

POLITICAL CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO MEDIA COMMUNICATION: A CRITIQUE

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Introduction

Events of recent years in Eastern Europe have typically been described in breathless fashion, or more recently in a bemused lament, as economic chaos and atavistic feuds swirl through the region. Somehow "freedom" has ended up at least as messily as in the "West".

Part of the problem in commonly held perceptions arises precisely from their mediatic dimensions. Watching young Germans leaving the DDR in droves as their regime's television vainly ran three hours a week of Western videoclips to induce them to stay, watching the Ceausescus' trial and execution while knowing Romanians themselves were seeing it incessantly replayed on their sets, watching Hungarian border guards snipping the barbed wire and Germans pulverizing the Wall, watching the Polish Round Table discussions on TV, the Velvet Revolution, Lithuanians defending their broadcasting tower with their lives, Boris Yeltsin standing on a tank: because media were so involved in these processes, and because we saw it all, sometimes live, on TV, we have slid into a fusion of media and event, dazzled by the fact that almost every one of these happenings was in truth the very opposite to a planned "media event" (Brinton 1990; Turnley & Turnley 1990).

Almost. We should have been alerted to the deeper dimensions of the process by the fact that in apparently the most decisive break with the past - the execution of the Ceausescus - the past was at its most vigorous. The very least political change has taken place in Romania out of all the former bloc regimes, and - symptomatically - although a firing squad was what we heard, when the cameras actually focused in on their inert bodies it was clear they had been shot once through the back of the head in the time-honored Stalinist mode. Similarly, the massacre at Timisoara, "proved" to our horrified eyes by rows of dead bodies on the ground, was mostly a collage of corpses deceased from natural causes, and staged for international consumption (Lowink: forthcoming). These actually were media events, albeit of a much more grisly kind, and generated within a grislier reality, than Daniel Boorstin had in mind as he dissected the beginnings of news-hype and candidate-packaging in the USA thirty years ago (Boorstin 1963: 45-46).

To grasp what the changes in media and society in Eastern Europe may teach us about the media-society relationship in general (and there is much), we need to step back and refocus our gaze away from our mediatic drama of regime change. Equally important, to understand media, there as elsewhere, we need to steer away from media-centric explanations.

These are no small tasks, especially for those unfamiliar with the specifics of the region. I hope below successfully to tread a line between assuming complete familiarity and total unfamiliarity with those specifics.

Initially we need to periodize three phases in the changes: the build-up to them, often of decades' duration; the "moment" of regime change itself; and the post-Communist conjuncture, insofar as the latter will stay in frame. For as well as change, there are, inevitably, crucial continuities. The current conjuncture is indubitably hard to keep in frame, but the weight of the past is everpresent, and - correctly understood - constantly sheds light upon ongoing developments.

Secondly, we need to acknowledge the specificity of each nation, not only in the particular trajectory that its regime change followed in the years 1985-91, but also in its unique cultural history. Although the Stalin and post-Stalin models were followed in all these nations, and although their legacy is still very evident in major areas of life, the politico-cultural graft took quite different forms in a number of respects because, largely, of these unique cultural and historical characteristics. My own research has focused on Russia, Poland and Hungary, and thus it is on these three nations that I shall concentrate for the rest of this essay. However, in the space even of a long presentation such as this, there is little opportunity to explore those specifics. It may be at times that, for lack of space to develop a book-length argument, I shall seem to be slipping into an implied, but unintended, homogenization.

Thirdly, we need to relate media to a series of processes and institutions in these nations, such as economic forces, international relations, the State, political movements, and cultural production as a whole, steering away from media-centric explanations of media or society.

Fourthly, in doing so, we are ineluctably drawn in to debates on key concepts and interpretations of social reality, whether of the State, social movements, civil society, the public sphere, or the character of sovietized societies. These debates take place largely among political scientists, sociologists and philosophers, yet a recurring lacuna in their analyses is the absence - I am tempted to say "structuring absence" - of any attention to communicative processes.

Finally, we need to review critically a number of media theories for their adequacy to conceptualize these processes in Eastern Europe. I have in mind diffusion theory, uses and gratifications theory, agenda-setting theory, gatekeeper theory, cultivation analysis, media system dependency theory. The problem with these approaches is the opposite to those listed in the previous paragraph, for they are tendentially media- or communication-centric.

This is a truly mammoth task. We are faced with (a) a three-way split between events in Eastern Europe, (b) rival interpretations of those events, and (c) rival conceptual approaches in both communication analysis and political science to the analysis of media, culture, economy and politics. But we also have some of the most fecund material imaginable for the development of media communication theory, material which transcends the current empirical obsessions in our field: television, Hollywood, political news, and the latest developments in media technologies.

This essay is then a ground-clearing exercise, an attempt to single out the most heuristically productive concepts and perspectives to interpret this tangled mass of data. It is, moreover, the "jalons" for a contracted book-length treatment of these subjects in Sage's Media, Culture and Society series, and thus I would greatly welcome comments, criticism and illumination which might help make the book version stronger. (In that version, I plan not only to critique, but also to propose ways to strengthen, media communication theory.)

Economic change, media, and public consciousness

The financial relation between the former soviet bloc's statized economic structures and its state-owned media is not a conceptually complex matter (Kowalski 1988; Jakab & Galik, ch.1; McNair 1991, chs.2-3), although as we will see below in the section on cultural production, the regimes were not always quite as repressively media-omnivorous as they may have desired or as is sometimes claimed. Nonetheless, there is no major controversy about who dominated sovietized media as there continues to be about media in capitalist societies. What is complex, is the relation between that media structure and the gradual economic disintegration of the bloc. It is to that relationship that we will immediately turn, and subsequently to the relation between media and economic change in the current phase of development (early 1993). In later sections on international relations

and cultural production, issues will be discussed concerning private and state media ownership in the current conjuncture.

It is a commonplace now that the Soviet bloc economies were at various levels of disarray and disintegration, some such as Poland and Hungary even running giant deficits with Western banks, and with not a single one evincing the dramatic growth-rates of earlier decades (Magas 1990: 66; Ramet 1991, Tables 1 & 2; Koves 1992: 1-15). The causes were multiple, and cannot be solely ascribed to bureaucratism, even though that was the overriding problem of the economic structure. (Nor do they vindicate the extremely dangerous confrontational tactics of the Reagan regime in its fierce military build-up.) Nonetheless, this economic stagnation was probably the primary cause of the collapse of the regimes, even though it was mediated to the public in numerous ways.

This mediation/communication is necessarily our focus. How was economic stagnation conveyed, given that Soviet bloc media surely did not highlight the problem, and that real-life comparisons between western and eastern living standards were restricted to the relatively small percentage of trusted Party members, diplomats and trade officials permitted to travel? Some evidence (e.g. Gregory & Dietz 1991; McGregor 1991) indicates that widespread criticism of the economic system was unusual, with objections being rather to specific issues such as the lack of incentives or of work-discipline. We may compare the responses of a major emigre survey conducted in the early 1980s (Silver 1987: 114-115), which found that even of those asserting that the USA had nothing whatsoever to learn from the USSR, almost fifty percent were strongly in favor of having the state control heavy industry (as opposed to 7% who had something positive to say about collective agriculture).

How, if there really were intense and universal dissatisfaction with the previous economic system, should we interpret the cynical and depressed public attitudes to economic reform during the years of transition and since (Urnov 1991; Gregory 1991)? What should we conclude from the attitudes of many Soviet workers to Polish Solidarity, except in the Baltic republics and western Ukraine, namely that Polish workers' militancy risked taking bread from Soviet tables (Teague 1988)? Did this reaction have a connection with the sour conviction of many Russians that to their own considerable cost they were massively subsidizing the other Soviet republics, not to mention foreign dependencies such as Cuba and Vietnam?

I would suggest that all these are indices of allocative or policy perceptions and grievances, rather than necessarily of opposition to the economic system as such. If so, might that tell us that the media's role in the situation was successfully to take economic stagnation off the public agenda - a reversal of a standard interpretation of media functioning (McCombs & Shaw 1972)? In this case, Moore and Tumin's (1949) classic analysis of the stabilizing social functions of ignorance would need to be brought into play in conjunction with the agenda-setting approach.

It may be argued, of course, that citizens were too afraid to express systemic opposition, and furthermore that the data above are Soviet rather than Polish or Hungarian. Yet the period we are discussing is the late 1980s, when many of the tabus of an earlier period had been lifted, either through glasnost policies in the USSR, or in the typically less constrained polities of Hungary and Poland. It is fair to say that public attitudes to the economic system in the latter nations were more critical than generally to be found in the Soviet Union, but normally among intellectuals rather than among the general population, which had thoroughly ingested one truth at least, namely that job-security was much higher in the East than in the West. Furthermore, it was well known that one major cause of economic stagnation in those two countries was the need to repay western banks' loans, a feature of integration into the Western economic system.

The picture we are facing demands that we explain restricted information, distorted information, and -- as we shall argue -- displacement, both on to generalized social aggressiveness and on to ethnic targets. Not such a different task in itself from the responsibility of the critical researcher into Western media, but harder because of

unfamiliarity and the absence of systematic study of many aspects of the situation, not least of the audience dimension.

Let me sketch out what I consider a plausible analysis of the role of media in conveying or not conveying the realities of economic decline and the possibilities for economic reform in these different nations, whilst constantly keeping in mind that people experience economic stagnation in different modes that may have little or no media echo or amplification. (The Bush Administration's dogged refusal over 1990-91 to acknowledge that the United States' economy was in serious recession, rarely challenged in earnest by news media analysts, would constitute a loosely parallel recent instance in the West.)

The first reality which demands recognition is that in Soviet bloc countries cash played much less of a role in everyday life than in the West. Savings were very high for a substantial number of people for the simple reason there was nothing much of interest to purchase. Even the old ladies who for a pittance swept the streets or sat "supervising" metro escalators - a phenomenon often noticed by western visitors - did so because they were generally guaranteed accommodation as a result. Furthermore, certain basics such as bread and transport were heavily subsidized. Thus inability to afford objects (or to meet credit-payments) was not the source of economic discontent. People complained about the quality of shoes or other consumer items, but not about lack of funds. Workers could normally guarantee at least one solid, if unappetizing meal a day at their workplace canteen, without having to buy it, cook it or clean up afterwards. The workplace was a service-distribution node, not only for food, but also for housing and medical care, in a way totally unfamiliar in the West.

We should not, however, forget how the Polish regime's intermittent attempts to impose sharp price-rises acted as the trigger for significant unrest in 1970, 1976 and 1980. Furthermore, fast price-inflation in Hungary and Poland during the 1980s, which did not really reach Russians until about 1990, did at that point produce economic angst of a type more recognizable in the West. The 1980s Soviet emigre survey already referred to found that 61% of the respondents felt real wages had fallen over the previous five years up till they left the USSR, but that shortages - "defitsit" - were what upset people most (Gregory 1987: 259-60). Furthermore, those most likely to be irritated with the slow rate of economic advance were precisely those who had been most successful within the system (Millar & Clayton 1987), the greatest beneficiaries in a sense of the historic trends in mass education and urbanization that Lewin (1988) has argued were the undertow of the Gorbachev phenomenon.

Where I would argue the declining level of growth particularly impacted on public consciousness was in fields such as health care and environmental pollution. The appalling rates of infant mortality and of respiratory disorders in industrial areas were only the most salient indices of the failure of the senior regimes of the socialist bloc to deliver a viable standard of living to their citizens. Such bitter personal experiences, including the need to pay physicians substantial sums under the counter ("on the left") to avoid endless waits for treatment, surely impacted on people's feelings about their conditions of life (for Soviet data, see Feshbach & Friendly, 1992).

At the same time, there was no comparison possible for the vast majority. Official media avoided these matters, with Soviet infant mortality statistics even ceasing to be published under the Brezhnev regime, and instead cynically dwelt on such issues as the very real plight of African Americans and Native Americans to try to displace attention elsewhere. The attempt was largely unsuccessful, and sadly often led to the reverse assumption, namely that such groups were in reality living high off the hog. With the exception of Poland, samizdat media had a generally weak circulation. This is not to deny their significance in the longer process of rebellion, but their puny voice does highlight the absence of comparative information. Foreign radio services such as the BBC and Radio Liberty/Radio-Free Europe, and the tales of a minority of travelers to Western lands, circulating through relatives and friends, were the only other sources.

Thus in everyday life there were testing experiences in absolute terms, yet without any clear yardsticks to know how to assess them fully. It is plausible that this had two effects. One was to accumulate a sense of frustration and anger, no less real for being diffuse. The second was that the simplest target for this anger consisted of one's fellow-citizens. Hence, I would argue, the degradation of relations in public, symbolized perhaps most tangibly by the virtual class war between waiters and patrons in eating establishments, or between store assistants and customers, but at all events corroding any civility or trust between members of the public.

Kira Muratova's 1989 film *Askyenicheskii Sindrom* (The Aesthetic Syndrome) portrayed this degradation in graphic terms for Russia, and indeed it must be said that the syndrome was more advanced there than in Poland or Hungary. A chance encounter in Budapest in the mid-1980s tellingly illuminates both this difference, and the absence of yardsticks. A "believing" Communist couple from Leningrad wandering around a Budapest supermarket expressed to a friend of the writer's their deep perplexity at how Hungary had managed just since 1948 to vault over the USSR on the path to communism, because clearly there was more abundance in Hungary than in Russia, and they well knew full communism promised abundance... In their case, the surging frustration and bitterness of which I have spoken were not evident, but confusion as to how to interpret Soviet reality in the absence of yardsticks was present in full measure.

Within this context, the proclamation of economic reforms by these regimes, trumpeted repeatedly in the official media, had I would suggest a dual effect. We need first to recall, however, that identifications of problems in these economies had been relatively normal in the news media from Brezhnev onwards, even though the problems were normally flagged as issues now being grappled with in order to perfect the system, rather than to change it. As life got tougher during the 1980s, the merits of reforms, the visibility of reforms, the very purpose of reforms, evoked deeper and deeper cynicism. In the USSR for example, from quite different political stances, both the weekly *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, later *Ekonomika i Zhizn* (Economic Newspaper/The Economy Today - literally Economy and Life), and the government daily, *Izvestiya*, ran stories during the late 1980s on initiatives in radical economic reform. For the former, this was simply a nod in the direction of then-current perestroika orthodoxy, while for the latter it represented a strong, if conceptually vague commitment to improve the economic condition of the country. Yet the stories reproduced in each newspaper served to emphasize the rarity and thus the virtual irrelevance of the economic changes actually underway.

Secondly, the emergence of a highly visible class of petty entrepreneurs, stimulated by the state (Avdeenko et al. 1990; Zubek 1991; Slider 1991), led to yet further anger, this time directed against the new private firms ("cooperatives") in the USSR and against businessmen driving Mercedes and BMWs and living in fancy villas in Hungary and Poland. The regimes were widely seen as supporting the re-emergence of licenced thievery.

Thirdly, the attempt to substitute the economic signals of a command economy - the plan, the telephone calls from above to below - with the price-signals of a capitalist economy, were repeatedly stymied by ineptitude, irresolution and ignorance of the new rules of the game at all levels. The phone-calls from above began to dry up, but were not replaced by any other economic signals. Drift, stagnation and waste ensued on an unprecedented scale.

In turn, since the regimes arrogated all power and authority to themselves, they alone could be held responsible for the entire mess and growing unfairness. This concentration of responsibility on a single source, the government, was arguably a potent solvent of those elements of confidence that still persisted in the public mind.

Thus the putative impact of official media silence as the economic decline gathered speed, was actually to open wider the already institutionalized gap between the State and the general public that Gorbachev vainly sought to close with glasnost policies and promises of "radical economic reforms". After the initial couple of years' heady excitement of revelations, mostly about the Stalinist past, the public began to be much hungrier for

substantive economic improvement than for glasnost. The Brezhnev years began to seem to some to have been tranquil, manageable, in economic terms almost halcyon. In Poland and Hungary, in any case, the quite widespread current of thought that saw their States as client regimes, had already served to subvert their legitimacy: economic hardships intensified the slide because, as just observed, these states claimed knowledge of, and the right to control over, the economic process.

Since the transition in regimes, the relation between economic forces and media has become even more complex and difficult to pin down with certainty. On the institutional level, the guaranteed financial and logistical support assured by the previous regime to loyal media vanished, and many media either collapsed or found their readership/audience drastically reduced. Large numbers of new media ventures sprang up, many reflecting the similar efflorescence of new political parties both large and miniscule ("taxi-parties" as they were called at one point in Poland, on the assumption the membership could fit comfortably in a single taxi). Many fell rapidly by the wayside. Some changed their title drastically, such as the former Soviet magazine *Kommunist*, which is now called *Free Thought*. Others, such as *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* (Young Communist League *Pravda*), retained their name and fed their readers a dismal, heavily ironic survey of current miseries. Pornographic media have flourished, as have "How-to" texts, business publications, personal astrology, and pirated videos (Condee & Padunov 1992; Lochon 1992; Karlinsky 1992). (Below, under the heading of international relations, I will discuss the potential impact of foreign media investment, for today it is impossible to speak of these economies as in any way autochthonous, and ever less in Poland and Hungary as statized.)

Without endeavoring to chart this immense flux here, the most obvious change in media economic coverage is that today the media present widely different views on current economic realities - or perhaps more precisely, on feasible solutions to those realities. It would venture too far at this point to try to assess the likely impact of this sudden plethora of perspectives on a population both unaccustomed to it, and completely uneducated in the workings of a modern capitalist economy, often visualizing the latter as a glorified bazaar.

However, that vast oversimplification in turn enabled a very rosy picture to circulate in some circles of a more or less painless transition to a "market" economy, which has now bred in reaction very extensive disillusionment, frustration and hopelessness. In other circles "market" negatively evoked the high prices of the small permitted private sales outlets they only normally used to patronize for special celebrations, along with with the vulnerability of employment they knew to be a hallmark of Western economies. In the short term, a number of their fears were amply realized.

In general it would seem that over these years most members of the public have become sated with change and politics, deeply desirous of stability, and - in its absence - of escape. Among the media genres just cited that have enjoyed strong popularity, Hollywood movies have been much in demand, partly for novelty's sake, and partly for the reason that they offer a comfortingly formulaic psychic release from a rather unbearable economic reality. Their capacity is nil, however, to stimulate reasoned public discussion over national economic goals and policies.

International relations, the slide from global influence, and media

By "international relations", I do not mean the exquisitely boring niceties of diplomacy, or of missile-counts. I mean, rather, the powerfully erosive effects of, initially, the Solidarity movement in Poland and the Afghan resistance, and then the development of glasnost policies in the USSR, the piecemeal slide away from the Stalin model in Hungary, the sudden virtual cessation of political signals from Moscow to the client regimes from 1988 onwards, the instantaneously accelerating ricochet effects of collapse in the DDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, and perhaps finally the obdurate stance of tiny Lithuania against Soviet power. In this concatenation of events needs also to be mentioned the long-term erosion of effective influence in the lands of Brezhnev's outreach over a

decade and more, from Egypt to Chile, and from India to Angola. Even Vietnam and Cuba, whose regimes stayed loyal until they themselves were cut adrift, increasingly functioned as burden rather than as opportunity for the Soviet power structure. (I am viewing these instances simply and solely in relation to Soviet international influence, and not offering here an evaluation of Pinochet, Landsbergis, Ahmed Massoud Shah, Kadar, or any regime or movement in themselves.)

Thus from the apogee of Soviet global influence, reflecting the supposedly inevitable world trend toward Communism, with its implicit boost to the traditional nationalism of Russia - in the form either of being the "elder brother" and core of the Soviet system, or of being the spiritual heart of the planet - the final descent was measured but unceasing. What did that signify, over time, to the power structures and the public of the Soviet Union and its bloc? How were these realities represented and mediated?

Furthermore, what were the effects of the "hard guy/soft guy" stances of Reaganite "Star Wars" belligerence, and West German Ostpolitik? I am not suggesting these were tidily coordinated, for German and U.S. interests were different, but we should not underestimate their joint influence on fracturing the cohesion, even the morale, of the more perceptive members of the Soviet bloc hierarchy. The question then is how if at all this erosion of morale and growing uncertainty within the apex actually trickled down to the general public, since it would not, clearly, be reflected in Soviet bloc public media?

American imperialists and German revanchists were regularly slung into the same pigsty by the Soviet press, and bloc successes and advances around the globe were continually feted.

It is a complicated question to which there are no answers immediately available. We might hazard that a more general political angst was fed by a combination of factors: by select media, such as White and Red Tass (Smith 1976: ch.14), by the nomenklatura's privileged access to superior global news sources such as The Financial Times or Der Spiegel, by the bulletins of foreign broadcast stations (Shanor 1985), by the stories told to their families by people who had visited the "outposts", such as Angola or Laos, especially by veterans from Afghanistan as that war dragged on, and by the continuing role of rumor as a mode of communication operating at all levels of Soviet bloc life.

In the end, it is no doubt true that the full picture was only available to a tiny, trusted minority. Yet in a top-heavy power structure, the morale of the apex is likely to be rather determinative of others' morale. The apex (*verkhushka*) in the Soviet Union consisted of the military high command, the military industrialists, and the KGB and Party hierarchies. The system worked similarly in the other bloc countries, albeit generally minus the national military as a resolutely pro-Soviet force (Barany 1992). It is hard to suppose that within that apex the evaluation of the following issues had but a minor effect on the disintegration of the system: (a) the outdistancing of the Soviet economy; (b) the consequent threat to military competitiveness; (c) the decline of the Soviet empire; and (d) the possibility of long-term revitalization through foreign capitalist investment (the true promise of Ostpolitik). In other words, we need to diversify our understanding of Soviet bloc "audiences." This does not simply mean adding such criteria as gender, ethnicity or age-cohort, but expanding our typical western focus on the mass audience in order to concentrate equally on the elite audience. In particular we need to recognize that our focus on the economy and media in the previous section is intimately related to our focus on international relations in this one.

The fact that these processes are even now inaccessible to systematic empirical study does not mean that we should bypass them in our analysis of the role of communication in regime transition in Eastern Europe. They are the obverse, in a sense, of my remarks above on the modes through which economic decline was communicated to and experienced by the general public during the period of transition. Together, I would propose, these constituted the partial and contradictory representation of present problems and future options which steadily gnawed away at the Soviet elite's own confidence in its rule, and at its already very limited hegemony (in the Gramscian sense) over the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc. The impact within the elite initially may have been in the

direction of tightening up internal control, as was the case after the Prague Spring (Kagarlitsky 1988: 198ff.), and similarly in response to Polish Solidarity (Ruble: 1983). The fact remains that the elite was acutely aware of these developments and their portent.

Today, the influence of international forces is enormously different in the field of media communication. Not only is radio jamming now history, but Radio Free Europe has offices in some Eastern European countries, Western media corporations have bought and are continuing to buy into the media systems of most of these countries, and those systems are now increasingly in question, whether in terms of their prior professional mores or of their financial viability.

Assessing this switch is not a task performed with great insight by a number of commentators. The most familiar verdict revolves around words such as "freedom", with a strong overlay of missionary zeal to bring these benighted Eastern Europeans into the bright warm glow of a prosperous, untrammelled Western media system. Those Eastern European media professionals prepared to dance to this rhetoric are consequently feted by the missionaries as serious, dedicated journalists, and sometimes even attributed a (very dubious) past career of serious opposition to their regimes. At the same time, critics of the Western system often grossly underestimate the problems inherent in the previous media system in Eastern Europe, and fixate purely on the pretentiousness of Western Media Missionaries in proposing their own solutions to all Eastern problems.

I would suggest that the realities are more complex, and require more sober analysis. By the point at which the regimes changed, with the economy in the kind of mess already noted above, the financial and technical basis of the press, in particular, was disastrous. Rare were the newspaper or magazine offices in which a computer could be seen, and with a virtually bankrupt economy there was less and less chance of bankrolling a newspaper which could not pay its way. Deprived of government subsidies and of citizens' need to be seen to subscribe to the Party press, many newspapers, magazines and journals went quickly into the red and faced extinction.

Film-making, equally, was immediately at risk of virtual collapse, not only for wanted sources of capital from the traditional government source, but also for want of co-production money with western ventures. Some of the latter was forthcoming, but film-making slowed to a trickle compared with the previous period. Knowledge of marketing and banking aspects of film production was minimal to non-existent, a major factor that affected all media, not only film. Consequently foreign, especially American films flooded the market, both officially, and in pirated videos (Autissier et al. 1992: 262, 291).

The telecommunication infrastructure was also very backward, not simply in numbers of telephones in businesses (let alone homes), but also in the quantity and quality of the lines and switches. This in turn affected everything from foreign trade to banking to news and information flows, since telecommunicated data generally deteriorated sharply because of the poor infrastructure. The sheer number of international lines was also extremely low by comparison with western Europe. And perhaps needless to say, computerization of all kinds, except for some big military-use mainframes in the USSR, was at a minimal level compared to the other half of the continent (Adirim 1991; McHenry 1988; Splichal 1992).

The hunger for foreign investment in all these infrastructural domains is hard to overestimate. The main question was, how far could that investment take place without drawing in foreign control to an extent that threatened national control over media and culture. The USA has a 25% ceiling on foreign ownership of a broadcast station, as evidenced in the forced divestiture by US courts of the Mexican owners of the former Spanish International Network in 1986. The problems of national control over the system of public communication - be that control in private or public hands, or a mixture - have repeatedly been raised by media purchases in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary (Jakab & Galik 1991; Frybes 1992; Lochon 1992).

For now let us simply acknowledge the acute dilemma of maintaining a press system in particular, and a media system in general, whatever its contents, in an economy

on the rocks. The attraction is hard to overestimate of having foreign investors sustain the survival of media, and not least, for those working in them, having these investors maintain employment for media professionals.

The Soviet and Post-Soviet State

Perceptions and theories of the character of the state in the Soviet bloc nations up till 1989 vary widely - including within those nations themselves. While virtually no one would apply the adjective "democratic" to the regimes in question, there is still a basic split between what I shall call the fundamentalists, who typically espouse the term "totalitarian" when defining the soviet-type state structure, and the pragmatists, who focus more on its unwieldy mechanisms, lack of coordination, and internal contradictions. Rather as one pair of English humorists described the contending forces in the English Civil War as "Wrong But Wromantic" (the Cavaliers) and as "Right But Repulsive" (the Roundheads), one may feel a certain emotional affinity with the fundamentalists' radical revulsion against the State's attempt to squelch people's freedoms - even if the fundamentalists' moral fury did not always extend to the cause of the dispossessed in other lands, including their own. One may also experience a degree of irritation with those who phlegmatically, almost amorally, seem to be temporizing with tyranny by pointing out the soviet state's limits and the full complexity of everyday existence and power relations in that system (1).

Nonetheless, this conceptual and moral nettle has to be grasped, since understanding media power without understanding State power is impossible in any society. (Hough (1977: 201-2), conversely, has been an unusual voice among political scientists in observing that in analyzing the state, "it is striking how rarely these concerns [of how horizontal and vertical communication are shaped] are placed at the center of comparative political analysis.") Thus in what ways did these states' relation to their media system differ in their relation to media from the British government's media policies regarding Northern Ireland, or the Reagan Administration's attempts to restrict the free flow of information to its own public (Schlesinger 1989; Curtis 1984; Downing 1986; Demac 1990)? I am not suggesting these policies were identical, but the differences illuminate each media-state situation more exactly.

My own bare-outline proposal for understanding the character of the Soviet state in what we now know to have been its declining years, I will illustrate with observations from five sources. The first is Bukharin's horrified anticipation of what Stalin's policies for rural Russia and Ukraine would entail, namely "military-feudal exploitation" (Cohen 1971: 320f.). This was no marxist jargon, but a very precise forecast of exactly what transpired: (1) the dominance of the military in internal affairs on many levels; (2) feudalism, both (a) in the exact sense of the permanent quasi-corvee mode of extracting an agricultural surplus, and (b) in the wider sense of the extension of clientilistic power relations to every sphere of society (Willerton 1979 and 1987; Kennedy 1991: 216-21; Lampert 1985: ch.2), and (c) in the general meaning of economic backwardness. Bukharin's phrase conveys the political and especially the economic reality if Stalinism more accurately than "totalitarianism," which at best signifies an attempt rather than a reality, and which ultimately implies a drive for power as an abstracted psychic charge, rather than as integrally related to a political economy and culture.

The second is James Millar's characterization of the Brezhnev regime's policy as The Little Deal (Millar 1988). The term is derived from Dunham's (1976) term "The Big Deal" (in turn borrowed from FDR), which she used to characterize the gradual relaxation of certain types of behavioral restriction in the last eight years of Stalin's life. Millar in turn pinpoints the further decay under Brezhnev of the furious and hideous years of Stalinism into a set of structures from which a large element of the original driving impetus had gone, namely the fear of extreme and instantaneous repression, to be replaced by a series of unofficial piecemeal concessions to those who were not aiming at any of the nerve-centers of the inherited system (2). Similarly Shlapentokh (1986: 137ff) writes of "the gradual

extinction of fear" among the younger generation, leading ultimately to their "loss" to the system. One could roughly describe this mutation as a kind of reform feudalism.

The third source is former Soviet sociologist Vladimir Shlapentokh's immensely perceptive, if sprawling, monograph (1986) on the dual "pragmatic" and "mythological" levels of mentality common in the latter decades of the Soviet Union. By these terms he refers to the everyday activity of the society, as opposed to the regime's mythological definition of that reality:

"the leading role of the working class, internationalism, social and national equality, and socialist democracy make up the mythological part of the official ideology. Planning, socialist property, Russian patriotism, science, education and the family represent values that are part of the pragmatic level of ideology" (1986: 37).

This is not in the first instance an analysis of the Soviet state, but in dissecting that state's hegemonic processes, helps to explain the state's degree of effective daily functioning. Shlapentokh distinguishes (183-84, n.11) this dual level of operation both from Orwell's "double-think" and from Freud's concept of rationalization. "Double-think" implies mutually exclusive views, whereas in Soviet society there was, rather, a permanent discord between mythological words and pragmatic deeds. For Freud, rationalization obscures the truth, whereas in Soviet citizens' awareness the truth does not normally evaporate, except in the case of a small minority of true believers, the "self-satisfied slaves" in Sinyavsky's phrase (Sinyavsky 1990: 145ff.). The permanent disjunction Shlapentokh identifies offers us an important insight into how the Soviet state maintained itself for as long as it did, and how concepts such as "legitimacy" (Weber), "culture", "ideology", certainly "totalitarianism", and possibly even "hegemony" (Gramsci), do not penetrate sufficiently some of the key elements of communication in regime maintenance in the case of sovietized societies.

The fourth, an important balancing element in relation to the last two, is Amalrik's (1982: 246-7) account of how the KGB major who had been sent to arrest him suddenly quietened and froze as he saw for the first time how the abyss could open up and swallow someone if they were deemed guilty of aiming at a nerve-center of the system (3). The episode perfectly reveals the continuing ultimate basis of the system, namely repression, but acknowledges that for most people this reality was no longer staring them in the face, was no longer so supremely capricious as in earlier decades - always provided they avoided known minefields.

The fifth is Dusko Doder's analysis (1986) of the forces behind the rise of Gorbachev, in particular his recognition that the last Soviet leader owed his rise and eventual promotion to Party chief to the KGB and the patronage of Andropov, long its boss. The role of the KGB as king-maker - not an undisputed role, to be sure - and as protagonist of limited reform, is not one that accounts of its repressive actions have prepared us to expect. Yet our discussion of the apex (the nomenklatura, the verkhushka) of the Soviet structure in the two previous sections should lead us to expect this role. The gigantic KGB was not composed of totally like-minded, let alone reform-minded, individuals, but its hierarchy may well have had the most accurate and comprehensive picture of Soviet and global realities of any institution, Soviet or non-Soviet. A sense for the urgency of economic rejuvenation was probably better represented there than in the other three points of the power-structure. At the same time, this dimension of Gorbachev's rise to power underscores the continuing massive power of the police state apparatus in determining policy at the highest and most strategic level. And this structure has yet to be systematically dissolved.

These five observations do not exhaustively delineate the character of the late-era Soviet State - how could they? - but to my mind they will serve as the core of a successful

conceptualization of what that state had become by the 1980s. This has deliberately not been a structural description of the agencies and institutions of the Soviet state, but rather an attempt to characterize its formative genesis, the later development of its methodology of the operation of power, and the role of communication in this process. (The client-states' modes of operation were in turn officially modeled upon this one.)

The key consequent issue for communication researchers is the mechanisms by which those states dominated their media. For some, this can simply be reduced to one of flat censorship, presuming all viewpoints to have been filtered through a Party cell mesh that strained out every political heresy. For others, such as the present author, it is more productive to see how dissent was managed, and was on occasion unmanageable rather than simply expunged, especially in the Brezhnev years in Russia, and during the latter decades of Communist rule in Poland and Hungary. It is a topic which will be examined below in the section on cultural production.

A similar diversity of views to those on the sovietized state exists vis-à-vis the successor State structures since 1989. There is considerable disagreement currently concerning the degree of continuity in modus operandi of the State between the two phases. That there is a considerable continuity in personnel is not in doubt, but what this means in terms of actual policies and procedures is less clear.

The successor-regimes have tended to define broadcasting, especially television, as appropriately subordinate to the government of the day (Jakab & Galik 1991; Mond 1992), and there is considerable evidence that the Gorbachev regime, despite being widely defined in the West as rather liberal, operated in similar ways (Vatchnadze 1991). Yeltsin's summary dismissal of Yegor Yakovlev, former editor of glasnost flagship Moscow News, as director of Ostankino Broadcasting in November 1992 - over allegations of negative TV news coverage of Russian troop behavior in ethnic clashes in North Ossetia - would be a further case in point, as would the March 1993 resignation under pressure of his successor, and as would the January 1993 resignations of the directors of Hungarian television and radio (also under tremendous pressure). Polish broadcasting executives were perpetually being fired or relocated by successive Polish administrations during the years 1990-93.

There are superficially plausible rationales for clinging to the old authoritarianism, given the unprecedented and enormous changes taking place which can certainly generate problems and criticism more readily than solutions. However, in view of the overwhelmingly commercial drive of most of the media corporations who have entered these markets, there is at the time of writing the disconcerting possibility that the media in each one of these countries might settle down into a bifurcated system of rather low-level entertainment media, on the one hand, including various types of pornography (Karlinsky 1992), but with news media, especially in broadcasting, kept on a very tight leash by the government.

Theories of democratic transition - in other words, of drastic changes in the form of the State - have been developed in recent years, mostly based on the experiences of Southern Europe and Latin America (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Di Palma 1990). In general, the nearest these authors approach to an analysis of communication or media is in terms of general statements about legitimacy and hegemony and the role of fear in repressive political climates. A further caveat is immediately in order concerning the applicability of their studies to Eastern Europe, namely the assumption that the political transition will automatically be to some form of democracy. A number of East European countries may have at best a very long, even stalled transition in that direction, notably Serbia, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, the Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics of the former Union, and not least Russia itself.

The literature cited above tends to concentrate mostly on the perspectives and strategic behavior of various political actors, whether of the elite or of the public. They focus on such issues as how far hard-liners in the elite are risk-insensitive, and doves, risk-aware; on military, bureaucratic and police detestation of uncertainty and disorder; on the excitement of the mutual discovery of shared ideals among the atomized, repressed public;

on the role of conspicuous elite corruption in alienating the public; on the effect of the culture of fear in deterring hope for change; and on the conditions under which a section of the elite may "secede" from the regime and form a coalition with oppositional forces. A theory of rational choice is implicit in these analyses, but the role of communication of any kind in the process of strategizing choices, even within the elite, is only hinted at or implied, never really examined.

The only exception to this judgment is that there are some very interesting insights in the "democratic transition" literature into the social mechanisms of awakening change in the public at the dawn of regime transition - referred to by O'Donnell et al. as the "resurrection of civil society" - which do have a strong communicative dimension even though it is not traced out in much detail. The authors refer to the importance of public political gestures by exemplary individuals - Walesa, Sakharov, Havel, are names which come to mind in our region - in testing the limits of the possible. They note the impact of satire and ridicule by artists and intellectuals in small settings such as cafes, classrooms, bookstores, apartments. They emphasize the importance of informal links with universities, literary journals, unofficial research groups. They stress the potential effectiveness of dress and gesture as signals of dissent. Their brief observations, however, lead us directly into concepts of civil society, the public sphere, and ultimately of political movements, and their relevance or otherwise for understanding the relation between media communication and the state in Eastern Europe during the era of regime change.

Civil Society, the Public Sphere, Political Movements

The terms "civil society" and "public sphere" have been in considerable vogue over the past few years, but both suffer from the vice of being considerably vague as well. As Norberto Bobbio has demonstrated (Bobbio 1988), historically the term "civil society" has frequently changed its meaning, from signifying the antithesis of the state of nature (Hobbes through Locke); the antithesis of the despotic state (Kant); economic, judicial and administrative structures intermediate between family and the state (Hegel); capitalist economic relations (Marx); or the arena of societal and cultural interaction outside the realm of the state, the economic order and the family (Gramsci). In the period of regime change in Eastern Europe "civil society" was often used by intellectuals as a kind of mantra, signifying both a highly idealized view of pluralistic democracy in western countries, and a normative commitment to fostering that idealized model within and against the Soviet bloc. Some commentators on Eastern Europe (e.g. Helsinki Watch 1986; Molnar 1990; Rau 1991; Starr 1990) have also used the term to refer to the growing vigor of public dissent in the latter years of the Soviet system.

A conceptually related term deployed by some East-Central European writers was "anti-politics" (Konrad 1984), to denote the spaces they were attempting to open up within and against the Communist regimes. In essence the term signified the refusal, on the one hand, to engage in "coquettish" (Ost 1990: 39) negotiations for reform with regimes that had shown repeatedly that they would never take reform seriously; and on the other hand, to begin living civic life so far as possible as though the regime's ideology and restrictions were non-existent, to carve out a space of honest interaction between citizens in the public sphere. Polish intellectual leader Adam Michnik described the strategy as "anticipatory democracy" (Ost 1990: 67; cf. Downing 1984: 23-24).

The "public sphere" or "public realm" has also been used in part as a close equivalent to "civil society" in the Gramscian sense. More commonly in recent years, however, has been the Habermasian use of the term, based on his somewhat idealized extrapolation from the initial processes of public opinion formation in Britain, France and Germany in his early study, only recently translated into English, *The Structural Transformation Of The Public Sphere* (1989). Subsequently the kernel of this notion resurfaced in his concept of the "ideal speech situation", in his *The Theory Of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987), functioning explicitly as a normative goal-cum-

yardstick for democratic structures and procedures. Whereas in his early study he wrote of the "re-feudalization" of public life in the twentieth century, in his later work he writes of the "colonization of the life-world" of the public by both economic and governmental forces, against which the public has come to react by organizing various types of oppositional social movements.

In this writer's use (Downing 1988), the term "alternative public sphere" is deployed as a way of understanding the alternative media of social and political movements, and the new spaces those media open up for debate, reflection and organization around crucial issues neglected or distorted by mainstream media. Arato and Cohen (1992: ch.10) argue that the term "civil society" is most productively used to refer to the combination of public and private (i.e. familial) spheres of life, namely those dimensions of our existence not primarily dominated by the logic and procedures of the State or of the economy. (Their quadripartite conceptualization of societal relations is intended for analytical purposes only, as their analysis later of the feminist movement clearly demonstrates later in their book.) In turn the public sphere today is primarily constituted in their view by social movements. A major analytical lacuna, however, is that - for reasons that are obscure to this writer - Arato and Cohen rarely refer to communication processes or institutions in relation to movements or the public sphere. I would propose, by contrast, that we should see alternative media as both the interior dialogue and outward self-expression of these movements, and thus as central to any understanding of the movement process itself.

Before engaging in a discussion of political movements, let me briefly summarize the argument of this section so far. It is that a nuanced analysis of the later soviet-type state, and an acknowledgment of the strongly authoritarian character of many of the successor regimes, are necessary conditions for understanding the roles of media in each situation. Furthermore, that elements of the recent analysis of state transitions in other regions help to illuminate the process by which dissident and eventually insurgent communication processes served to weaken the grip of the soviet regimes. In turn, certain definitions of "public sphere" and "civil society" also contain in nuce strong implications, typically not addressed explicitly, for the significance of alternative media and communication in developing the processes of regime transition. Jakubowicz (1990) offers a fascinating analysis of the operation of no less than three different public sphere in late 1980s Poland, namely the regime, the Catholic Church, and the pro-Solidarity forces.

The impact of popular movements varied considerably between the three countries, with Poland's Solidarity clearly exerting the most impact by far, arguably having been, along with the Afghan resistance movement, the slow detonator of the entire Soviet bloc's dissolution. Notwithstanding the great insurrection of 1956, however, Hungary's oppositional movements were miniscule by comparison with Poland's (Ramet 1991: 100, 113-21). The Soviet Union's were primarily ethnic and/or religious (Tokes 1975), though with an additional very powerful environmental component during the 1980s, which emerged into full force only once the Gorbachev regime's glasnost policies had lifted the lid on public expression (Helsinki Watch 1990; Tolz 1990; Babkhina 1991; Sedaitis & Butterfield 1991).

Migranyan (1991) has argued that in the specific conditions of the Soviet Union, unleashing free expression before making headway in solving economic problems was a recipe for the chauvinist social movements and the ethnic and national confrontations which scarred Eastern Europe thereafter (cf. Goble 1991; Butterfield & Weigle 1991). The point is important: in the USA, especially, there is a powerful long-standing cultural optimism about the instantaneous benefits of free speech. The "public sphere", in other words, is thought to be automatically an opportunity for positive and constructive speech, and negative, poisonous speech will be purged of its effects by fresh doses of the former erupting in response. Particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, inherited cultural expectations are considerably more cautious than this, and not necessarily as a result of elitist prejudices. At all events, such a perspective acts as a brake on false optimism

concerning the automatic benefits of all popular movements and the public communication in which they engage.

Interestingly, workers' movements, although intense at certain moments, such as the Tyumen oil field workers' or the Russian and Ukrainian miners' militancy in 1989-90 (Rutland 1991; Sedaitis 1991; Bava 1991), made far less of a dent on the dissolution of the regime in the USSR or Hungary, than in Poland. This may have been partly a product of the sheer physical expanse of the USSR and the geographical distance between the centers of agitation and Moscow, the concentrated center of State power, which reduced the immediate visibility and communicative capacity of the strikers. Attempts to cling on to power by the old Soviet regime through mobilizing so-called "workers' front" movements were analogous only in name, and rather quickly withered on the vine (Tolz 1990: 60-68; Sedaitis 1991: 13-19).

For political movements, although sociological research frequently neglects this obvious reality, communication is their lifeblood. Typically they must create their own communication strategies and radical media against the silence or hostility of official media and repressive organs of the State (Downing 1984). Western sociological research on social movements has also been criticized, correctly in my view, for having little or no sense for the role of the State in the play of forces (Butterfield & Weigle 1991: 184), and especially for implicitly integrating the pressures exerted by social movements into a pluralist model, as though they were interest-groups negotiating with a state structure, itself presumed to be ultimately benign (compare Hough's approach as outlined above). This optimistic view was much harder to find plausible in the East than it has been in the West (unless, in the latter region, you had been a member of an excluded group, such as a person of color).

There is currently a burgeoning literature on social movements, seeking to establish their typical forms, phases and modes of self-constitution (Touraine 1981; Alberoni 1984; Melucci 1989; Dalton & Kuechler 1990). Regrettably for our purposes, their empirical focus is almost exclusively on recent Western European movements, that is to say on peace, ecological, anti-nuclear and feminist movements. The aims, character and trajectories of these so-called "New Social Movements" were radically different from those in Eastern Europe, or for that matter from the civil rights movement in the USA or the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The insights of this research need rather carefully sifting before they can be applied outside their culture zone.

As Arato and Cohen (1992: ch.10) have argued, social movement research has moved in three phases. Initially it was heavily influenced by traditional notions of the crowd or the mob, a sea of irrational human beings swept up in a fit of passion communicated from one to the other almost via naked nerve endings, instinctually and hysterically. The second model, in conscious opposition to the first, defined social movements as rational actors seeking to maximize their influence by choosing the available methods of protest and communication at their disposal (the "resource-mobilization" model). The third model, characteristic of recent "New Social Movement" research on Western Europe, examines the collective identity of the participants and tries by this to establish what the factors are which lead people to define themselves as, and to participate as, members of a given social movement. This approach conceptualizes contemporary social movements as an ongoing, almost cyclical phenomenon, and as an expression of sectoral, pragmatic discontent, by contrast with what they define as earlier movements (typically, labor movements) that in their view set themselves a revolutionary target, or pinned their hopes on harnessing the State to their goals, or took for granted the automatic, ecologically sound blessings of economic growth (4).

In the section below I shall return to the notion of political movements and alternative communication in Eastern Europe. For the moment, anchoring their importance for media analysis is as far as I shall take the discussion. Each approach has a different implication in this regard. For example, the traditional "collective behavior" approach to political movements derives from earlier definitions of the "mob", and leaves us to infer an

almost animalistic mode of communication, either within the "mob" or from it to its intended and accidental targets. The resource-mobilization model tends to be as hyper-rational as the collective behavior model is hyper-instinctual. It implies a political chessboard, even if the movement in question lacks a number of its opponent's pieces. In this view, the capacity to mobilize news media attention is a cheap resource, if it can be successfully realized. The quality and tenor of the attention may be poor or negative, but mention may at least bestow public existence on an otherwise barely known movement. In line with its rationalism, however, complete clarity about both resources and the consequences of action is usually assumed to be a part of the communication process for the movement, indeed its foundation.

The "New Social Movement" (NSM) approach tends more to imply a view of communication as ritual behavior (cf. Carey 1975), as a process of subcultural exploration and reaffirming of collective awareness. Alberoni (1984) has some interesting insights into the drama of becoming aware of oneself in a new way as a result of being in communication with an active social movement, insights which dovetail suggestively with the analysis of the "culture of fear" in Latin America analyzed by Corradi (1992), and possibly too with the "cycle of protest" in postwar Italy, as analyzed by Tarrow (1990). Alberoni coins the term "the nascent state" to denote the transitional condition in which individuals redefine themselves as members of a social movement, and discusses the importance both of the rediscovery of previously hidden, denied history for social movements, and of "the overpowering experience that a new beginning is possible where truth is predominant rather than falsehood" (55-57). These comments have considerable resonance in the East European situation before the changes in regimes (cf. Ash 1990; Nove 1989; Goodwyn 1990; Melville & Lapidus 1990, chs.2,4; Eisen 1990). On the other hand, his discussion of the "paradox of incommunicability" (82-83) of social movements, namely the difficulty their members have in explaining their commitment to those outside the movement in question, seems more relevant to feminist or religious movements, for example, than to the movements in Eastern Europe. It is relatively rare, however, for "NSM" analysts to incorporate communication into their framework (5).

Cultural Production, Censorship and Samizdat Media

The concept of cultural production is drawn here particularly from the work of Hall (1980: 27-28, 128-38), as well as from empirical studies by Elliott (1972), Schlesinger (1988) and Schlesinger et al. (1983). In essence, the concept focuses on the mechanisms, large and small, by which given contemporary cultures are generated, sustained or subjected to decline, with particular attention to the role of media and other communication institutions. Rather, therefore, than looking at culture purely as perspective, this approach seeks to ground the sources of cultural perspectives and their durability or otherwise, in a social, economic and political matrix.

I argued above that the Soviet bloc states were already in a long process of change and decay, initially gradual, but inexorably accelerating. I do not claim foresight of the dizzy gallop of 1989-91, but the signs of increasing internal pressure for change were there for anyone with eyes to see. Whether we are speaking of Brezhnev's "Little Deal", or of Kadar's inch-by-inch relaxation of controls, or of the Jaruzelski regime's increasing paralysis in Poland, or of the subterranean revival of passionate nationalist and/or religious sentiments across large tracts of the region - and there were many more such indices - "totalitarianism" scarcely conveyed the actual situation.

Nor, similarly, did the simplistic analogue concept in the sphere of cultural production, namely "censorship". Not only does this concept obliterate the role of various kinds of alternative communication, to which we shall return below, but it also negates the prime factor, the cement of the system of cultural control, namely self-censorship. As in the West, but on a much greater range of issues, media professionals primarily operated by their learned procedures - learned in university, from their colleagues, and by reviewing the

output of their own publication or channel. This self-censorship did not necessarily make the transition to new types of media content any easier following the regime changes. Indeed, one of the problems many journalists described to me in all three countries was to get the mental censor out of their own heads, even though the restrictions they had so long internalized were no longer in force (6).

The reaction of many western commentators to this description of self-censorship as the glue of cultural control is "Thought control - totalitarianism!" But it is distinctly unsociological to produce on the one hand a metaphysics of sovietized media, while still continuing to talk in secular educational categories about "trained media professionals" in the West. The range and type of issues that were accepted as off-limits varied, as I have said, very considerably, from what was off-limits in the West. So did the aesthetic quality of print and broadcast media - though here again, western analysts tended to take their own best examples as the yardstick, such as *The Economist* or *El Pais*, rather than *The National Enquirer* or *Bildzeitung*. So, tremendously, did the penalties for non-compliance differ, though execution was not among them after Stalin's demise. But the basic sociology - not the economics - of cultural production was remarkably analogous in both systems. It depended for its daily functioning on internalized norms of what was appropriate to cover or produce, and what was not, so avoiding predictable, career-threatening confrontation with media executives: in other words, official cultural production ran on self-censorship.

An interesting comparison/contrast, for example, is between elite sources of information in both systems during the 1980s. In the Soviet system, the elite received accurate, up-to-the-minute, uncensored information via White Tass and Red Tass (Smith 1976: ch.14; Antonkin 1983), and through being permitted to read the quality foreign press. In a different cultural sphere, there were experimental and socially critical plays performed on a secondary theatre circuit in Moscow and Leningrad, widely and intensively patronized by the big city intelligentsia. Not to everyone, admittedly, but accurate information and a variety of perspectives were available to select elites. The difference in the "West" is that such information is often available to a somewhat wider elite, always provided its members have the education, appetite and income to consume it. The high-priced specialist corporate bulletins, financial reports, data-base services or remote-sensing images, are not limited to a nomenklatura, merely to those who can afford them and have the necessary instruction to make use of them (7).

The mechanisms, in other words, varied, but not necessarily the restriction of quality information to consumption by elites. The Western system was much more porous, but this did not in and of itself suffice to produce an effective demand for quality information.

The contrasts between the systems were more to be seen in the parallel provision of often compulsory political lectures in the workplace and elsewhere by Party, civil defense and anti-religious activists (White 1979; Remington 1988: chs.2-3), which had no analogue in the "West". Even so, these lecture-sessions were not particularly successful examples of thought control. Had there not been rewards and sanctions attached to attendance, and rewards for offering one's services as a lecturer, it is most improbable that this parallel system of official communication would have functioned in any way. We may compare the largely fruitless programs of the Houses of Culture in Russia, Poland and Hungary (White 1990).

Shlapentokh's (1986) analysis cited earlier could be read to suggest that the dual level of communication eventually became so powerful that even some of the regime's leadership finally concluded that this dual communication was blocking economic and social development. On this reading, then, we should see Gorbachev's announcement of glasnost communication policies, not as the utterance of a maverick who had inexplicably been allowed to climb to the top, but as the reaction of key *verkhushka* members to an oncoming cataclysm they saw as inevitable unless preventive action were taken.

I would argue, therefore, that this more nuanced understanding of the immediate antecedents of regime change in the sphere of cultural production is necessary in order

properly to comprehend the present situation, whether in its totality, or more specifically in terms of media and communication developments. A kind of paralysis would often invade the analyst as she or he contemplated the conjuncture in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, especially in the cultural sphere. Distinguishing strong undercurrents from the whirl of flotsam and jetsam made reading entrails look simple. Only a clear understanding of the structures that immediately preceded that period could shed proper light on likely trends, societal or mediatic.

Let us begin by commenting upon the societal dimension, a dimension I have argued above to be impossible to understand unless the "totalitarian" model is rejected or drastically modified. The communication roots of these dramatic political changes go back a very long way. People did not begin, as in the film *Network*, by throwing open their windows and shouting to each other "I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it any more!" Yes, there were mass demonstrations, occupations, confrontations, but they had long antecedents in the communication networks of cultural and political dissidents, in the unsung activity of underground political movements, in the embryonic alternative public sphere. Alberto Melucci (1989: 208) has observed of social movements in Western Europe that

"a great deal of activity continues to take place during the invisibility phase. The submerged networks of social movements are laboratories of experience. New problems and questions are posed. New answers are invented and tested, and reality is perceived and named in different ways."

In the Eastern European instance, this "invisibility phase" included three types of communicative activity in oppositional cultural production: samizdat publication; marginal media; and what in his study of *Solidarity* Lawrence Goodwyn (1991: 110f.) has described as the transition from kitchen table conversations to political organizing.

I have mentioned samizdat first because it is a little better understood in the West (e.g. Blumsztajn 1988; Haraszti 1979 and 1987; Hopkins 1983; Downing 1984: Part III; Helsinki Watch 1986; Helsinki Watch 1990). The term means "Self-publication", in opposition to State-publication, reflecting the situation where the State insisted upon a publishing monopoly for itself. Hough proposes (1977: 201) that both the Stalin and the Brezhnev regimes were "more preoccupied with regulating horizontal communication among the citizenry than with communications between the citizens and the political authorities." In light of this regime priority, samizdat were indeed the stirrings of an alternative public sphere, and were instantly perceived as such by soviet bloc regimes.

In the early days, samizdat publication meant typed single-spaced sheets, without margins, often blurry carbon copies rather than the original. As in other spheres of insurgency, the Polish samizdat were outstandingly successful, perhaps building upon the long tradition of underground publishing in that nation. Later, especially in Poland, the physical quality of the publications came to approach that of official media.

I hardly need mention that quite stiff sanctions applied to producing, circulating, reading or possessing such manuscripts, but a major index of the decay of the regimes could be found in the progressive openness with which citizens would initially display a samizdat text on their bookshelf, then be seen buying it, then be seen reading it in public. Historically, Soviet samizdat began to be an active media sphere following the post-Khrushchev repression of literary expression; Polish and Hungarian samizdat became active following the Helsinki Agreement of 1975, guaranteeing among other things freedom of expression, to which the Soviet bloc regimes were signatories.

In addition, with the wide availability of the audio-cassette, "magnitizdat" began to circulate, making available both Russian ballads with an alternative political edge, and pirated Western rock music (Smith 1984; Ryback 1989; Ramet 1991: ch.9). With the arrival of the videocassette, this process expanded still further (Boyd 1990; Mattelart

1992b). In youth culture, especially in the USSR, both Western popular music and the use of English in graffiti signified a rebellion against the "line" that honest, decent Soviet youth would automatically prefer Russian music and culture, given that Russian was, if not the language of the angels, then at least that of the world's first Communist state (Bushnell 1990). Their enthusiasm for both was equally a rebellion against the Soviet bloc's closed frontiers for youth culture, the hypocritical denial of its own internationalist pretensions.

I will not proceed further with commentary upon samizdat media, except to underline that very well-known figures in the West, such as Sakharov, were only one element in the total samizdat picture. A whole variety of concerns, religious, ethnic and nationalist, young people's, environmental, peace-oriented, slowly began to be expressed by these means (see also Tokes 1975; Helsinki Watch 1987; Alexeyeva 1987). But their small number and circulation in the USSR and Hungary should not blind us to their long-term cumulative significance: every political movement has to begin from its specific context, with its specific resources and self-understanding. Samizdat media had no dramatic, instant impact: they represented a gradual burn into the deep fabric of power. Given the speed with which during the glasnost era people seized upon hitherto banned communications, we may infer that samizdat reflected a much wider public opinion, even if they did not physically reach it except perhaps by word of mouth.

By the term "marginal" media, I have in mind not alternative, but small-scale official media, such as monthly and quarterly periodicals, minor specialized radio programs, a few provincial publications, plays in small theatres (e.g. Goldfarb 1981; Condee & Padunov work in progress). The high estimation of the "writer" as prophet, especially in traditional Russian and Polish culture, and the long list of seemingly isolated literary figures who eventually wrought considerable impact upon national consciousness, has historically allocated to writers a weight usually reserved for mass media in the "West" in the formation of public opinion - even when their audience did not appear to exist as such (Kagarlitsky 1988: ch.1).

We might add to these marginal official media both literary works published overseas ("tamizdat" - "Over There Publication") and smuggled into the country, and also foreign radio services such as the BBC or Deutsche Welle (Shanor 1985). The full story of all these statistically minor but nonetheless influential media has still to be told, especially as regards the marginal official media. Let me then give two brief examples, one from the USSR and the other from Hungary.

The Soviet example comes from a monthly magazine, *Chemistry Today* (literally, *Chemistry And Life*, *Khimiya I Zhizn*). It enjoyed at its height a circulation of 200,000, quite small relative to the gigantic circulation figures of required newspapers such as *Pravda*, but nonetheless significant in that its readership generally read it (which quite often could not be said for *Pravda*). This little outlet took a major risk in 1961 (?) and published the full text of the Lysenko Commission report.

The significance of doing so takes a little explaining to those unfamiliar with the region and its history. Lysenko was the spurious genetics researcher canonized by the Stalin regime in the 1930s as the emblem of its self-propagandizing claim to be the most advanced scientific culture - because proletarian-based - on the planet. His "solutions" to grain-yield problems also promised a technical-fix way out of the feeble productivity of the draconic collective farm system. Perhaps needless to say, scientists who disputed Lysenko found themselves without jobs, imprisoned, and much worse still. This was no typical feud between academics.

Lysenko was finally exposed and demoted only much later, in the early 1960s, but because so many careers had been made on his coat-tails, and so many destroyed through his readiness to denounce those who upheld non-Soviet genetics, the public acknowledgement of his exposure was handled with tongs. The Commission report was only planned to be distributed to the select six thousand members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Hence, its unauthorized publication by *Chemistry Today* was a major breach of the political rules. Indeed, the magazine was only able to survive such risky actions

because it had one very powerful protector within the Soviet hierarchy. Without that shield, or godfather, its staff would have been likely dismissed and possibly some of them jailed.

The Hungarian example is a Friday evening radio program of the earlier 1980s on economic policy called Ballpark (Dühöngö), which attracted a mere 1-2% of the audience. Within this weekly half-hour, the producers set themselves the task of pushing at the limits of what could be broadcast. They took current regime slogans such as "political reform" and publicly queried what they actually meant, or questioned whether simply repaying foreign banks was the only way to deal with Hungary's debt problem. Again, this would be accounted very mild material by some standards, but it implicitly disputed the regime's competence in political or economic policy. They discovered the limits of the ballpark in 1986 when they allowed a university professor to assert that the whole basis of the new 5-year plan was flawed. On meeting the director of radio broadcasting on their way out of the building, he told them "That's the last program you make." Nonetheless, in the duration of the program series, they felt they had managed to stretch the limits of what could be said over the air, despite many forced compromises that often nauseated them, or generated a cynical, alienated hide around them.

There is no space to develop this theme further, and as noted, it should be expanded to examine peripheral stage productions, science fiction, absurdist literature, and still other communicative forms, all of which contributed to maintaining a distance from the regime, almost by way of occasional metaphorical gulps of fresh air, figurative flashes of light through scratches on a painted-out windowpane. It is perhaps no accident that these instances of minor communicative rebellion originate more from Russia and Hungary, for the major communicative breaches always tended to be initiated from Poland. David Ost's analysis neatly summarizes the overall dynamics and framework of these half-tolerated endeavors to rebuild a civil society:

"...although totalitarianism is a necessary tendency of a Leninist party state, it cannot be achieved. And so the Party continually swings between a totalitarian tendency and a reform tendency, which recognizes that the state must interact with civil society rather than try to extinguish it" (Ost 1990: 39).

The third aspect of the communicative roots of the regime changes, the transition from political atomization to a collective political force, has also been little studied to date. Goodwyn's study of Solidarity (1991), already mentioned above, and Roman Laba's (1991) analysis of the same movement, are among the relatively few studies which address issues of communication in the development of grassroots opposition in Eastern Europe. Both writers, basing themselves on detailed sociological research on the Baltic Coast when the first phase of Solidarity was at its height, vigorously dispute the accuracy of popular Western interpretations of the movement, namely that it arose through the influence either of a determined little band of Warsaw intellectual leaders (KOR, later KOS), or of Pope John Paul II's 1979 visit to Poland, or a combination of both. Both writers emphasize the movement's origins in "collective learning through historical experience" (Laba 1991: 170). "Slowly, incrementally, piece by piece, the body of knowledge assembled through this unseen but persistent struggle in Poland's mines, factories and shipyards, acquired transforming potential" (Goodwyn 1991: 43, slightly edited).

Such a process clearly implies communication of many kinds, and indeed both Laba and Goodwyn frequently refer to many types of communication strategy by the Baltic working class: the underground press, leaflets, couriers, the use of loudspeaker systems in the shipyards to identify the licence plates of secret police cars, using the carbon copies of telex messages as news bulletins on notice boards. Goodwyn notes in addition the role of informal message-bearers, whether the merchant seamen of other countries who visited the Baltic ports and by the very quality of their clothes challenged the regime's claims to have

organized amazing advances for "its" workers, or the truck-drivers who took the reality of the Gdansk and Gdynia shipyard occupation strikes out to other parts of Poland. Goodwyn's overriding theme, however, is the process by which within the Polish working class itself - and not via papal or intellectual interventions from outside its ranks - the experience of fighting the regime was accumulated and communicated (1991: 105, 113-115, 175).

Laba (1991: ch.7) also focuses on cultural themes, the blend of religious, national and egalitarian symbols used by the Solidarity movement in its first phase, and the ways they differed from the regime's. Lech Walesa was portrayed sometimes as Everyman, sometimes as anti-hero, sometimes as trickster. By contrast the regime's symbols had always focused on masculinist imagery, aggressive themes, dehumanization of the enemy, and supposedly inspired, almost godlike political leadership. Laba also interprets the strikes as a communicative rite of passage in which individuals "rejected social masks" - i.e. the roles and rituals prescribed for them by the regime under the sanction of fear - and engaged with each other freely in public for the first time in many of their lives (1991: 132).

It is to be hoped that more accounts will soon appear which begin to flesh out these all-important communicative processes in developing organized resistance in Eastern Europe. I have argued elsewhere (Downing 1984) that breaking down atomization and developing autonomy, an alternative public realm, are critically important bases for wider and more effective political movements.

Let us now turn to the present. In the current period, as Condee and Padunov (1992; and forthcoming) have shown for Russia, the speed is dizzying with which switches in cultural production are taking place. Not only are the official publications of yesteryear either changing their names or leaving the scene entirely, and not only are the subversive icons of very recent times such as Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago now last week's mashed potatoes, and not only is video piracy rampant, but as noted earlier a new array of self-help, business, astrological and pornographic publications are flooding the scene. Similar trends are visible in East-Central Europe (Karlinsky 1992; Mattelart 1992).

The most significant war, as noted already, is over broadcasting, specifically television (Mond 1992; Frybes 1992), where the instincts of ruling elites, whether the Hungarian Democratic Forum, President Walesa or President Yeltsin, are clearly in the Gaullist mold of asserting tight government oversight of the airwaves, particularly news and current affairs programming. Smolenski (1991) has recently provided a graphic account of the ongoing conflicts between Walesa and Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland's leading independent newspaper.

Furthermore, foreign corporate media interests have begun to make substantial inroads (Springer, Murdoch and Maxwell in Hungary, Hersant in Poland, and most recently at the time of writing, CNN in Moscow and Russia). While the first flush of such enthusiasm for buying into the East had faded a little by the close of 1992, the basic dilemma in the East continued to be three- or four-fold: invigorating a sclerotic media and telecommunications system with foreign investment and training programs; running the risk of an ocean of US cultural production with the consequent threat of loss of local cultural heritage; and balancing between top-heavy local control versus more fragmented but still unresponsive international control over communication practice and policy (Splichal 1992).

On the organizational plane, most media professionals were not so much ideologically committed to the outgoing system, as trained to be loyal to the power structure. For most, there was no definitive problem in switching from one master to another - as long as there was a master to be served, you served him (cf. Viatteau 1992). A genuinely independent media system remains a goal rather than a reality in the West, but still the scope for some independence is greater there than it used to be in the East. Many media professionals in the East did need training to develop a measure of independence in their work. Equally, of those who set out to be fierce journalistic critics, a number needed to learn to distinguish between personal attacks on public figures, and the analysis of roles, processes and institutions. Nearly all journalists needed to be weaned away from the

"publitsistyka" tradition of newswriting in Eastern Europe, which from before the advent of communist regimes had favored lengthy commentary and opinion over attention to the specifics of current developments. Since there is less experience of trying to develop a responsive, critical media system in the East, and since a number of the problems there are unprecedented and extremely difficult - "What are we supposed to do to manage the transition, read Marx's Capital backwards?" some wits were asking - instant success is not to be anticipated.

This brief overview of trends in cultural production at the outset of the 1990s would be seriously incomplete were we to omit the grave problem of the relation between media and ethnic confrontation. Whether this confrontation is pacific, as in the former Czechoslovakia, mob-based, as in the former East Germany or in Romania, or involves massive military force, as in the former Yugoslavia and in the Transcaucasian republics, the role of media in exacerbating or mitigating such conflicts remains potentially very important, but hitherto largely unexplored. Nor should we assume that anti-Romani or anti-Semitic currents, currently less overtly expressed in other parts of Eastern Europe, will necessarily become dormant - rather, they may become much more salient. The role of media in averting such possible catastrophes is also in principle a potent one, but not necessarily the priority among media, government or transnational elites in the nations in question.

Western Media Theory and Change in Eastern Europe

Our problem at this juncture is the opposite of the one repeatedly flagged so far, namely that this set of theorists seems overly media- or communication-centric, and - with exceptions on some levels - almost uninterested in societal change, the economic and political structure, or political resistance to the status quo. It might be argued that these theories only set themselves the task of accounting for media operations, not for societal realities, but this would be a lame and flimsy defense. Media are only interesting because they are integral to culture and society, not because they can be ripped untimely from their societal womb.

Let us briefly examine each one in turn, namely agenda-setting, cultivation analysis, diffusion theory, gatekeeper theory, and uses and gratifications theory. I will leave till last media system dependency, since it does make a more serious attempt to address societal dimensions of media.

Agenda-setting theory (Protest & McCombs 1991) focuses overwhelmingly on the news genre. It claims that the media rank-order news issues, which the public then takes to be significant as a result of this highlighting. It does not claim to predict how the audience will respond to specific content, only that there will be wide consensus that the issues underscored are indeed important. It is "a theoretical concept about the transmission of salience" (McCombs 1991: 43). As Protest and McCombs themselves acknowledge (1991: 45), the evidence in support is primarily correlative rather than sequential in character. More recent studies have qualified the agenda-setting process in various directions, including duration of exposure to the media agenda, national versus local agenda-issues, prior audience orientations, and the impact of differing media technologies, amongst other issues (Protest & McCombs 1991: Parts III & IV).

It is not an approach, evidently, which greatly illuminates the communicative dimensions of the Eastern European situation, past or current. It strongly implies a level of legitimacy which was not enjoyed by most East European media before the changes: indeed, we noted earlier that perhaps East European media had helped to keep the true dimensions of economic stagnation and the need for radical economic reform off the public agenda. In the former situation in the USSR and elsewhere in the region, public reactions to official media-set agendas often varied by topic, with foreign news sometimes more credible than domestic news (8). Although the issue of media credibility does not hold center stage in the agenda-setting approach, it is a precondition of successful agenda-

setting. Foreign radio broadcasts could probably be argued to have helped set the agenda for those who received them, and perhaps for members of their inner circles, but hardly to have set the public or governmental agenda.

Nor does the approach give us very much insight into the current (1993) phase in East European development, given that economic and ethnic issues are widely dominant, and no one needs a news bulletin to enable them to foreground these topics. Perhaps the growth of nationalist feeling in Hungary and the excoriation of the 1920 Trianon settlement in which Hungary's borders were substantially shrunk, would represent a viable case-study in the development of an irredentist agenda, but far from all Hungarian media are presently joining in this chorus.

In his survey of mass communication theory, McQuail (1987: 276) has suggested that the evidence for the agenda-setting hypothesis is in any event rather inconclusive. Ettema et al. (1991) have recently proposed, along with Molotch et al. (1987), that the attempt to posit a causal-sequential linkage between media agendas, government policy-setting, and public agendas, is foredoomed to failure, and that only an analysis which focuses on concatenated effects and ricochet effects of actions and interpretations on all three levels, can capture the full dynamics of the process by which public issues get assigned an effective ranking (96-97). At the same time, the issue they chose to demonstrate their point - child-abduction by an estranged foreign parent who removes the child to their own country of birth, and then is shielded by their government - was of great specificity and high emotive content, not perhaps the best type of issue with which to test out their or the more classical version of the agenda-setting approach.

To this writer, the agenda-setting notion seems plausible, but only under rather specific conditions. Where the public or a segment of the public, correctly or incorrectly, considers that it has reason to know better than the media agenda, then the hypothesis falls. To that extent, it fails to draw attention to the sources of resistance to having one's agenda set. It is like a theory of pack-journalism, or of fashion, but with no space in it for the boy in the crowd who first shouts out "He's naked!"

The cultivation analysis approach seeks to define the long-term role of television in contemporary society, proposing that heavy television exposure blends attitudes in the direction of mainstream cultural values, and bends them in line with the somewhat conservative political agenda of media owners and the power structure in general (Gerbner 1984: 343). Its strongest empirical support to date comes from U.S. data (contrast Bouwman and Stoppers, 1984 and Bouwman 1984, for the Netherlands; Wober 1984 and 1990, for Britain; and Boch 1984, for the German Federal Republic). It may indeed be that television has played to date a stronger integrative role in the USA than in other nations - Gerbner has drawn analogies both with preindustrial religion, and with gravitational pull (Gerbner 1986: 260-61) - and this in turn may derive from the fragmented character of U.S. culture in which more conventional sources of solidarity are weaker than in longer established nations (Hart & Downing 1992).

The strength of the approach lies for this writer primarily in its attempt to pin down the long-term impact of media taken in the broadcloth, as opposed to the more typical "one-shot/one-topic" analysis of media use by an audience. It presents an interesting comparison with the agenda-setting approach in that both seek to establish longer-range media effects. Cultivation analysis, however, makes a strong claim regarding content-specific effects, in this respect going further than the agenda-setters' resolution merely to focus on what people think about. (Whether that caution is always appropriate is another matter again.)

In fact Shlapentokh (1986: 39-40) produces an interesting amalgam of both positions vis-a-vis pre-transition media in the USSR (although neither discourse seems familiar to him). He argues both that

"this monotony of ritualistic slogans...[and] their continuous repetition...[signal] to all that the...system remains intact, and that the authorities will act to block those who seek to

change the system"

- in other words that the public's action agenda is set by media, at least in significant respects - and that by

"sheer repetition, Soviet ideology has managed to persuade many citizens that the Soviet system of economic planning is more efficient than capitalist market economics, that the "national question" has been solved in the USSR but remains perplexing in Western societies, that a one-party system is the most effective way of meeting the needs of the population, and that political pluralism would be counterproductive."

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In other words, a cultivation hypothesis, complete with indicators.

The most problematic issue in cultivation analysis is the assumption of political and social stability. In general, this may be claimed of the USA since World War II, in that the main conflict issues have generally been relatively short-lived and often regionally or even locally focused. The civil rights movement was at the center of conflict in the decade 1955-65, but overwhelmingly in the South-East; major demonstrations against the war in South-East Asia ran from 1965-75; major social outbursts in African American communities were prominent from 1964-72, but almost never simultaneously, with the exception of response to Dr King's assassination in 1968. The issues raised by these social explosions admittedly went to the very heart of U.S. society, both in its domestic and in its global dimensions, but the explosions themselves did not dissolve the society or the negative forces against which they were directed. Still less did the assassination of one president, and the forced abdication of another. African Americans are still concentrated at the foot of the social hierarchy, and foreign intervention has not ceased despite its taking more cautious forms.

However, this degree of continuity cannot be presumed for all societies. Levendel and Terestenyi (1984) have noted specifically the difficulty in applying cultivation analysis to Hungary, even a number of years before the regime transition. The point at which cultivation analysis might be of most help in analyzing the East European situation could be in examining the degree to which sovietized media did set up certain frameworks that have endured in the public mind - e.g. on the relative merits of job-security in the East as opposed to economic dynamism in the West - even while failing to do so in other respects, such as the merit of blocking foreign travel.

There is no necessity, after all, for elements of the mainstream culture toward which television and other media may be said to bend us, to be logically consistent with each other. The "commercial populism" that Gerbner identifies in one essay (1982) as typically the product of heavy TV viewing in the USA - namely a simultaneous enthusiasm for more government spending and for lower taxes - is clearly contradictory. In this sense, we should perhaps avoid a maximalist expectation of how sovietized media needed to perform in order nonetheless successfully to cultivate certain mind-sets which worked in favor of regime stability, even while others co-existed with them that pulled in opposite directions.

Popul
Demand

Not heard

As indicated, the great strength of the approach lies in its longitudinal method and in its implicit involvement of social memory in the media communication process. At the same time, it is at its strongest when faced with a relatively unchanging societal and mediatic reality, and with a rather strong level of public trust in media (more arguably present, perhaps, among the Russian population in the former USSR than among Poles or Hungarians). The situation in Eastern Europe is further complicated by our knowledge that the parallel lecture-communication system, and the educational system, were overwhelmingly pulling in the same direction as the media system, whereas in the United States there has never been an analogue to the lecture-system, and - unless the Whittle

Corporation's current Channel One project heralds a revolution in the schools - extensive homogeneity between media and schools' messages cannot be presumed.

Diffusion theory (Rogers 1962; Brown 1991) effectively links media with consequent (or existing) interpersonal networks, and its primarily concerned with either news, technical innovations or campaigns, and how these "travel", sociologically speaking. Its roots, as Katz (1960) early pointed out, are in the preoccupation of U.S. rural sociologists with how to help promote technical innovations in agriculture. The presumption is of a straightforward, positive and useful message which will be clearly understood in principle immediately, but which may meet with misguided resistance to its diffusion. Hence the typical concerns of diffusion theorists with the complexity of the message, its observability, its reversability as a practice, its impact on social relations, its relative advantage (e.g. cost-effectiveness, increased comfort or security), and - naturally - with community opinion leaders, peer pressure, and the like.

It is then the kind of definition of communication with which, ironically, many pro-system cadres and media personnel would have gladly concurred in the former soviet bloc. It evokes the famous agit-trains of the early Bolshevik republic, the enthusiastic but tragically misguided collectivization volunteers of the first Five-Year Plan, and later the army of lecturers in the parallel lecture-communication system. The notion of more or less informed audience resistance would need to be replaced with one of an obduracy which needed to be shoved in the right direction to have it yield, rather than manipulated - and which until long into the Gorbachev period ran the constant risk of being defined as invincible ignorance of a subversive stripe, and thus as sanctionable.

There is, however, little room in diffusion theory to conceptualize the potentially system-buckling communication of Solidarity's messages. Nor does diffusion analysis lend itself easily to the review of oppositional readings of the official press, or of the key role of word-of-mouth communication in sovietized societies (Gleicher & Bauer 1953). Its agenda is very different. Least of all, perhaps, is it equipped to deal with the current situation of a press system falling apart, a broadcasting system under the very anxious eye of new, unstable governments, and a telecommunications system that belongs for the most part to a pre-World War II era. Its preoccupations are with benign local change in a generally benign environment.

Gatekeeper theory originally focused only on news. It identified media executives as making patterned decisions as to what news items to select out of the total flow of information reaching the newsroom (White 1949; Snider 1967). The difference between applying this approach in a western capitalist society, and in the former soviet bloc, is that it normally takes a sociologist's research to discover and analyze the patterns and processes behind these decisions (Schlesinger 1989; Tuchman 1978; Gans 1979). In Communist societies, the core issues were formally stated in Party documents and pronouncements, and updated by very regular briefings and phone-calls.

The merit of the approach is that it does directly address the question of power in media, rather than seeing them as spontaneous flowers of democracy. In neither setting, however, is it really credible that media executives themselves should wield so much untrammelled power, seemingly independent of the nomenklatura, or of the corporate owner and major advertisers, depending upon the social system. There is an inappropriate fixation on one level of power in gatekeeper theory.

More recently, Gitlin (1985) and Herman and Chomsky (1988) have given new impetus to the gatekeeper approach, Gitlin by identifying the multiple, often conflicting gatekeepers at work in prime time entertainment TV in the USA, Herman and Chomsky by extending the notion of "gatekeeper" to that of "filter", and especially by drawing attention to the influence of proprietorial gatekeepers in the economic power structure. We might compare Gandy's (1991) redirection of focus of the agenda-setting model on to how the media agenda is set, as an effort in similar vein.

Hough (1977: ch.8), employing "gatekeeper" in the more general sense in which it is used in Eastonian political science (Easton 1965) - not a discourse with which

gatekeeper-analysis seems familiar - asks an interesting question concerning the implied power of the gatekeeper in a political system. He questions whether the gatekeeper is seen simply as someone who sifts (like the copy-taster sitting at the wire-service terminal in a media structure), or as someone who transforms generalized societal inputs into specific demands directed to the political system. Clearly the latter is much the more influential role. In Eastern Europe, one might ask how media executives and those above them to whom they owed their allegiance processed nationalist or ethnic sentiments before and since the regime transition. It is a particularly interesting question because time after time, the expression of long-suppressed nationalist sentiment first emerged after the end of the Brezhnev era in smaller literary publications, and focused on issues of language-survival and details of pre-soviet history, seemingly abstract from contemporary concerns, but in practice almost always charged with immense symbolic significance. Since the regime change, these more delphic manifestations of nationalism have given way to often strident, extremely chauvinist and even militaristic calls to action. The media gatekeeper-role (more widely defined than by its originators) potentially becomes of great relevance at this point, since mostly the ordinary foot-soldiers of journalism and the media are the same individuals as before the change in regime.

The "uses-and-gratifications" approach to media tries to establish which aspects of media output are utilized by which audience segments in the light of their existing desires and preferences. In its inception, the model was implicitly psychological and static (cf. Elliott 1974), as Weibull (in Rosengren et al., eds., 1985: 125) acknowledged in a major symposium on the approach:

"A certain media system with certain inherent properties was taken as given, and the question asked was what use the individual made of this system and what needs he or she gratified through media use."

The symposium certainly offered a series of critiques of this model (see the contributions by McQuail, Weibull and Lull). The concluding essay by Blumler, Gurevitch and Katz acknowledged a series of hitherto unresolved issues in the approach, such as the constraining features of texts, cross-national comparisons, and generally the need to relate uses-and-gratifications research to the communication process as a whole.

However, the dominant model in the symposium was what might be termed the "public opinion" vision of society. This conceives of society as an accumulation of individual viewpoints which may or may not alter over time, which may be internally stratified (e.g. by life-cycle position), but which constitute the tranquil or heaving sea of the general mood. It is a mass-psychological version of Max Weber's methodological individualism. Unfortunately this version lacks Weber's sense for history or structure, aside from media structure, and even then presents us only with an abstract choice between "responsive" and "unresponsive" (i.e. insufficiently market-driven) media structures (Palmgreen et al., in Rosengren et al., eds. 1985: 35).

Attention is scant in the symposium to power, the state, conflict, economic forces, structural relations between social classes, societal change or historical development. Change is said rather vapidly to be the "norm" (op.cit.: 35), yet it is not posited or conceptualized in any specific manner, and turns up under the sub-heading "Challenges for the Future" (op.cit.: 33), rather than being listed under achievements already attained through the benefit and under the rubric of the uses-and-gratifications model.

In general, a number of the essays in the volume exhibit a poverty of understanding sociological theory, with Palmgreen et al. confusing functionalist approaches with static approaches, instead of recognizing that functionalism can incorporate dynamic equilibrium and even conflict (Coser 1956; Russett 1966). There is also a poverty in understanding the basic economics of media, with Palmgreen and Rayburn defining the decline of newspapers or failure of TV shows simply in relation to audience popularity (op.cit.: 71).

Wenner links together demographic variables, dispositions (i.e. political views), habitual media exposure, "consequent" beliefs, and what he terms the "media reference foreground" of gratifications sought and obtained from media. He then identifies this commercial audience researcher's operationalization of contractual tasks as the heart of media research. He makes no wider reference to societal structures, and by not doing so limits his grasp to that of a simple social cartographer, rather than assigning himself the task of a comprehensive explanation of the media-society relationship. Levy and Windahl's essay similarly privileges the immediate in media research - why this program, that channel, this medium - rather than longer term impact, providing in so doing a kind of snapshot sociology.

Faced with the transitions in Eastern Europe, adherents of this position would seem likely to ask the following questions (at best). What did Eastern Europeans derive from their media system before, during and after the transition. One senses they might have to be prompted to differentiate between nations, that they would certainly have to be reminded to differentiate between elites and the more general public in responses to media, and that they would be obtuse in recognizing the roles of either marginal or underground media, since their focus is always on mainstream media provision. They might be adept at acknowledging a null-hypothesis case of media gratification in the instance of boring or frontally propagandistic sovietized media output, but one imagines they would be less successful in tracing the distinction Shlapentokh explores between the ideological and the pragmatic audience responses to media, or, still less, in tracking the declining excitement of glasnost or the cumulative impact of economic stagnation, global decline, and the other array of factors in media and political transition outlined earlier. Each one of these topics is progressively further removed from the uses-and-gratifications lens.

In particular, the relation between media and the public sphere, or between media and political movements, are completely out of frame, since their mass-psychologistic focus drives them only to examine a direct relation between given media output and its atomized, at best stratified, consumers-cum-opinion-holders. Finally, the role of owners, directors or - in the case of the soviet system - Party or KGB authorities, is invisible, a non-problem, in this tradition of media research. Quirky in the western context, to say the least, such an omission would be positively perverse in the eastern one.

The accusation of media-centrism cannot be laid at the door of media system dependency theory, which explicitly addresses the relationship between media and other social institutions as an effort to explain the role of the former. In the fifth edition of their text *Theories Of Mass Communication*, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach identify a series of "systems" - politics, economics, religion, family, education, the military, recreation, the law (305) - with which the media "system" interacts. The list is reminiscent in some ways of Talcott Parsons' (1951) quadripartite conceptualization of society into economic, political, cultural and personality sub-systems, and in other ways (with the exception of labor unions) of Althusser's (1971) listing of "ideological State apparatuses." The adoption of the term "system" is not argued for, so it is unclear whether it is intended to be more or less equivalent to "institution", or whether it is designed to ascribe an internally systemic, equilibrated character to media and the other complexes listed, as per Parsonian uses of the terms "system" and "subsystem."

The media system dependency approach is certainly functionalist in general terms, or to be more exact, a combination of functionalist, evolutionist and phenomenological (rather than symbolic interactionist, as the authors claim). They deny they are functionalists, claiming (incorrectly) that "classical structural functionalists" regard conflict as aberrant or non-existent (op.cit.: 320-21), whereas they see conflict as normal and as promoting change.

The role of media, the reason media can be seen to create dependency upon their operation, is that

"the social world is held together by fragile subjective

understandings of reality",

and the media function to "resolve" the chronic contemporary problem of "ambiguity, threat and social change" (op.cit.: 315-16). "Conflict theorists" (read Marxists), on the other hand, they accuse of seeing media as "a tool employed by ruling elites to further their interests" (op.cit.: 320). The relation between the power structure and the media, in whatever ways in might be conceptualized, is given no more shrift than this, except to note that the media system's "primary goal" in capitalist society "is to make a profit" (op.cit.: 305). How this meshes with its primary function, namely to socialize and inform (op.cit.: 316,321) is not addressed in the chapter.

The evolutionist component of their concept of media system dependency is to be found in their claim that there are inherent expansionist tendencies in all such "systems":

"...the media, like all other systems, seek opportunities to maximize their resources control and minimize their dependency, that is to create asymmetric relations in which they are more powerful" (op.cit.: 321).

There is a kind of personification or species-being projection at work here, with the media system implicitly conceived of as a single actor and identified as a successfully adapting aggressive species, as opposed to some unspecified "spotted owl" system. The particular system they flag as ceding ground to the media system is the political system, by which in turn they mean the electoral process and possibly the presidency, rather than the power structure itself (op.cit.: 322).

It has to be said that this theoretical construct, which seems designed above all to try to account for the growth to societal prominence of mass media over the past century, is somewhat ramshackle (even though it represents a great advance over the rendition of the construct in earlier editions of the book). The problems noted above - imprecision in the adoption of "system" as a concept, personification of "system", vagueness about the power structure, and the determinedly functionalist (malgre eux) adaptive-integrative-evolutionist role assigned to media as information-purveyors - certainly do not assist media system dependency theory to address the issues raised by the transitions in Eastern Europe.

Unfair, it may be said again: it was not developed to do so. Very good; but in that case why was their text not entitled *Theories of Mass Communication in the United States*? To be fair, in the fourth edition DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach did refer to "the peculiar media-political system relation in America" which provided political information that would be unavailable in "other societies (such as the USSR)" (op.cit., 4th ed.: 240). At the same time, in the earlier version, their statement was more a celebration of American exceptionalism than an acknowledgement of the constraints of multiple societal patterns of media use on the construction of an adequate theory of media communication.

Thus for all the strength of its laudable effort to integrate a theory of media communication with a theory of society, media system dependency theory cannot satisfactorily conceptualize the former sovietized system whose dual information provision was designed to set the boundaries of permissible discourse and to filter out ideologically unsound communications. Nor can the theory begin to handle the tremendous fluctuations in East European media which accumulated through the later 1980s. Media professionals in Eastern Europe were as confused and divided about what was going on as was the general public, and not least the nomenklatura - how could they "resolve the problem of ambiguity" when a resolution was unavailable? If we turn to samizdat media, then the theory also offers little help. Only in the case of western broadcasting stations was there an alternative mode of resolving some ambiguity made available, for if Shlapentokh's analysis is in any way valid, ambiguity was built in to the system - and even then during the years of rapid transition, those stations too offered little solace to the confused.

Conclusions

It is clear by now that these various theories tend to have limited value when dealing with the role of media in Eastern Europe over the past few years in particular. They all tend to presume a basic stability, where agendas are peacefully set, diffusion trickles out to farmers or physicians, audiences seek and generally find gratifications, are cultivated into the cultural mainstream, and confidently depend upon their media system to make sense of social reality for them. Societal crisis, endemic labor and ethnic strife, wrenching economic transition, gross governmental deception and manipulation of information, are none of them peculiar to the world, but do seem peculiar to the world of media theory.

With the partial exception of cultivation analysis which regularly registers national and cultural differences (Tamborini & Choi 1990; Morgan 1990), mass communication theories have repeatedly been presented as free-floating formulations, not tied to any one time or place, rather like Karl Mannheim's "freischwebende Intellektuellen." This implicit ethnocentrism may be argued to produce in turn a trained incapacity even on domestic U.S. territory to focus on a malign rather than a supposedly benign communication process, and thus to steer attention away from racism, the subordination of women, the position of immigrants and refugees, homophobia, the perils of the workplace, prisons and jails, health uncare.

I will suggest again, as I have above, that this corpus of theoretical discourse has actually pivoted on two issues. One is the relative economic and political stability (not equity) of U.S. society. The other has been the praiseworthy attempt by communication researchers to challenge Joseph Klapper's and his cohort's virtual dismissal of media communication as of minimal societal significance. I also think Klapper's conclusion and the condition of U.S. society may well be related, insofar as Klapper was able to argue his case not only because clumsy prior formulations of media impact enabled his critique to stick, but in part because he was researching in a very orderly societal context (the civil rights movement in the South always excepted). It is significant, I think, that the only media researcher at the time Klapper was writing who saw media as exerting a powerful role in societal change was Lerner (1959), with his theory of media as "mobility multipliers." Whatever critiques may be leveled against Lerner's work, he was at least focusing his attention outside the Great Island of the United States of America.

Yet those who sought to dispute Klapper's dismissal of media impact also did so from within the relative lack of economic or political convulsion characteristic of the experience of the majority population in the USA. A "steady-state" society and media operation are the backdrop for uninterrupted cultivation processes to get to work, for media agendas to be stably set over time, for media uses and gratifications to fluctuate gently in response to taste and fashion, for the "media system" peacefully to extend its operation into the "political (viz. electoral) system."

Diffusion theory is by definition about change, and in that sense much closer to Lerner, but has focused almost exclusively on piecemeal local change and highly specific issues. These are worthy and important topics for research, without a doubt, but are on a rather different plane from the kinds of societal change we have been reviewing.

Gatekeeper research emphasized from the outset the socially conservative character of editorial decision-making, a point amplified by Gitlin, and considerably amplified by Herman and Chomsky. Furthermore, these three latter writers made it clear they were not producing a general theory of media operation, but that their focus was specifically on the USA. Their framework also made possible the consideration of societal conflict and change, and took the persistence of the status quo and the evacuation of the sting of conflict as issues to be elucidated rather than taken for granted.

We have seen, by contrast, the explanatory strength of a number of political science approaches in dealing with power, change and conflict, even though they typically failed to address the key communication dimensions of their subject-matter in any conceptually disciplined fashion. Habermas' work alone engages with communication issues, but

regrettably within such a strongly normative theoretical straitjacket - the ideal speech situation - that it deprives him of intermediate conceptual instruments with which to engage in the analysis of specific situations.

In particular, attention to alternative media, political movements' communication, and civil society/antipolitics/alternative public sphere discourses are notably absent from any of the mediatic theoretical treatments surveyed. Issues of media as public service institutions or commercial institutions are also notably absent.

We must therefore face the fact that these two bodies of theoretical discourse need each other rather badly, as I have endeavored to demonstrate empirically by reference to Eastern Europe, though the case could have been demonstrated from many other quarters of the planet. Their seeming mutual incomprehension is not to anyone's advantage. The State, political movements, civil society and the public sphere, international relations, the economy, are all necessary concerns for communication research, as are media and communication operations integral to those institutions and processes involved in the turmoil in Eastern Europe and elsewhere on the planet.

Footnotes

(1) Hough (1977: ch.8) is a leading voice among the pragmatists, who has attacked functionalist theorists in political science, not for the adequacy of their concepts, but for what he considers their inexplicable inability to apply them to Soviet realities. In particular, he argued that the Soviet state's regional, city and district entities were just as much processors of bread-and-butter demands as was any western polity: they were not simply organizations for the perfection of repression. Complementarily, Benn (1989: 124) has observed of claims that the Soviet regime was totally in control of its public:

"Effective control presupposes effective feedback. How, for instance, can a regime control public opinion if it has no reliable way of finding out what the public really thinks?"

Benn also points out rather soberly (1989: 42,84,172) how little interest the Soviet regime ever displayed in the psychology of effective manipulation, and how it preferred to confront, exhort or mobilize supposedly socially malleable human beings ("existence determines consciousness..."). Both analysts have a different empirical focus, but combine in de-mythologizing the notion of absolute Soviet power. Hough, however, in the text above veers polemically to the point of virtually evacuating any repressive content to Soviet state policies, rather as the political scientists upon whose work he depends (Easton, Almond) do for the western polities they theorize.

The fundamentalists would include such writers as Solzhenitsyn, or on a much lower level Kirkpatrick, with her "raison des etats-unis" notion of the existence of an essential difference between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes (Kirkpatrick 1982).

(2) Hough (1977: ch.9) reports on his comparative study of Pravda and Izvestiya contents in 1951 and 1971 that he found in the latter period that positions on regime policies had come to be supported by evidence rather than mere assertion. He also found that problems were much more likely to be traced to general causes rather than to individual failures. What he terms the "dramatization of protest" (e.g. picketing or leafletting) was banned still, but the circulation of some critical commentary was possible so long as it avoided the known nerve-centers of the system. He adds that "one of the most useful ways of visualizing the changes in communication policy is in terms of a greater breadth in audience to which and within which a freer flow of policy-relevant information was permitted" (1977: 201). One might contest his argument as unduly vague about exactly what constituted "policy-relevant information", and also his failure to address the problem of secrecy within the scientific-military-industrial sector (Cockburn 1983: ch.5). Nonetheless, his emphasis on the fact of change in state communication policy since Stalin,

glacial in pace though it may have felt within the USSR, is an important one if we are to understand the processes by which these regimes eventually subsided.

(3) "Later, one officer told me that my trial had reversed his attitude toward the regime, and that he no longer felt himself to be a believing "Soviet man." This kind of thing is well understood by the authorities, who see to it that even the best-prepared political trials are not open to the public. "Soviet man" possesses, in regard to politics, something like the human body's innate feeling for space. Just as instinct keeps a person away from the edge of the abyss, so instinct (and not reason) keeps "Soviet man" at a distance from words and deeds that have a political coloration. And the fact that this is a matter of instinct, and not of reason, has two consequences. On the one hand, "Soviet man" exaggerates what is forbidden to him; on the other, he is amazed by the harshness with which the system reacts to any "violation." He stays as far away as possible from the edge of the abyss. But when someone falls into it, he gasps: "Is it really that deep?"

(4) Whether "NSM" research offers an adequate description of any of these movements, "old" or "new", is another matter entirely. Pragmatism is not the universal hallmark of these movements' strategies (for example, the women of Greenham Common in England in 1983-85), nor was a totalizing ideology the hallmark of socialist movements earlier this century (cf. Lidtke 1985, on German Social Democracy up to 1933). Furthermore, their implicit identification of contemporary movements as "single-issue" is very problematic, seemingly equating a challenge to the nuclear arms race or to the roles of women in society with the demand of a group of parents for a new traffic light on their street.

(5) For a partial exception see Thomas Rochon's study of the British anti-nuclear movement (Dalton & Kuechler 1990: ch.6).

(6) The question of censorship must be periodized in assessing these nations' communication history. Soviet censorship went through a series of thaws and freezes from the death of Stalin. Labor camps continued to operate, though not on the same scale, and psycho-prisons were added to them in the USSR under Brezhnev. Eventually under Gorbachev censorship was gradually and spottily reduced in the direction only of the degree of liberalization that had been achieved in Poland and Hungary without - at that time - appearing to threaten the pillars of those regimes (e.g. a single Party, pro-Soviet foreign policy, avoidance of such delicate historical topics as the 1956 Hungarian revolution or the 1941 Soviet massacre of the Polish officer corps in Katyn forest). I say "spottily" because glasnost was conspicuous by its rarity outside Moscow, Leningrad and the Baltic republics, and because all these regimes controlled the importation of foreign media, including books (e.g. Remmer 1989), and because they all used their monopoly over paper production and print circulation to limit the diffusion of materials of which they disapproved (Kowalski 1988; McNair 1991; Vatchnadze 1992). The communication policy hallmark of the 1980s, then, in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, was the gradual relaxation of censorship penalties, always depending upon prominence of the media outlet, the topic, the juncture and the particular administrative entity involved. We shall return to this theme again when we discuss samizdat and marginal media.

Censorship must also be problematized as well as periodized. Here the Hungarian case is particularly instructive because the regime there went furthest in lifting controls (Kende 1985), which in turn displaced them into the minds of the communicators. As Kende puts it (op.cit.: 44-45):

"This, then, is the first and most important - and invisible - facet of censorship: the consciousness of journalists and editors. A consciousness which in most cases is coupled with professional vigilance and a subtle political instinct. A cultural official even with minimum experience knows which style or message, what words or types of arguments, specific references or hidden implications he is free to tolerate

without any problem, and which, on the other hand, are those on which he must at least engage in some "consultations".

Similarly, writing in 1977, Krakovoy (in Haraszti 1979: 149-58) put it thus:

"The poet senses in advance that, innocent as it might seem, the use of such and such an adjective might put the continuance of his creative work in danger; in order to avoid his entire work being defined as foreign to the reality, the novelist will proceed to a detailed selection of the background to his stories and of his heroes' character traits; the advertising designer will make his own the notion that in practice there are no impartial forms or colors; the gifted director will instantly sense the moment when the ambiance of such and such a sequence is becoming unacceptably pessimistic."

Given this subtle but powerful process, Haraszti (1987) argues that we need to consider

"...not only...the outer regulations...but also - and primarily - the inner gravitation, the downward pull, of the artist's imagination...where censorship...is not the simple oppressor of those who create culture but is their natural home" (1987: 8).

He especially emphasizes how for artists in a modified censorship where they receive State stipends and privileges,

"the state represents not a monolithic body of rules but rather a live network of lobbies. We play with it, we know how to use it, and we have allies and enemies at the controls... Generosity from above will be matched by docility from below...It is like an empty sack that artists with a secure existence fill with anything that will not burst it" (1987: 78-79).

These considerations help to demythologize the David-and-Goliath model of sovietized censorship popular in the West, and simultaneously force us to consider the censorship situation in the West.

(7) As Hough (1977: 202) has argued,

"Given the very low level of political policy information of the mass of the population in all countries, the processes by which ideas penetrate to politically relevant elements of the population and especially the processes by which ideas and policies are changed, are enormously more complex than any facile statements about the autonomy of the media of communication would indicate."

(8) The question of media audiences in Eastern Europe is a complex one. I have already indicated what I consider to be the strengths of Shlapentokh's analysis of Soviet public opinion, but his analysis would not necessarily apply to Polish or Hungarian audiences in the same degree. Ellen Propper Mickiewicz (1981) has summarized a number of empirical audience-studies carried out in the former Soviet Union, many of which suggested that Soviet media had little impact on political consciousness. Zimmerman (1987: 339-43) has summarized some audience data from the 1980s Soviet emigre survey already

referred to, including samizdat media and foreign broadcast listening. At the same time, Sinyavsky (1990) has argued that Soviet ideology has had a long-term impact on patterns of thinking, at least in the former Soviet Union. And finally, there is the question of the younger generation and their perspectives (Riordan 1989; Bushnell 1990; Bachkatov & Wilson 1988; Ramet 1991: ch.10). I hope to address these issues more adequately in my upcoming monograph of which this article represents, as I said at the outset, the "jalons."

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[The writer's apologies for its length, but the variety of discourses at issue in this study, and the focus on three different nations, makes it virtually unavoidable.]

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