism, and the development of limited autonomy in cultural institutions, independent public expression can and does develop in Communist societies despite the will of the political elite. In this paper, independent public expression is shown to be inherent in Communist societies; consequently, the relationship between politics and cultural life in these societies is considerably more complex than observers have posited.

A major failing of many sociological analyses of Communist systems conducted in both the West and the East is that the official sources of information and the official theoretical framework which orders this information too often have been taken at face value. This is as true for the antagonists of the system as it is for the protagonists. Thus, for example, party ideologists have declared the end of class antagonism and have stressed that in the new society the collective good is more important than the good of the individual (see Marcuse 1961). Western observers have analyzed these contentions as if they were central characteristics of the social structure of Communist nations and of the value system of the general population, while, in fact, important class cleavages still exist in Communist nations, where social exhortations have often failed to motivate the citizenry when they are not linked with individualistic benefits. (Thus the recurring problem of low productivity.)

Analysts of public expression in Communist societies have been especially prone to confuse the official viewpoint of social reality with the actual situation. The official conception involves the reduction of all public expression to its political content. Lenin, in his discussion of party organization and party literature, made explicit the party view of public

¹ The term "Communist society" is used here with some reservations. Within these societies, the term "socialist society" refers to the present order, while "communism" refers only to the distant goals of the social order. Yet, using the term "socialist society" would confuse societies directed and controlled by Communist parties with other societies which consider themselves socialist. Thus, the best distinguishing term might be "Communist-party directed and controlled society." This is indeed what I am referring to, but because of the awkwardness of the phrase, I use simply Communist society.

expression in 1905—well before the Communist ascent to power. He declared: “All Social-Democratic literature must become Party literature. Every newspaper, journal, publishing house, etc., must immediately set about reorganizing its work, leading up to a situation in which it will, in one form or another, be integrated into one Party organization or another. Only then will ‘Social-Democratic’ literature really become worthy of that name . . . and merge with the movement of the really advanced and thoroughly revolutionary class” (Lenin 1974). Though Lenin may not have conceived that the practical implications of this statement would become the sanction for the elaborate system of political control of public expression which exists in present-day Communist nations (see Solomon 1974, pp. 163–69), statements such as this one have been cited by party ideologists as the explanation for the compatibility of “progressive” censorship of public expression with freedom, and so constitute the starting point of Communist policy concerning public expression (for a recent Soviet view, see Kunitsyn 1971).

Most sociological studies conducted in the West of public expression in Communist nations do not dispute the official depiction of public expression. These studies focus on the political control of public expression before analyzing the social situations, roles, and functions of officially promoted and officially repressed public expression. Many observers have concentrated their attention on the nature of officially supported public expression (see, e.g., Simmons 1961, pp. 469–78; Hollander 1966, pp. 352–64; and P. Johnson 1965). In their studies the institution of political control is scrutinized, and the function of politically promoted expression is analyzed. Not surprisingly, sanctioned public expression is found to be supportive of the ruling political elite. Other studies have focused on the social situation and function of expression that is officially repressed (see, e.g., Monas 1968, pp. 2–17; Lourie 1974, pp. 328–39). Such studies view political control of public expression as somehow unnatural and enumerate types of underground responses to this unnatural state of affairs. They show how these various responses are “natural” reactions to an oppressive order.

The line between officially supported propagandistic expression and officially repressed dissident expression cannot be drawn as neatly as these studies imply. Public expression supported by the party and state does not necessarily mirror party values, and public expression repressed by the state is not necessarily dissident. Official policies with direct influence on public expression do not simply have the one-dimensional consequence of promoting supportive expression and repressing politically dissident expression.

Friedberg has noted that much of the clandestine expression in the Soviet Union is not politically seditious and is not in opposition to the socialist

order (Friedberg 1968, pp. 18–23). He observes that since public expression which is not seen to be in the interest of the Soviet state and the party is openly censored and denounced, the amateurish, the sophomoric, and the just plain mediocre writers are able to rationalize the suppression of their work as politically motivated.

Similarly, not all officially supported forms of public expression are simply propaganda and media for the inculcation of party ideals. Some officially supported expression, in fact, has forthrightly criticized the existing “socialist” order. Ideals derived from Marxism and stressed by the political elite are used at times as the basis of criticism of party and governmental policy. Prerevolutionary high culture, both national and international, has been made available to the whole of the population for the first time due to party cultural policies and provides alternatives to party-promoted models of cultural expression. Institutions established or reconstituted for the purpose of disseminating “party-minded” expression develop limited but still significant autonomy and disseminate expressions other than party-prescribed ones. In short, the consequences of official policies toward expression are not always in keeping with the party line.

In the analysis that follows, attention is focused primarily on structural factors inherent to Communist systems which foster officially accepted independent expression. The major thesis of this paper is that these factors have been present not only during periods of “liberalization” but also during the “darkest days of Stalinism.” My main concern is not simply to account for how independent expression reaches the public during severe and liberal periods (for a discussion of this, see Goldfarb 1976*b*) but to account for the propensity for independent expression regardless of the nature of the political elite. The goal is to explain the persistence of independent expression not simply as a consequence of some assumed universal human drive for freedom, but rather in terms of specific concrete social and cultural processes.²

PARTY-PRESCRIBED EXPRESSION

With the Communist party’s ascendancy to power, public expression came to depend primarily on the support of institutions controlled by the party. The general situation has developed along the lines Lenin set forth in his

² I am not discounting the existence of a human drive for freedom. Such a drive may or may not be operant. However, to invoke such a drive as an explanation for these phenomena overlooks a more empirically grounded sociological explanation. Whether or not the tendency to seek cultural freedom is universal, the goal of the sociologist should be to explain the tendency as much as possible *sociologically*, i.e., in terms of observable social and cultural structures and processes. The ontological question of man’s drive for freedom need not be a point of contention.

essay "Party Organization and Party Literature."³ Lenin's essay was clearly referring specifically to public expression which comes out in the party's name, but gradually his notion of integrating all party media of public expression into party organization was transformed into the notion that all public expression must be infused with party spirit (*partimost*). Along these lines, Mikhail Sholokhov, during the height of the Stalinist period, declared: "Each of us writes according to the dictates of our hearts, but all our hearts belong to the Party and to the people whom we serve with our art" (cited in Senn 1975). Complete party control and direction of public expression became the general policy.

The policies of the Soviet Union concerning public expression have been adopted in their main outlines by other Communist nations. In some cases the Soviet system was imposed upon unwilling nations; in other cases native Communist elites willingly adopted the Soviet model (see C. Johnson 1970). Even in the People's Republic of China, with its overt antagonism to the Soviet Union, the policies concerning most forms of public expression do not greatly differ from the policies of the Soviet Union (see Laychuk 1975, pp. 66-80).

Control is instituted by lavishing rewards of prestige, economic goods, and authority on those who express party-encouraged themes through party-approved forms and by a system of direct administrative control (see Moore 1954). Creative intellectuals are mostly controlled through rewards (and during severe periods, harsh punishments), while those in the mass media and in the applied sciences are chiefly controlled by administrative means.

The system of control is hierarchical (Simmons 1961, pp. 473-74). In the upper levels of the party, general ideological lines are elaborated, for which directives are issued to appropriate governmental and party offices and published in party organs. Bureaus of censorship and review committees of scientific and cultural unions and institutes function in accordance with these directives, supporting work in progress that conforms to general directives and discouraging and ultimately censoring work that does not.⁴ If some undesirable work manages to reach the public, reviewers or official commentators may denounce it, and all those responsible for its appearance may have publicly to make amends. Publications in the sciences,

³ See, e.g., report of Soviet Cultural Ministers' pronouncement on the role of art in *Polityka*, Warsaw (December 1975).

⁴ The censors' interpretations of party directions may be at variance with the party elite's interpretations. Thus, at times works with little boldness are censored inexplicably, and at other times works of extreme boldness pass the censors untouched. The latter instances, probably less frequent, occur particularly at the cultural periphery, i.e., in small theaters, poetry readings, and so forth, where the audience is not very large. For an analysis of one such peripheral cultural movement, see Goldfarb (1976a).

arts, and in the mass media are controlled in this fashion. The party goal in each of these fields has been the same—to shape cultural development. Certain methods and subjects have come under attack: in the sciences, most prominently genetics; in the arts, almost all 20th-century movements besides party-defined socialist realism. Autonomy of intellectual pursuits has been denied. Science and technology have been supported and glorified as vehicles to transform the backward Soviet economy rather than as enterprises with value in and of themselves (Rabinowitch 1961), and the arts and mass media have been supported and directed as vehicles for the creation of the new Soviet man (Hollander 1966).

The consequences of these policies have not been entirely negative. The policies have provided a broad range of cultural products to a greatly expanded public. Through intensive support of primary and secondary education, illiteracy has been eliminated and publics for literature, the arts, and sciences have been created. Through the generous financial support and the glorification of the arts and sciences, work in these fields has become quite attractive. Through mass distribution and publication of literary and artistic classics and through popularization of the sciences, the national and international cultures have become available to the public. And, through subsidization of the fine arts, theater, publishing houses, and so forth, high culture has been brought within the economic reach of the masses. No doubt much misinformation has been disseminated (e.g., the purported distinction between Marxist and bourgeois sciences) and substantial selections of the cultural past have been ignored (e.g., the works of Kafka became available to the Czechoslovak public only in the 1960s, and then in a limited way), but, nevertheless, the Communist “cultural revolution” has succeeded in bringing culture to the people.

Party policies concerning public expression have promoted art, science, and literature that strictly conform to party guidelines. Yet, party cultural policies foster not only party-prescribed expression but also expression that falls outside the bounds of party prescription and at times is in opposition to party goals. In the following sections, I shall consider the general social and cultural forces that tend to encourage public expressions other than party-prescribed ones and the political implications of such expressions.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND INDEPENDENT EXPRESSION

Frequently, in attacks on “dissent” by party dogmatists, unconventional literary, artistic, and scholarly expressions are described as being vestiges of the prerevolutionary order or under the influence of reactionary tendencies from abroad. Since according to official dogma the state of socialism exists, dissent, like crime (see Hollander 1973, p. 368), cannot be explained with reference to the structure and processes of Communist society. In-

stead, it is attributed to factors outside the Communist system. Such is the case presented in Andrei Zhdanov's address to the Moscow Writers Union on September 17, 1946, which set the stage for the brutal repression of public expression in the arts and sciences in the postwar period. Zhdanov blamed undesirable aspects of Soviet literature, its elements of irony, lyricism, individualism, and its apolitical character, on western influences. He declared: "Some of our literary people have begun to regard themselves not as teachers but as pupils of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois foreign literature. Is such kow-towing fitting for us, Soviet patriots, for us who have built the Soviet order which is a hundred times loftier and better than any bourgeois order? Is kow-towing before the narrow minded petit-bourgeois literature of the West fitting for our progressive Soviet literature, the most revolutionary literature of the world?" (quoted in Mosely 1961). Because much of the public expression in Communist societies is created with reference to cultural spheres that reach beyond the immediate contemporary social situation of Communist societies, there is some truth in such attacks. Distortion begins when party officials imply in their attacks that these cultural spheres are extrinsic to the Communist system.

A primary source of the development of independent public expression lies in the party support of prerevolutionary cultural traditions of Communist nations. The literature, theater, art, and scholarly achievements of prerevolutionary times have been lavishly supported by the Communists. The party leadership strives to demonstrate that the present system is the fulfillment of the promise of the national and international cultural heritage. Even during periods of the severest Zhdanovist policies, the support for the traditional culture of the nation has provided an alternative for creator and audience to the sterile "formula culture" developed by politicians.

During the height of Stalinization, national and international traditions of cultural expression were not only available as an alternative to party-prescribed contemporary culture but more popular than contemporary socialist realistic creations. Thus in 1952, prerevolutionary literature and theater were substantially more popular among the Russian people than party formula works (Denicke 1952).

The availability of traditional works has helped to transform contemporary creative expression. The obvious mediocrity of the bulk of socialist realism, when compared with the works of Tolstoy and Kandinsky, Mickiewicz and Wyspianski, Kafka and Mann, pushes the artist in the direction of the ideals of traditional art manifested in the models of the art works themselves and in the model of the creative process involved.

The works of the postrevolutionary artists are frequently elaborations in terms of present realities of the styles and creative impulses of the ear-

lier works. The cultural heritage respected and supported by the Communist regime serves as a basis for public expression outside the narrow bounds set by party formulas. Religious sentiment and the peasants' love of the land (*The Quiet Don*) and judgments of the fallibility of political leaders (*The First Circle*) and of the ambiguity of righteousness (*Dr. Zhivago*) are explicitly based on traditional literary culture, especially as it was developed by Tolstoy. In *Tango*, the Polish dramatist Mrozek discussed the moral dilemma of the successful revolutionaries, the same revolutionaries whose ascendancy ends Witkiewicz's interwar play, *The Shoemakers*. In student theater, the names and works of 19th-century nationalist poets and young revolutionaries are used as material for contemporary national expression. The student theater group of Szeged, Hungary, recites, sings, and dances to the poetry and name of Petöfi in an unconventional production entitled *Petöfi Rock*, which while appearing to be little more than a succession of marching-band formations, is more significantly a contemporary ritual celebration of the sacred value of national independence and a youthful search for meaning in the national culture.⁵ The theater "STU" of Cracow, Poland, in a modern musical, *Polish Dreambook*, considers the very problem of "Polishness" as it has been treated in traditional Polish literature. Through the images of the great Romantic poets, this theater brings to surface the primordial national myths and imaginatively calls for a national rebirth by drawing upon national traditions but transcending them, and by accepting the Communist order but calling for an overturning of its repressive aspects (Goldfarb 1976a).

Traditional culture supports independent expression not simply as artifact to be studied and developed. The cultural traditions present artists in Communist nations with a model of creation that is markedly richer than the party notion of *partinost* (party spirit). Narrow formulas, artificially imposed as the basis of creation, and politically imposed component parts of creative form (e.g., the necessity to portray a "positive hero") may be overcome when the creative inspiration of the past, with all its richness, is used as an alternative to the purported inspiration of *partinost*. Notions of creative autonomy, criticism of authority, and moral independence are clearly seen to be part of the creative process in traditional culture and are chosen instead of *partinost* by contemporary creators. Creators who make such a choice often find themselves at odds with the state cultural apparatus. Their works, subjected to censorship, often do not find a public legally in their own country. And even when they do, literary

⁵ I observed this play and interviewed some of its creators at the 1973 International Open Theater Festival in Wrocław, Poland, while on an International Research and Exchanges Board Fellowship (1973-74).

works are often difficult to obtain,⁶ drama is presented at the margins of the theatrical world (e.g., Polish student theater; see Goldfarb 1976*a*), and sculpture and painting often must be exhibited privately unbeknownst to the general public.⁷ Nevertheless, the transmission of traditional norms of creative autonomy supports the development of independent public expression.

MARXISM AND INDEPENDENT EXPRESSION

The very cultural symbols on which Communist party rule is based—Marxist ideology, the ideals of socialism, and the promise of a Communist utopia—also support independent public expression.

Marxism is propagated to all members of Communist societies as the most advanced world view. In the schools and in youth clubs, at work and at the workers' clubs, in newspapers and on radio and television, the virtues of Marxism—its method, insights, and achievements, its promise and strengths—are loudly proclaimed. As a result, the Marxist viewpoint, its key concepts, and its utopian vision generally have become an integral part of the world view of the members of Communist societies, including not only those members who support the regime but also those who are most opposed to it (see Inkeles and Bauer 1959).

The intensive teaching and praising of Marxism clearly have been intended to instill in the "masses" a positive attitude toward the accomplishments of the party as the vanguard movement building a socialist society and working for the Communist utopia. Party propaganda at all points identifies true Marxism with the official party position; the party is always pictured as the leading agent of social change along Marxist lines. No doubt, a good number of the members of Communist societies view the party in this manner. There is, though, reason to believe that a substantial portion of the population does not view the party in this way.

Scattered available evidence suggests that the official version of the proper role of the party, the meaning of Marxism, and the nature of socialism and communism have not simply been passively received and accepted by the entire population. Central values apparently have been internalized, but the real accomplishments of the ruling elite have been critically evalu-

⁶The by now classic pattern is to publish very limited editions (e.g., 1,000 copies) practically unavailable to the general public, given the large demand for the unconventional and provocative.

⁷Until his recent exile, the sculptor Ernst Neizvestny exhibited his work in this way (see Berger 1969).

ated.⁸ This pattern has been continuously evident in the cultural expression by intellectuals in Communist societies.

An important part of being an intellectual is to reflect upon the problems of the social milieu, using a specific expertise or talent and a personal world view. By dictating forms and themes and by inculcating the population with the party's views, the Communist party has attempted to direct and control such reflection upon the social milieu. While an immediate consequence of this has been the party's apparent success—creation of socialist realism in the arts and the transformation of journalism and the social sciences into fields of propaganda—simultaneously the seeds have been sown for the birth of critical expression based on party ideals. As in the case for the population in general, the central values of the party become for intellectuals a potential basis for critical judgment of the nature of social reality. Though in periods of severe repression critical judgment is closely controlled, the use of key Marxist ideals is strongly encouraged, and these ideals, because not in and of themselves supportive of party policies, may promote critical as well as supportive cultural creativity. Marxist ideology functions not only in Mannheim's sense as a symbolic system supportive of the status quo but also in the sense specified by Geertz—as a symbolic system that “makes an autonomous politics possible by providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly grasped” (Geertz 1973, p. 219).

Marxism has provided for some of the most outspoken critics of the Communist status quo the framework for their appraisals. Djilas's analysis of the emergence of self-interested bureaucrats as a new ruling class is based explicitly on a Marxist orientation (Djilas 1957). Similarly, the critique of the practices of the Polish United Workers Party (the Communist party) by Jan Kuron and Karol Modzelewski is a Marxist assessment of the subordination of workers' interests to the interests of the ruling party elite (Kuron and Modzelewski 1968, pp. 15–90). Kolakowski's and Schaff's Marxist humanistic explorations are attempts to find a place for the individual in a socialist system (see Kolakowski 1968; Schaff 1965). The Medvedevs, in their anti-Stalinist writings, are involved in a similar quest (R. Medvedev 1971; Z. Medvedev 1969). Each of these writers, among them past party members, believes in the future of socialism and agrees fundamentally with the central values of the party but evaluates critically the party methods utilized to achieve these central values. While the critical appraisals are quite different in each case and even conflict, the

⁸ In the aftermath of the upheavals in Poland in 1956 and during the “Prague Spring” in 1968, some objective public opinion polls and surveys were possible, and they clearly point in this direction (see Nowak 1962; Piekalkiewicz 1972, esp. tables on pp. 4–5, 79–86, 132–46, and 151–52).

basic pattern of appraisal is the same; the performance of the party is measured against its promise.

Thus we have seen that critical appraisal of the Communist status quo in terms of central values of the Communist ideology is a general pattern with particular relevance for critical expression. Now we turn to a more specific dimension of this cultural pattern: the development of critical appraisals of Communist cultural policies and performance in terms of party ideals of cultural revolution.

The cultural revolution that purportedly has taken place in Communist nations has two essential aspects: on the one hand it makes available to a broad range of the population the cultural products of the nation, while on the other it creates a distinctively socialist national culture. In regard to the first aspect, the accomplishments of the Communist cultural policies, as has been mentioned above, are quite impressive, but in regard to the second aspect, the accomplishments are quite questionable. The attempt has been made to create socialist culture by decree. A convoluted Marxist cultural theory, Zhdanovism, was developed as an ideological support for this purported socialist culture. The mediocrity of the cultural product in all fields of art and on occasion in the sciences is all too well known.

Intellectuals pressured to create such a cultural product have been critical of the quality of the product, showing how it fails to measure up to its purported attributes as the quintessence of human culture. The response has been to develop critical theories of socialist culture and to develop a self-conscious "socialist" cultural creation quite different from party-prescribed models.

In *The Necessity of Art*, first published in 1959 in East Germany, Ernst Fischer argued for a broader and more realistic Marxist approach to art, one which would acknowledge that the new socialist art will develop not through artistic dogma laid down by decree but rather "in the process of work, in the free play of movements and methods, in diversity of argument and discussion" (Fischer 1964). Lukács, in his analysis of critical socialist realism, suggests that the development of a true realistic socialist literature, as opposed to the flat creation of Stalinist art, depends on a successful characterization of "the genuine tension underlying the struggle of socialism" (Lukács 1971a, p. 129). Both of these cultural theorists believe that a new socialist art will be born and that the new realities of the socialist order will foster a fundamentally different kind of culture. Yet they see this as developing despite the official cultural doctrine, so that for Fischer the prime example of the new socialist artist is the Soviet sculptor, Ernst Neizvestny, who recently was forced to emigrate, and for Lukács the true socialist artist is exemplified in the works of Solzhenitsyn (Lukács 1971b).

The development of such Marxist theories of socialist culture is of par-

ticular significance in that they help to legitimize creative expressions other than party-prescribed ones. Under Stalin, socialist culture was simply that which the party elite (and ultimately Stalin) defined as such. But with the development of de-Stalinization and splits within the international Communist movement, the question of what is and what is not a remnant of the "cult of personality" became highly problematic. In the more congenial post-Stalinist political environment, persuasive independent Marxist theories of culture helped to undermine restrictive Stalinist cultural policies (see P. Johnson 1965). Thus, even official party dogma in the Soviet Union now admits that a variety of artistic forms are consonant with socialist realism.

Perhaps of even more significance than these general theories is that creators of culture have defended their own work by presenting it as truly socialist. In a debate with Khrushchev, Neizvestny successfully defended himself at a public art exhibition as a true Marxist artist (Berger 1969). Hejduk justifies his student theater as being socialist art, critically appraising the socialist order from the specific point of view of socialist youth (Hejduk 1974; and personal interview with Hejduk conducted by the author). Litwiniec defends as distinctly progressive all theater (including his own creations at Theater Kalambur) that openly portrays both negative and positive aspects of the social milieu, and in this fashion, he, in his capacity as the director of the International Theater Festival in Wroclaw, has supported a great diversity of theatrical expression.⁹

Particularly as voiced through the art forms of literature and theater, claims of cultural revolution and of the advanced nature of party-prescribed culture have come under critical scrutiny. Because the language of political ideology cannot be translated precisely into the language of the arts, a greater degree of latitude is possible than in more direct forms of cultural expression.¹⁰ The literary or theatrical work may ostensibly follow party-prescribed formulas, while irony and satire may be implied through the use of artistic conventions. This has been most evident in the theater of Communist nations, prominently in Czech cabaret theater of the mid-sixties, Polish student theater in the late fifties and early seventies, and some Russian theater in the late sixties.

In light of party claims of cultural revolution, such criticisms of Communist restrictive cultural policies are parallel to the general public's distaste for aspects of the system instituted by the political elite in order to achieve generally approved central values. Because of such a parallel, these

⁹ Based on interviews I conducted with Litwiniec and on a public lecture he gave at the 1974 Lublin Student Theater Festival.

¹⁰ For general treatment, see Read (1951); for treatment specifically in terms of Communist societies, see Marcuse (1961).

criticisms have been perceived by a wide audience as having broad social significance and have played an important political role in the recent histories of those nations as forums for independent political expression (see concluding section of this paper; also see Golan 1970; Goldfarb 1976a; Puzyna 1974, pp. 168–73).

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There are two fundamental types of cultural institutions in Communist societies. Each serves as a support for independent expression. On the one hand, there are cultural institutions which are manned by professionals addressing the general public under the direct control of cultural and educational ministries. Scientific academies, most professional theaters, universities, and literary publishing houses are prominent examples of these. On the other hand, there are cultural institutions not as clearly oriented to the primary goal of the creation and dissemination of culture as such. These institutions are formally tied to some political or social group or practical activity and are not under the direct control of cultural or educational ministries. The newspapers and publishing houses of various professional organizations and of social class organizations, the research institutes of various industries, and the cultural houses of specific localities are examples of this type. The cultural life in the first type tends to be more professional and more involved in “basic” culture. The cultural life in the second type tends to be more amateurish and more involved in culture of specific interests. Yet, labeling the former professional and the latter amateur, or the former basic cultural institutions and the latter applied cultural institutions, would be a mistake. Sometimes the finest professional work is done in the second type of institution, and cultural products of general interest to the whole society are produced in this type of cultural institution. These institutions often afford the intellectual the greatest degree of creative freedom and thus have definite attractions for cultural innovators, both professional and amateur. Keeping this situation in mind, we may refer to the first type as *primary cultural institutions* because of their direct ties with central party departments and governmental cultural ministries and because theirs is the primary function of cultural production for the whole of society, and the second type *ancillary cultural institutions* because of their indirect relationship with central departments and ministries and direct dependence upon other organizations which do not have the production of culture as their primary task for economic and political support, and because theirs is the ancillary function of cultural production for specific sectors of society. In both the primary and ancillary cultural institutions, the ideologically inspired cultural directions and controls meet resistance, but the type of resistance is different and there-

fore the distinction between the two types is important for the analysis of the social supports of independent cultural expression.

In primary cultural institutions the chief function is the creation and dissemination of culture. Directives are received from higher-level cultural departments and ministries, and the main instrumental tasks of cultural institutions—creation of new art, presentation of performing arts, conducting scientific research, and dissemination of knowledge—must be performed in compliance with these directives. Yet, the association in these institutions is based on cultural activity, not compliance with political directives. These institutions, though formed or reformed to put into practice party cultural policies, serve as potential institutional bases for cultural tendencies that may undermine party cultural policies.

While some kind of cultural work must be done in compliance with party policies, the orientations involved in such work often conflict with party policies. Unless *partimost* becomes the sole basis of culture (which is probably an impossibility), norms of cultural activity reaching beyond the boundaries of party policy and the ideals fostered by central party propaganda may come into conflict with official directives.

The interaction of artists, scientists, and leaders in unions, institutes, and academies is based upon their professional competence and not politics. Here, political policies are evaluated in terms of professional criteria and may be judged as being in conflict with cultural work. Thus, party-formed and controlled writers' unions in the Soviet Union (see P. Johnson, 1965) and Poland (see Gomori 1973) have served as platforms for denouncing restrictive cultural policies. Beyond such extraordinary occurrences, the conflict between cultural work and cultural policy is an underlying aspect of life in cultural institutions. My interviews with artists, actors, writers, and social scientists and my observation of theater in Poland indicate that a common attitude of the cultural intelligentsia is to consider party cultural directives and censorship as obstacles to be circumvented, obstacles antithetical to their main creative task. Observers of culture in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe noted such attitudes as part of institutional life of the social sciences (Mosely 1961), theater (Salisbury 1968*a*, pp. 188–200), literature (Salisbury 1968*b*, pp. 166–87), and the arts (Kramer 1968, pp. 201–19). These attitudes may be suppressed, yet in primary cultural institutions they cause an underlying tension which may potentially support expressions other than party-prescribed ones.

The situation in ancillary cultural institutions is more complicated. Support does not come directly from high-level governmental ministries and party departments of culture but rather from organizations based on locality, social class, and industry. Ancillary cultural institutions are controlled by and must serve the interest of these organizations, as the primary cultural institutions must comply with high-level cultural directives.

The result is not the complete avoidance of party control but instead a five-way crosscurrent of potentially conflicting sociocultural orientations within these institutions. These include the same conflicting orientations that exist within primary cultural institutions—that is, the conflicts between (1) the values and requisites of cultural work, (2) the values and cultural policies of the party and governmental ministries, (3) the perceptions and demands of high-level governmental and party directives concerning the function of the supporting organization or social group, (4) the orientations of those within the sponsoring organization concerning its function and its relationship with the cultural institution it supports, and (5) the orientations of those within the ancillary cultural institution concerning their special role in society. The actual working out of these potentially conflicting orientations depends on the nature of party policy, the supporting organization, and the cultural institution being supported.

Ancillary cultural institutions generally have not been studied in the West. Some consequences of organizing cultural institutions in this fashion have been noted; for example, in the Soviet Union, scientific research which is closely aligned with industrial enterprises, as in the West, is more technically oriented than in basic research institutes (Rabinowitch 1961), and theater connected with cultural houses and factories is freer to experiment (Zaitsev 1975, pp. 119–28). Yet, the analysis of the potentially conflicting sociocultural orientations outlined above has not been systematically studied. This is probably because of the poverty of data available concerning the functioning of these institutions. In another paper, I have analyzed one such cultural institution and have shown that the nature of the relationship of the supporting organization, the Polish Student Organization, with the party and with Polish student theater has provided for this theater a great degree of latitude for cultural expression (Goldfarb 1975). Yet, it must be made clear here that for this to be the case, the interaction of the five sociocultural orientations mentioned above must be favorable. Party control and direction of the supporting organization and of the ancillary cultural group must be favorable. Party control and direction of the supporting organization and of the ancillary cultural group must not be too tight, and the sociopolitical orientations of the supporting organization and ancillary cultural institution must be parallel. If this is not the case, restrictions may be even more confining. When party supervision is too tight, as it was during the Stalinist period in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, ancillary cultural institutions become propaganda institutions for the transmission of party values to every sector of the society. When the orientations of those in the supporting organization and the ancillary cultural group are not parallel, the cultural group may be then subjected to harsh restrictions from the supporting organization as well as from the party. An example of this is a professional Polish theat-

rical group which chose to work with the support of a factory in the provincial city of Pulawy with the hope of having more creative freedom than in Warsaw where its members had graduated from the Drama College. Instead of acquiring more freedom for artistic innovation, the sponsoring organization demanded not only compliance with party conventions but also straightforward entertainment. Nevertheless, the existence of the underlying conflicting orientations in secondary cultural institutions may potentially interact to support cultural expressions other than party-prescribed ones.

INDEPENDENT EXPRESSION AND POLITICS

The traditional analysis of cultural life in Communist societies explains cultural expression simply in terms of the changing nature of the political elite.¹¹ We have seen above that this approach overlooks important social and cultural processes which sustain a cultural life quite apart from the one prescribed in the party elites. In this section we will see how my approach helps explain more fully the effects of the changing political context on cultural expression. I begin this task by considering the changing fortunes of cultural expression in Poland.

The Stalinist regime in Poland fell in 1956. Since the nature of the political elite is a primary factor which determines whether independent expression reaches the public, one would expect 1956 to mark an all-important turning point for public independent expression. Indeed, the cultural life of postwar Poland can be divided into two distinct periods—the Stalinist period and the post-Stalinist period. Polish cultural life during the first period was patterned on a model of Soviet cultural life. During the second period, considerable freedoms have been granted Polish artists and intellectuals, and a distinctive Polish postwar culture has begun to flourish. The analysis in this paper can help to explain why such a culture did emerge with the weakening of the Stalinist regime and in fact contributed to its weakening. If we see the Stalinist regime's totalitarian control as the only obstacle to independent expression, we would expect such expression to have emerged only after the regime fell. Yet, the social bases for independent public expression began to develop well before the Stalinist regime fell.

In the period from 1948 to 1955, much of Polish high culture was repressed. Nevertheless, one of the first independent voices heard publicly in an officially supported forum came from young students who were the primary targets of the political propaganda of that period. They did so in student satirical cabaret theater. The first critical productions were pre-

¹¹ The reason for this approach is clear. Communist societies are highly politicized, and the nature of cultural life does tend to mirror the changing nature of the political elite.

sented to the public in 1954, a full two years before the Stalinist regime fell (and indeed the preparation for the presentation of the first work began during the Summer of 1953).

These early student cabarets were themselves unanticipated consequences of the party policies of promoting "socialist" culture. This is evident from examining any of the early revues of the Student Satirical Theater (Studencki Teatr Satyrikow). In its first revue (premiere, May 2, 1954), this theater, the first and most renowned of an independent student theater movement that has survived and flourished to this day, produced one skit which forthrightly criticized a grotesque academic schedule filled with unnecessary political activities. This skit was the first public questioning in theater of the overpoliticized nature of the university, and by implication of the overpoliticized nature of Polish society as a whole. In later works their satirical edge sharpened. Consistently the same technique was used—taking manifestations of party ideology and propaganda and, through ironic treatment, representing them satirically.

The Student Satirical Theater and other student theaters are ancillary cultural institutions supported by the Polish Student Organization (PSO). As the patron of student theater, the PSO has provided and continues to provide the institutional basis for the independence of student theater. The PSO was founded in 1950 as an explicitly apolitical student organization. The party created this type of organization in order to reach and control a wider range of students than they could through the extremely politicized Union of Polish Youth. This was necessary because of the students' adherence to orientations based on "prerevolutionary" cultural traditions, which were negatively disposed toward the new socialist order. The goal of the party was to involve students in a party-backed organization and thus gain their sympathies. Yet, the consequence of establishing such an organization was to provide an institutional base of support for an apolitical and even politically critical public mode of expression (see Goldfarb 1976*a*). From 1954 to 1956, when the regime was still essentially Stalinist, student theater provided a unique stage for critical expression to reach students and broader audiences (Puzyna 1974). The basis for this expression lay primarily in the unanticipated consequences of the regime's propaganda and in the institutional structure established by the regime.

Until 1956 there was a great deal of resistance to any kind of independent expression in Poland. After 1956 this resistance loosened considerably but did not disappear. The central point is that the drive to express independent ideals publicly was constantly reinforced even during the most repressive years. Thus, when intensive repression was lifted, a new generation of Polish artists and intellectuals, who had been subjected to constant propaganda during their formative years, was able to develop an important forum for critical political discussion.

The importance of the analytic scheme presented in this paper is even clearer when we try to understand how the social bases of independent expression enable such expression to reach the public even though the direction of the general political situation seems to make this unlikely (for a discussion of strategies used to achieve this, see Goldfarb 1976*b*). This indeed was the case in the early seventies in Poland. At that time the judgment of outside observers was that the situation for intellectuals and artists had improved only slightly with the major political changes. It was maintained that the new regime, headed by Edward Gierek, was able to keep independent intellectuals and artists quiet by exercising fairly repressive cultural policies while improving the economic lot of the masses of Poles. The decrease in the number of books published, plays produced, and major research projects initiated was cited as proof of this observation (see Dean 1974). It was precisely at that time, however, that student theater again produced highly critical works for the first time since the late fifties (Goldfarb 1976*a*). In order to account for this development, the social bases of independent public expression must be considered.¹²

Public expression may directly reflect the will of the party, but for this to be so, the bases of independent expression must be quite weak. The base that seems to determine most effectively the variability among Communist societies in this regard is the support of national and international traditions: the nature and strength of national and international cultural traditions vary tremendously, while the support of socialist culture and the institutional structure of culture are found in all Communist societies. In societies where no substantial national high cultural tradition exists and where ties to international cultural traditions do not now exist and have not existed historically, the party can most easily dominate public expression. This is evident in Bulgaria and Albania and in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union. In contrast, in societies where there is a strong national cultural tradition, party domination of public expression is most difficult. The generally freer cultural situation in Poland and Hungary in Eastern Europe and the Baltic republics within the Soviet Union manifests this.¹³

The preceding suggests that one very important way in which Communist parties can effectively undermine independent expression is by ma-

¹² This is done in detail in my dissertation, "The Sociological Implications of Polish Student Theater" (Goldfarb 1977).

¹³ The positive relationship between tradition and cultural autonomy is not confined to Communist societies. Edward Shils has analyzed this relationship as it has been manifested in Great Britain (see Shils 1958). While Shils shows that in a Western society traditions of autonomy promote liberty, in Communist societies even authoritarian traditions can and do support independent expression in that they provide alternatives to the party conception of culture. I develop this point in terms of the Polish Catholic tradition in my dissertation (Goldfarb 1977).

nipulating the national and international traditions. The most striking case of this is in East Germany where the continuity of the national cultural tradition, far from being central to the party's cultural policies, has been explicitly denied for most of the history of the German Democratic Republic. Though other reasons surely exist for the basic uniformity of public expression in the GDR,¹⁴ the fact that national cultural traditions have been deemphasized may have been the crucial determining factor of this uniformity. Especially suggestive in this regard is that two years after an apparent major shift from overt avoidance to cautious recognition in East Germany's orientation toward its national traditions (see *New York Times*, June 22, 1975, p. 6) a major flurry of independent public expression has become evident (see, e.g., *New York Times*, November 5, 1976, p. 1).

Before concluding, one last issue concerning the relationship between the social bases of independent expression and politics must be addressed, namely, the influence of these social bases on political change. Numerous times in Communist societies bold independent expression preceded major political events. In 1954 an independent Polish student theater movement began; in 1956 the Stalinist regime in Poland fell. In 1955 the Petöfi circle, a public forum for independent debate, was founded; in 1956 there was a major political revolution in Hungary. In 1968, a production of *Forefathers' Eve* which explicitly expressed anti-Soviet sentiment was presented; following its forced closing a major student revolt occurred. Early in 1970 two Polish student theater productions critical of Gomulka were created. In December 1970, Gomulka was forced to resign as a consequence of a major workers' revolt. In these cases unconventional political views became public as a consequence of the social and cultural processes discussed in this paper. Further, in some such cases, as with the early Polish student theater, the Petöfi circle, and the production of *Forefathers' Eve*, there is evidence indicating that broader political changes were facilitated by independent public expression (see, e.g., Golan 1970; Goldfarb 1976a; Puzyna 1974). This suggests that the social bases of independent expression analyzed in this paper may promote independent expression, which then becomes a basis of political action, and perhaps they encourage political action by creating zones of autonomy and orientations which promote more directly not only independent expression but also independent political action.

An analysis of this is beyond the immediate task of this paper. It suffices to conclude that if the social bases of independent expression are indeed also bases of independent political action, we have in the theoretic-

¹⁴ Such as the self-selection process made by German intellectuals in the postwar period, and the availability of West German broadcasts in 70% of East Germany.

cal arguments presented here the beginnings of a systematic political sociology of Communist societies that goes beyond the confusions discussed in the introduction to this paper.

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