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STEFAN MORAWSKI

## CENSORSHIP VERSUS ART, PROS AND CONS: TYPOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This essay attempts merely to sketch a few preliminary reflections on the general relationship between censorship of the political type and art. First of all it must be pointed out that, whereas the history of censorship's interventions is an old one, the history of resistance to it is relatively new. Our own culture, versatile and dynamic in character, provides a rather instructive case in point. In our culture, despite the fact that Socrates preferred to take hemlock rather than abandon his convictions and give up his teaching activities, and despite the many excommunicated and executed heretics in the Middle Ages, until the time of Gutenberg and the Reformation censorship as a phenomenon went quite unnoticed by the majority, and thus was normal. The self-censorship of the officials and the clergy, the universal pressure of the efficiently indoctrinated state religion, the fact that in the opinion of the majority, and among them the clerics, individuality was a rather negative value (for example "divine" Leonardo was the product of the late Renaissance, and the notion of genius did not emerge until the middle of the eighteenth century), and finally the absence of any serious threats to Church and civil authorities prior to the discovery of the printing press and the era of open schisms (Luther and Calvin), resulted in the fact that the ruling group looked upon censorship simply as a preventive measure and that protest against it was virtually unknown.

A censor (etymologically speaking) was the one who prepared authoritative evaluation of how to act in a given situation in life. It was so understood by the Romans when they established the office of censorship in 443 B.C. The censors, as *arbitri populi*, defined the moral obligations of the citizen toward society (government). This state of affairs was tolerated until a conflict between the offices supported by the authority of the rulers or the Pope and the views of the liberated, somewhat autonomous intelligentsia led to a difference of opinions. Hence the dramatic case of Galileo, hence the arguments of Spinoza in his *Tractatus Theologico-*

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\* This essay is part of a larger study, a segment of which entitled "Politicians versus Artists" will appear in *Arts in Society* (Madison, Wisconsin), the Fall-Winter 1973-4 issue. A section on history of censorship in socialist conditions has not been published as yet.

*Politicus* concerning the freedom to express one's convictions publicly in speech and in writing.

Spinoza's *Tractatus* appeared in 1670, yet the historians date the beginning of the history of the anti-censorship movements rather to Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644). Milton fought the specter of the Inquisition and the Council of Trent, defending the right to publish texts expressing views different from those put forward and propagated by the ruling elite. He maintained that government officials should rule, but should not block a free circulation of thought, that there was nothing easier than to choose a bad censor (Stationer), who did not understand very much, yet was given the power of sole judge, and that even if a censor was wise, he could still be mistaken, and, worst of all, by making it impossible for the various opinions to circulate freely, a censor inhibited the search for truth. Milton's arguments — valid until this day — were used by many later writers and artists. It must be remembered, however, that in his address to the Parliament, Milton himself suggested banning the publication of Papal propaganda pamphlets, for he considered them to be highly harmful. Thus the aura of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* affected its rabid adversaries as well. And when we realize that not only Plato (in his *Republic*), but also — despite the arguments of Milton, Spinoza — Rousseau were among the adherents of censorship, the situation looks somewhat more complex.

Four arguments are generally used in defense of censorship; they appear separately because of the specific intentions of those who stress the necessity of censorship. The fourth is generally used in each of the other three versions as a reinforcing argument.

The first argument: Censorship is indispensable to protect the Supreme Idea (any one) from its actual or potential enemies as well as from heretics. The Supreme Idea, taught and instilled in everyone from early childhood, is constantly exposed to the danger of distortion and attack for various reasons: either because of the weakness of human nature (its propensity toward evil and rebellion, or just plain unruliness), or because of shameful but attractive examples abroad; or else because of some specific views or interests of specific persons and groups within the system who can not and do not want to follow the recommended doctrinal order, or finally because of faulty exegesis and interpretation of the doctrine. This is why the Supreme Idea in the proper, officially sanctioned version is continually preached anew; the teaching is conducted by special guardians of ideological order and doctrinal purity. Behind them stand institutions established by the hierarchy — from the top of the structure down to, among others, censorship.

Since the spokesmen for the ideology and the highest administrative machine are guardians of Absolute Truth, the principle of subordination

of the artist is merely a logical, sensible consequence. They hold that it is not the artist's business to bother about the problem of organizing social order, whereas the intervention of the Guardians of Absolute Truth in the affairs of the artist, especially concerning the content of his work, is not only permitted but deemed quite natural. The necessity of administrative protection of the Supreme Idea can therefore be explained more or less automatically. Undermining or distorting the Supreme Idea threatens social discipline which is based on uniformity of views. For the spiritual *ordo mundi* is to serve the function of maintaining and uniting the entire life of a given society. Any views that differ from or openly oppose the officially accepted Supreme Idea (which constitutes the foundation of the prevalent doctrine) are withdrawn from public circulation. For as well as ignorance, the tempting need to be different, and the spirit of contradiction, no less than open hostility toward the system (regardless for what reason) may provide fertile ground for those views and in effect disintegrate society. Thus censorship in such a case is not merely a *malum necessarium*, but, on the contrary, it is an institution that works for the good in the same way — although by different means — as the school, the court of law, or the church. In fact, it would be an obvious wrong to reject this administrative-doctrinal instrument so helpful in weeding out the spiritual garden by discarding ideological discrepancies, etc.

The second argument: Censorship is inevitable in protecting the ruling apparatus against criticism. The correct policy, it is said, is the most effective policy. And effectiveness is best achieved when ideology is treated as something purely instrumental, when moral considerations, if any, are nothing but a sham, when it is imperative to curtail any anarchic drive toward emphasizing the differences between people and social groups, to make uniform all opinions as well as institutions, and to subordinate them to one legislative and executive center. Maximum efficiency in the functioning of brute force must be the unswerving political prerequisite. The more obviously inviolable the authority of the ruler, the more durable his power. And authority is most securely established by ruthlessness in destroying enemies as well as skeptics, unbelievers, or constant malcontents. A censorship agency is one of the forms of total control which a single ruler or a ruling élite can have over a society. While in the previous case the accepted Absolute Truth is a command, here the political imperative becomes compulsory "truth."

While in the first instance the artists are — at least theoretically — included in some spiritual participation, because of the common doctrinal corpus, here they must simply obey the various political decrees of the rulers. A constant review of their activities — particularly if they become involved in dialogue with the genuine realities of

their country — is as natural as searching a criminal suspect, and in these conditions most citizens are suspects. Here, therefore, the police-like function of censorship is practiced openly. There have been and still are political systems which have always, or only at certain periods, used the arguments and justifications of the first category to disguise the police-like, purely pragmatic mechanism of the censorship of the press and artistic and scholarly activities. For it is one thing to accept as a point of reference a specific Supreme Idea which may, but does not have to be synonymous with a police system, and which, additionally, in a system based on that Idea, only in a later phase becomes a convenient front for the rulers as they begin to fight among themselves for power, and it is quite another thing to cynically apply force as a politically indispensable principle.

The third argument: Censorship is necessary not in general, but only in specific moments in history. In case of a national war — for the protection of the population, and in case of a social revolution — to secure already gained advantages, it is unavoidable that those citizens who because of their cosmopolitan or reactionary views are prepared actively to demobilize public opinion must be periodically denied their civil liberties. For, the spokesmen for this view of censorship insist that while free speech is of unquestionable value, so is national independence and realization of social progress. What is more, these latter values are of higher order in the particular circumstances we are now discussing.

Even if it is assumed that only the independent existence of a given nation or a revolutionary social transformation can assure the maximum in civil liberties, that axiomatic system of values is reversed in the face of a historical conflict of opposing forces, of aggressor versus victim, revolutionary versus defender of the old order. Censorship, therefore, is a necessary evil which, to paraphrase Goethe, becomes transformed into good. It strengthens the fundamental values without which the existence of a free society is unthinkable. In other words, here censorship proceeds with the aim of finally eliminating itself. The first argument also refers to a conflict of values, but there the conflict is a fictitious one, since the Supreme Idea is considered to be the only authoritative value and everything else only pretends to achieve axiological dignity. In the case of the second argument, values do not count at all; at most it may be said that the immediate effectiveness of the authoritarian police state rule is seen as the only "good." In the third case, however, the conflict of values is authentic and dramatic in character: censorship is involved in that conflict in the same sense as is killing in self-defense, necessary cruelty in the face of cruelty, or the use of force.

The fourth argument: Censorship is unquestionably needed for

educational reasons. Art is not an ideologically irrelevant phenomenon. Its influence on man's behavior has been, is, and will be most significant. Because art — particularly serious art — represents, among other things, specific moral, religious, and political attitudes, the rulers of a country have both the right and duty to intervene in artistic activity. It would be unthinkable, for example, to remain indifferent toward gangsters or toward the idea of arranging a society in which murder, dishonesty and theft were generally accepted. Or it is argued that one should not tolerate, for example, systematic mockery of all authority, social discipline, or the responsibility of the individual toward the society, the nation, the human race. In other words, censorship should sift out artistic utterances in order to reject those which are in conflict with *humanitas*, with the moral and political intuition of each of us. That intuition, in fact, defends itself spontaneously against elements of anarchy and anomie, but behind the intuition must stand the law. Specific decrees of wise authorities rationalize common intuitions, and censorship in turn puts these decrees into being to prevent spreading of destructive attitudes which defy and endanger the community of man. In the fourth argument, vaguely defined universal human values are the central point of reference; among these values, freedom for individual rebellion is subordinate to the principle of harmonious coexistence, thus it is presumed that all human activity should be government-regulated. This kind of argument, of course, applies to democratic, not authoritarian systems, although the latter eagerly refer to the educational function of art and, in the face of it, to the particular responsibility of the politicians for the general form of a given culture.

What arguments can and ought to be used against the above stated positions?

In the case of the first position, the very premises must be put to question. What the spokesmen for this view consider self-evident, namely the existence of a Supreme Idea which secures once and for all an ideal, the best of all possible worlds, is what particularly demands critical reflection. It is not accidental that this type of argumentation is reminiscent of the reasoning of the Fathers of the Church, and the social system aimed at — of theocracy, and that art is censored along the principles applied for centuries in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* that covered works of art, for example, during the period of the Counter-Reformation. Almost all the authoritarian systems of modern times were and are anti-religious and anti-clerical; this does not change the fact, however, that the hierarchic structure of the functioning of power, the attitudes of cultural policies and consequently the mechanics of culture are in both instances — despite different ideological premises and

different contexts — analogical. Therefore the counter-arguments are identical with those used in the beginning of the modern age when under the pressures of the Church, Milton in *Areopagitica* and Spinoza in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* were demanding respect for civil liberties, and almost a century later, in 1737, Lord Chesterfield attacked censorship of the theater established by the government of Walpole allegedly for the protection of public morality against pornography, but in reality to eliminate social criticism (*The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay). Chesterfield said that the principle of freedom of expression must never be abused because it is impossible to find authentic truth in conditions of censorship, because the very basis of the democratic system is undermined if public opinion is stifled in any area of life, and finally because such means of combatting immorality or social criticism are ineffective anyway. Chesterfield's intervention in the House of Lords was based on the principle of the then prevalent liberalism, according to which the rights of the individual were sacred, and the state could merely perform the function of guardian of those rights.

A century later a young writer — from quite a different position, from a revolutionary-democratic approach — took a similarly negative view of the matter of censorship. In "Debates on the Freedom of the Press" (an article published in May 1842 in the *Rheinische Zeitung*), and in an essay written somewhat earlier that same year, entitled "Remarks on the New Prussian Instructions on Censorship", which did not appear until a year later in Switzerland, and precisely because of censorship, the young revolutionary essentially wrote as follows: The law says that censorship should not interfere with the search for truth, whereas censorship practices, at odds with the constitution, prove that even a more liberal tendency in controlling public utterances makes the search for truth impossible. The law advises censorship to protect the individuality of the writers, whereas censorship practices bring uniformity not only to the content, but even to the style of the author's works. The official color is a flat, dull gray. The widely imposed wisdom — fallible as all wisdoms — is the wisdom of the state, and the ruled are expected to remain forever humble. Anyone who writes is *a priori* a suspect — if only for engaging in thought which is not the officially accepted thought; the prescribed and only virtue is loyalty, and if it is not clearly exhibited, the government, through censorship, realizes its "right of revenge."

And so the relationship between censorship and literary production is full of contradictions: the writer is encouraged to have full trust in a ruler who is totally distrustful of the writer; the writer must be humble and meek, while the ruler shamelessly imposes on him his viewpoint as the only valid viewpoint possible. If the right to speak

the truth is left only to court jesters, official literary production becomes totally artless, lame and quite mediocre, without esprit or character. Karl Marx, the young author of the above mentioned articles, was planning for a future free society, which would realize for each individual — in a society of common laws, duties and interests — the opening of a rich life in accordance with his possibilities, rather than just a formal guarantee of individual expression in a society in which — according to the views of Chesterfield — everyone remains in his place with an unchanging distribution of property.

The differences between the views of Chesterfield and Marx are reflected also in the case of censorship. The first appealed primarily to the conscience of his colleagues, the other maintained that "If this sort of dictatorship were loyal it would dissolve itself . . . The real cure would be the abolition of censorship. It is a bad institution, but institutions are more powerful than man."<sup>1</sup> These radical conclusions resulted not only from the fact that Marx was commenting on the state of affairs in authoritatively ruled Prussia and Chesterfield in liberal England. In Marx's "Debates . . ." we read a general remark referring to all social systems, namely that "censorship is a form of slavery . . . Laws that make the *sentiment* of the acting person the main criterion, and not the *act as such*, are nothing but *positive sanctions of lawlessness*."<sup>2</sup>

Disregarding the well established superiority of the moral and political principles of democracy, let us pause in our counter-arguments on the question of the effectiveness of censorship from the point of view of the doctrine surrounding the Supreme Idea. For young Marx rightly pointed out that censorship not only fails to eliminate ideological struggle (it merely transforms it into combat between a helpless principle and an unprincipled power), or to remain a critical examination "monopolized by the government" but, because of its privileges, because it is a misguided means of police-type control, it revolutionizes a society much more surely than its absence would do. Actually, if one looks at the functioning of the principles based on the Supreme Idea and a system subordinate to it, one is struck by the fact that one small crack in the dam is enough to start a deluge. The more monolithic a social structure (and its equivalent social consciousness) becomes, the more vulnerable it is to disturbances caused by the increasing incompatibility between the idea and reality, between theory and practice. Such a process is unavoidable. And the segment of society which with the help of censorship had been effectively indoctrinated can no longer think for itself; with its mind captive, it cannot make an about-face when

<sup>1</sup> *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. by Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat. New York, 1967, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

the rulers need it most. Those who had resisted indoctrination, remain in a state of mute "armed readiness." This applies to an even larger degree to artists and authors. To paraphrase Marx one could say that even those among them who have good voices become merely eunuchs. Or, they produce fake art without themselves believing in what they write, paint, compose, etc. A cheerful court jester then becomes a gruesome, purely official court jester. The Supreme Idea, even if it had some following in the beginning, even if some of its authors had given it a certain impetus, deteriorates in conditions of monopoly. It has only formally official followers, but its enemies — whose number increases with time — are authentic. The hypocrisy of most of its official promoters and glorifiers make it a dead banner.

One could, despite everything, answer that censorship helps achieve the goals set by the government which guards the sacredness of the Supreme Idea, namely by maintaining social discipline, ideological unity, law and order, and protecting the society at large from harmful information. This argument too is incompatible with facts. Such an ideological unity is at most superficial, illusory. People accustomed to double-talk, even if they do not favor other ideologies, are certainly hostile or indifferent to what is repeated in official pronouncements.

Artists, who have established for themselves "internal censorship", will consequently, no matter how hard they try, defend the Supreme Idea in a luke-warm, conventional fashion. Other writers will use a special, allusive language. For conditions of censorship produce a specific semiotic system alongside the system of stereotypes and slogans of the officially circulating ideology. This special system is decipherable to the intended audience as well as to the government. Censorship, grown sensitive to this situation, eliminates certain fragments of publications, plays, films, but cannot catch everything. What is more, the pathological imperfections of this kind of cultural functioning may be seen clearly in the fact that even a silence on certain specific subjects becomes significant, or, that some elements of certain works or sometimes the whole work (perceived as metaphor) which in their artistic intent had a totally different meaning, take on political significance. Everyone knows immediately about works that have been banned; their authors, sometimes wrongly, are looked upon as martyrs. Their authority is much greater than the authority of writers who are published.

Finally, with today's flow of information, despite local control over publications, plays, art, the majority of the population may maintain contact with ideas from outside which are openly hostile to the system. Precisely the ideologically guarded existence of censorship, not its absence, makes these ideas attractive. It seems then, that censorship, despite its seemingly immediate outward successes, in reality works against the

Supreme Idea and the system which constitutes its foundation. Criticism from within, particularly by thinkers authentically engaged in the problems of regenerating the Supreme Idea or maintaining a dialogue with it, in order at least partially to preserve the virtues it might have and to point them out in their full splendor to the people, would in the long run be more advantageous to the ruling group than spiritual enslavement. But a system based on the sacredness of the Supreme Idea is doomed to ultimate self-elimination. Any deviation from the actual interpretation of the Idea is a severely punishable heresy. To admit that the officially propagated truth is not an Absolute but rather an *ordo societatis* solution, better and more profound than some others only in certain ways, is unacceptable. The dogmatic structure of the doctrine excludes any authentic criticism of its status quo. The ruling apparatus which has usurped the right to judge what is good and what is bad, in time will refer to the gradually petrifying Supreme Idea only for propaganda reasons. Civil liberties — to return once more to Marx — are punished, while lawlessness and illicitness are a law, a normal state of affairs. And when the word "freedom" is used, it is understood in a rather peculiar way: to follow without question the spiritual (and political) rules based on non-criticism of the Supreme Idea.

I have paid particular attention in the counter-arguments to the first argument, because they apply all along the line also to point number two. In fact, those people who are for censorship in a regimented society do not really expect any kind of discussion. To them the principle of the absolute rule by a dictatorship is not a matter for discussion anyway. In the first argument a certain conflict of views is still possible, while in the second the confrontation is exclusively between the censorship as the officially sanctioned means of repression and any utterance not obedient to the rulers. Here they do not invent any cover-up of the tyranny by conflicts between the Idea (representing the only officially propagated "spiritual freedom") and the anarchic, destructive freedom (which is in fact a common critical search for the truth about the best possible social system. Counter-arguments in the second case need not, however, limit themselves simply to contrasting the principles of a democratic, free society with the motives of open tyranny. First of all because history has proven beyond any doubt the superiority of the principles and practice of the non-authoritarian societies, since they have been leaders in the process of human development. Secondly, and this is closely tied with the previous point, the ineffectiveness of censorship in conditions of a police state is exhibited theoretically and practically by numerous facts. The façade appears immaculate, but behind it one can see the processes of deterioration of all phases of social life. Apathy, inertia, and corruption among the majority of the

population, mutual mistrust, intrigues, and treason in the ruling circles; authentic or fictitious conspiracies that bring about a state of potential revolt; a constant terror which leads to the enslavement of the rulers as well as the enslaved masses; art and literature cease to exist, or may be found only among flatterers or craftsmen; cultural progress slows down to a minimum. The example of the police state clearly reveals, therefore, what is disguised by the relatively lively ideological activity in a society guided in accordance with the Supreme Idea, namely: *that it is not the artists and writers who are at the source of social unrest, but the reality itself; that censorship is intolerant not only of the spiritual freedom of a specific small group of people, but of the whole captive society; that censorship is in no way a symptom of the strength of the ruling group, but rather of its actual weakness and its hidden fears.* In this case as well as in the previous one any counter-arguments are a waste of time. Tyrannical rule by a police state will cynically establish censorship as an implement to enslave the people in order to maintain power rather than to help society blossom forth. This does not, however, undermine the above stated arguments. It would be unthinkable for a despotic government to tolerate civil liberties, but then an openly despotic government has little chance in our modern times of surviving among the civilized societies which are racing toward a material and spiritual prosperity throughout the world.

As for the third argument, the only way to counter it is to refer to the social-historical praxis. The counter-arguments are based on the fact that the actual processes mentioned by the spokesmen for censorship should be in *themselves* a sufficient defense either in case of a national liberation war or a social revolution. For if history itself indicates that independence is a sacred principle and that revolutionary changes produce the desired social justice, if, as a result of this evidence, the great majority of people actively participate in liberation movements or support them fully, why bother to apply repression in the name of freedom. The counter-arguments thus lead to the conclusion that neither pacifist ideas spread during a national war, nor anti-revolutionary ideas proclaimed during social upheavals, can endanger law and order, and there are not enough persuasive reasons that would justify preventive restriction on civil liberties.

The supporters of temporary censorship may answer that during the specific periods when the fate of the country or the social progress is being decided, even just a few public utterances might activate enemy forces or demobilize those whose participation might be indispensable. Such a danger can not, of course, be measured precisely, but history indicates that to underestimate it, especially in such key moments, may prove fatal, they might say. It is better, then, to overreact than to un-

derestimate them. In addition, aware of their responsibility for the survival of the country, or the victory of the revolutionary forces, as for the quality of the society which, after all, they are saving from the invader or are to establish after the revolution, the rulers feel capable of letting up on censorship at a proper moment. For they treat this institution as an instrument not because they want to maintain or grab power, but because of their ideological aims. Although history is on the side of the people fighting for their freedom (the workers and peasants), societies are always divided into classes and in decisive moments conflicts of interests grow out of proportion. As for national unity, in this case also conflicting stands might come to the fore (despite the fact that generally class differences are, as it were, adjourned), particularly in societies which have national minorities. Thus a writer's manifesto — especially when put against the background of serious class antagonisms, may not be a matter of indifference. For the eyes of the society turn with interest in its direction. In fact is maintained, not without reason, that these are clearly political manifestos, belonging to journalism rather than literature in the strict sense. Censorship is, therefore, applied against a citizen who proclaims certain political slogans, not against an artist.

The arguments in the third case seem in conclusion to be at least equally as strong as the statements against it. Preventive censorship is certainly evil, but a necessary evil. The basic problem here is not to prolong it beyond the period of historical necessity. Those who oppose its application even in special circumstances, probably remember the bad examples of authoritarian systems where censorship had changed from a temporary institution during a time of turmoil into a permanent institution with a much broader base. They are forgetting, however, that authoritarian systems do not have to refer to the arguments discussed above, while in free societies censorship is abolished as promised.

The fourth argument is connected with the controversy concerning the function of art. For at its core we find the premise—silent or spelled out—that art has tremendous influence on social consciousness. But when we examine the history of art, especially art in modern times, this thesis must be seriously revised. In actual reality, art has been a repetition, in a specific, condensed form, of what had already taken root in social consciousness; this generalization applies to its affirmative, and its contesting function as well. For art has been and is a testimony to the alienation and counter-alienation processes, transferred from the level of social reality to "another" level, namely that of esthetic reality. Even if some rare works of art did transcend the actual perspectives of consciousness, such a transcendence, strictly speaking, was a reflection of

already formed revolutionary attitudes. The social influence of art has therefore been mostly *secondary* in relation to the influence exerted by the social reality itself, by politics, technology, customs, religion, science, philosophy. Art confirmed and preserved what was either becoming common in social life or had just begun to crystallize. This is to say basic stimuli — even in "artistic" societies such as ancient Greece — came from other sources. To realize this does not mean to eradicate the importance of the functions of art (specifically its esthetic cognitive and moral functions), it merely means to put it into proper perspective. If the situation were different, how could one explain the many bitter remarks of the artists themselves about the *helplessness* of art. How often has a fictional world or a peculiar harmony disarmed the recipient with its purely esthetic charm or given an illusion of participating in real life. But even when art became a phenomenon of capital significance in solving problems of reality, of awakening conscience, appealing for a *non-serviam* stand, its direct influence on history should not be overrated.

It seems, thus, that the spokesmen for censorship who stress the educational function of art are clearly overestimating it. This happens for two reasons. One may be that the spiritual enslavement of the people, the lack of political liberties, give art an over-emphasized importance. We have already analyzed this phenomenon in speaking about regimented societies. In this version the need for censorship results from the educational potential of art, in as much as it introduces protest against the enslavement of society. Here, however, we are interested in the second reason — the overemphasis on the function of art in conditions of a democratic society, where a public opinion and an openly functioning political opposition exist.

Our culture has a rich tradition of overemphasizing the social role of art. It goes back to Plato and is today represented by, for example, B. F. Skinner, a leading American psychologist, who in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971) in the name of an analogical premise promotes behavioral technology which would exclude, among other things, the development of the artist in the opposition or any creative person with tendencies toward rebellion against the accepted rules of social life.

It is a significant fact that a belief in the decisive influence of art on social and political attitudes was shared by outstanding social thinkers and revolutionaries of the nineteenth century. In the *Letters* of St. Simon we read not only that the industrialists are guaranteeing the artists the best possible social conditions, but also that the artists must first support the industrial system. St. Simon assumes in his utopian projection of a harmonious future society, that artists will do this as much out of

gratitude for the status received as out of a deep conviction that there is no better system in existence. This is why his remarks never bring up the question of censorship. Nor is it mentioned by Etienne Cabet when he wrote about his utopian Icaria. He merely suggested, that esthetic pleasure — after the affairs necessary to life are solved — must be tied to social usefulness and must be accessible to everyone. But when he headed an Ikarian Commune in Nauvee (in the state of Illinois), mistrustful of the group of experts called especially in accordance with the rules of the Utopia, he reserved for himself the right to censor theater performances. And censorship seemed to him to be indispensable also in other artistic fields because of the allegedly decisive role of the artist in molding social attitudes.<sup>3</sup> One more example: on the 19th of May, 1871, two days before the bloody week of the Paris Commune, its sixty-four members were debating whether censorship of the theater was indispensable. At the suggestion of Vaillant and Frankel, they accepted a formula of interference by means of a special commission. The discussion — let us add — did not pertain only to the current situation, that is to the danger in special circumstances, but rather to the general principles of cultural policy. Here too the primary argument was the profound and far reaching function of art.<sup>4</sup> That persistent idea is understandable when seen in the light of nineteenth century social eschatology; parallel to *Letters on Esthetic Education* by F. Schiller, came the conception of an eschatological idea of liberation of humanity exclusively through art. This conception has survived until today, but the radical transformation of the status of the artists in the last few decades, against the background of the explosive civilizational changes, indicates that ascribing exaggerated functions to art is a myth-making activity.

The above counter-argumentation does not undermine the validity of the discussion on the *duties of the artist* toward the community, or the moral and political significance of art. It merely points out that the moral and political authority of art is an authentic privilege if the artist can fulfill his social role, which is being committed to his historical era and to the fate of his country; he *supplements* the politician's point of view. In other words: if he gives testimony to the ills and unrest ravaging society, criticizes the present in the name of the future,

<sup>3</sup> C. H. de Saint Simon, *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1966, Vol. III, 163-64.

<sup>4</sup> G. Bourgin and G. Henriot eds., *Procès-verbaux de la Commune*, Paris, 1945. II, 413 ff. F. Ryat in this debate defended — following his master Proudhon — the absolute freedom of art, while Langevin spoke for a permanent intervention by the state. L. Frankel found a compromise formula, but, as compromises often are, a contradictory formula. He said that for the cause of socialism the dependence of artistic institutions on state control is deadly, and that a socialist state had a duty to support the ideologically engaged artists by any means. At the same time, however, he proposed to place the theaters under the jurisdiction of a commission appointed by the Commune.

speaks out against alienation in all its forms. And an artist may realize this role only in conditions free of censorship. But if the arguments which we have been trying to undermine are given a purely political or purely moral character, if instead of stressing the educational function of art, the accent is placed on the duties of the authorities responsible, in the name of a given doctrine, for maintaining the social order, or, more precisely, maintaining the rules of prevailing customs, than we either return to the arguments of the first example (the Supreme Idea), or are faced with the the question not so much of political censorship as censorship resulting from social morality pressures. In fact, even the latter seems indefensible, for — not counting special circumstances of demoralization, for example during natural or social disasters — nothing acts as strongly and spontaneously as the human need to maintain moral norms. Those who break them are always the exception, and their influence on social life, because of the enlivened ethical discussion, is in reality beneficial. This is why, for example, someone who glorifies gangsters should not be punished administratively, for his work will compromise itself in the eyes of a democratic majority. What sort of "example" is it, anyway, when every day television carries not fictional but true examples of private and political ("dirty wars") gangsterism. And those who mock authority, governments, etc., can be feared only by an authoritarian system, which when it considers it inevitable, forces artists to remain silent and prevents them from pleading that the basic values of *humanitas* be respected.

The counter-arguments presented in this case are a polemic with the attitudes not only of the supporters of political censorship applied to art, but also with those who treat this problem as a secondary or even an unimportant one. For they claim that since the function of art should not be overrated, it is not worthwhile to become alarmed by censorship aimed at a small social group. The important thing they say is the lives of those millions of people to whom the question of freedom of political expression is something distant or even exotic. Such a stand perfidiously distorts the counter-arguments to the censorship which pertains to the educational power of art (we do not maintain that art is socially unimportant and — moreover — do not negate the specific social role of the artist, particularly the Promethean artist), and, in addition, it fails to see — in its pragmatic blindness — that social progress in any field cannot be doled out here and there at random, or weighed on an apothecary's scale. Marx wrote in the "Debates . . .", as if foreseeing the problems of our present times — "If one form of freedom is abolished, the very principle of freedom is abolished, and freedom can then live only an illusory life, for then it is only a matter of accident in which phase of life freedom will be curtailed."

## ACADEMIC DISSENT AS A CATALYST FOR POLITICAL CRISIS IN A COMMUNIST SYSTEM

Every political system has its proper mode of integration and a specific set of institutions which maintain the unity and cohesion of the entire socio-political structure. The importance of these institutions differs from one system to another and changes according to the existing realities of political life. In the Communist system, the evolution of economic, cultural and other processes is predominantly determined by the political leadership of the ruling party.

In part, the activity of all Communist leaders is determined by their commitment to the organizational and ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. The doctrinal background provides a motivation toward action centered on a specific evolution of society, culture and economy. This implies an ideologically perceived community of interests and desires which finds its expression in a similar pattern of political, social, and economic development.

However, the Communist Parties do not operate in a void. The effectiveness of their activity depends on a multitude of factors and conditions which characterize separate national environments. For each country this necessitates a distinct pattern of adapting the ideological principles to the existing realities of social structure, culture, traditions, economy, etc. The national differences reflect the variety of national objectives and provide a source of influences which have direct bearing on the performance of Communist leaders. The intensity of these influences varies depending upon the country and the period of time. The investigation of the changing importance of environment on the political process makes it possible to determine the particular combination of influences which are shaping each national leadership and to indicate a possible direction for future development.

The internal pattern of change in Communist countries has not followed a constant evolutionary line. On the contrary, it has usually taken form during periodic disturbances and direct challenges to the established arrangements. Although frequently generated by a historically motivated factional infighting, these conflicts remain closely related to social,

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CENSORSHIP VERSUS ART, PROS AND CONS: TYPOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS .....	Stefan Morawski	3
ACADEMIC DISSENT AS A CATALYST FOR POLITICAL CRISIS IN A COMMUNIST SYSTEM .....	Jan B. de Weydenthal	17
SOME DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC .....	Tadeusz N. Cieplak	41
THE U.S. OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION (OWI) AND THE POLISH QUESTION, 1943-1945 .....	Jack L. Hammersmith	67
THE PROFILE OF A TRANSPLANTED FAMILY....	Danuta Mostwin	77
DMOWSKI'S OVERTURE TO MASARYK....	Zygmunt J. Gąsiorowski	90
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>		
Jerzy B. Cynk, <i>History of the Polish Air Force 1918-1968</i> .....	Michael Alfred Peszke	93
Stanisław Lem, <i>Solaris</i> .....	Thomas H. Hoisington	96
Bruce Johnson, <i>Conrad's Models of Mind</i> ; Bruce E. Teets and Helmut E. Gerber, <i>Joseph Conrad: An Annotated Bibliography</i> of Writings about Him; Borys Conrad, <i>My Father: Joseph Conrad</i> .....	Robert Bense	98
Jerzy Szablowski, ed., <i>The Flemish Tapestries at Wawel Castle</i> in Cracow .....	Stanley Cuba	100
Mateusz Gliński, ed., <i>Chopin: Listy do Delfiny</i> .....	Jerzy Gólos	103
Thomas E. Bird, ed., <i>Queens Slavic Papers, Vol. I</i> .....	Christine M. Olszer	104
JURZYKOWSKI FOUNDATION AWARDS, 1973 .....		105
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....		118
NEWS ABOUT THE POLISH INSTITUTE .....		128