NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: HOW THINGS WERE DONE IN ODESSA:

CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

IN A SOVIET CITY OF THE 1970s

AUTHOR: Maurice Friedberg
University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

This report is based upon research supported in part by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research with funds provided by the U. S. Departments of State and Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency, through the Council's Contract #701 with the University of Illinois for the Soviet Interview Project. Subsequent to the expiration of federal support and the Council's Contract #701, the author has volunteered this report to the Council for distribution within the U. S. Government. By agreement with the Department of State, the costs of duplication and distribution are covered by the Council under its Grant #1006-555009 from the Department under Title VIII. The analysis and interpretations in this report are those of the author, and not of the Council or any part of the U. S. Government.

DATE: May, 1989

Contents

Preface

The establishment by Peter the Great, early in the eighteenth century, of the city of St. Petersburg (today's Leningrad), provided Russia, in the tsar's famous utterance, with a "window to Europe." That window was a Northern one. Another window, from the South, was opened shortly thereafter with the founding of Odessa, now Russia's most important port on the Black Sea. A major industrial and cultural center blessed with a mild climate, beaches suitable for bathing, and a relatively cosmopolitan population--all of them rarities in the USSR--Odessa has long attracted painters and writers, vacationers and tourists. Accordingly, Odessa is among the very few Soviet cities, other than major administrative centers, to be described in publications aimed at Soviet as well as foreign visitors. Several of these, such as the tourist guide In Sunny Odessa (Po solnechnoi Odesse, 2nd ed., Odessa, "Maiak," 1964) or the historically oriented The Streets Tell Tales (K. Sakrisyan and M. Stavnitser, Ulitsy rasskazyvaiut, Odessa, "Maiak," 1973) are conventional enough. Some, such as Odessa (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1968) are bilingual, in this case Russian and Spanish. Others are more original, as is, for example Dedicated to Odessa (Odesse posviashchaetsia, Odessa, "Maiak," 1971), a collection of Russian and Ukrainian prose and verse describing the city. The technical execution of some, such as the trilingual Russian, Ukrainian and English album The

Odessa Art Museum (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1976) is primitive. Others, such as the also trilingual Odessa: Architecture, Monuments (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1984) are attractively produced and feature some striking photographs of the city's sights.

With all that, however, no serious sociological study exists of Odessa or, for that matter, any other Soviet city. The one book that comes close to fitting the description is the work of an American scholar. The late Merle Fainsod's Smolensk Under Soviet Rule (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958) describes the workings of a Soviet city on the eve of World War II on the basis of Soviet secret police archives that were seized by the German and, ultimately, by the American army. Fascinating as Fainsod's book is, its data is now half a century old.

The impetus for the present study was the arrival in the United States (and also Israel and West Germany) in the second half of the 1970's of a quarter of a million émigrés from the USSR, most of them Jews, Germans and Armenians. It was the largest such migration since the end of World War II which resulted in the creation in Western Europe, and later also in the United States and Canada, of a large community of former Soviet citizens. These displaced persons, primarily forced laborers deported to wartime Germany and also prisoners of war, were studied in the late 1940's and early 1950's, by Soviet affairs specialists from the Harvard Interview Project.

The findings, which dealt with many areas of Soviet life in 1940, the last peacetime year, were subsequently published by many scholars, including this writer, then a graduate student at Columbia University.

Among the new arrivals in the 1970's the largest single contingent of émigrés, over ten thousand persons, came from Odessa. And while it was true that the overwhelming majority of them were Jewish, it was felt this fact was less of a problem than it would have been if some other Soviet city were involved. In the first place, even after the war Jews constituted over ten percent of Odessa's population, and they were to be found--as they always could--in every occupational group, from port stevedores and unskilled workers to the cultural and intellectual elite. (Unlike the 1920's, however, because of official anti-Semitic discrimination, there were no Jews in the 1970's in Party bureaucracy, or in the military and police apparatus.) Hence Odessa's Jews who have lived in that city virtually since its inception, were not only indigenous population, but because of their professional composition not altogether unrepresentative of the city as a whole. The decision to interview a large sample of émigré Odessans on problems relating to the city's cultural and intellectual life as well as interethnic relations and religious observance was mine alone. These questions happen to lie within my own area of professional competence. I am a literary specialist and a cultural historian with a strong interest in problems of ethnicity, politics and religion in the USSR. Moreover, other aspects of life in the USSR, such as the workings of economic institutions, family

budgets and medical care, were then being investigated by other researchers associated with the Soviet Interview Project at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign directed by Professor James R. Millar.

My original list of potential informants, some thirty in number, was prepared by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). Of that sample, about two-thirds agreed to be interviewed. Subsequently, the number of informants grew to a hundred and two by means of "snowballing": informants would introduce me to other émigré Odessans who, in their opinion, had valuable information to share. I am in their debt. They have been generous with their time and many were also gracious hosts who treated me as a welcome guest intent on describing their beloved Odessa to Americans. Unfortunately, I am not free to reveal their names.

The professional composition of my informants, nearly all of whom left the USSR in the latter part of the 1970's, was as follows:

Engineers, research scientists, and technicians	21
College and university faculty	14
College and university students	6
Physicians	6
Performing musicians	6
Secondary school teachers	4
Librarians	4
Theater actors	4
Sculptors	3
Journalists	3
Economists	3

Lawyers and judges	3
Opera and operetta administrators	2
Professional chess players	2
Film scriptwriters	2
Circus magicians	2
Professional writers	2
Professional painters	2
Theater directors	2
Television producers and announcers	2
Public park administrators	2
Music impresarios	2

In addition, there were one each of the following:.film actor, film director, theater gymnastics coach, poet, architect, technical translator, director of a worker's theater, computer specialist, museum employee, professional reciter of poetry and prose, and a career organizer of parades and public spectacles. Four informants gave more than one profession, e.g., a poet who was also a free-lance journalist or a performing musician who also taught on a part-time basis.

That perceptions of a single event or process may greatly vary is hardly surprising, particularly so when these begin to dim in memory. Most of the approximately hundred Odessans whose testimony, usually several hours of unstructured Russian conversation, constitutes the material of this study, had left Odessa between three and ten years earlier. Occasionally, there were disparities in their accounts of life in that city. Perhaps the only reasonable way to reconcile these differences is suggested by an old ballad of that famous Black Sea port:

Я вам не скажу за всю Одессу,
Вся Одесса очень велика.

I can't tell you about all of Odessa,
All of Odessa is very large.

INTRODUCTION

It is no mere accident, as the Soviet locution goes, that the title of this study was borrowed from a famous short story by Isaac Babel (translated, incidentally, some two decades ago by this writer and Robert A. Maguire). As work progressed on this undertaking of the Soviet Interview Project, in the course of which I interviewed approximately one hundred former residents of Odessa who left their city in the 1970s, the impression grew stronger that something of the ambience of Babel's tales survived the decades of Stalin's oppressive drabness, survived even the travail of World War II and the moderately repressive years of Brezhnev. For all the outer trappings of a large Soviet city--Odessa's population nearly doubled in the aftermath of the war, surpassing a million by the mid-1970s--Odessa appears to have retained more color, more spunk, more irreverence than most Soviet cities. Moreover, with very few exceptions, our informants spoke of their native town with surprising warmth, affection, and considerable nostalgia. On this score there was virtual unanimity among the émigré schoolteachers and engineers, musicians and lawyers, actors and filmmakers, journalists and professors---the men and women interviewed for this project. The admittedly lopsided choice of informants' professions (I talked with two circus magicians and two professional chess players, but no factory workers or office clerks) was prompted by a desire to obtain as much information as possible about the city's cultural institutions---its schools and universities, newspapers and television stations, theaters and libraries, museums and concert halls, film studio and lecture series. An effort was made to obtain as much information as possible about the Communist Party's controls over these activities, and about the population's occasional efforts to circumvent some of them. A genuinely multiethnic city, and one with a considerable

variety of religious institutions as well, Odessa provides also an opportunity to observe in action Soviet nationality policy, as well as informal intercommunal relations. Finally, because Odessa is a major tourist center (there are many sanatoria and rest homes in the vicinity), it affords a chance at examining some Soviet patterns of mass entertainment, much of it heavily politicized.

Several factors set Odessa aside from other Soviet cities of comparable size. Best known is its rich cultural legacy. It is the city of several important Russian writers--Isaac Babel, above all, but also Yuri Olesha, Eduard Bagritsky, Valentin Kataev, and the team of the humorists, Ilf and Petrov--as well as the center of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Mandele Mocher Sforim lived in Odessa, as did Chaim Nachman Bialik. Odessa gave the world some of its most famous performing musicians, David Oistrakh and Emil Gilels among them. A view of one of the city's sights--the stairs at the waterfront--was immortalized in Potemkin, a classic of world cinema.

Yet Odessa also offers its citizens and visitors a number of very practical advantages. Its moderate climate stands in sharp contrast to that of most Russian cities, and Odessa is among the very few Soviet urban centers that is not only a seaport, but actually has boardwalks and beaches suitable for bathing. (So rare are these attractions in the USSR, that tens of thousands of people from colder regions flock there annually for their summer vacations, and a great many settle in Odessa upon retirement.) Other attractions loom large as well in a country plagued with shortages. Scores of informants emphasized (and none volunteered any information to the contrary) that Odessa is among the best supplied cities in the country. Fresh fruits and vegetables are available all year, and the selection and quality of foodstuffs found on Privoz, Odessa's marketplace where privately-grown produce is sold, is exceeded, in the opinion of some cognoscenti, only by the bazaars of Georgia and Uzbekistan. Odessa, it appears, is

among the very few cities where fresh fish may be bought---freshly caught by fishermen or freshly stolen from state-owned fisheries. Privately-made cheap wine is sold by the glass, and alcoholism in Odessa (as so many other of the city's attributes) is thus Mediterranean and not Northern Russian in character: not for nothing is Odessa known as Russia's Marseilles. Locally manufactured (legally or semi-legally) products that are on sale include also edible oils, chocolate and candy. Moreover, Odessans were also the beneficiaries of the fact that their port was the location of the final quality control of perishable goods exported abroad or imported into the USSR through the Black Sea merchant marine route. As a result, lightly spoiled (or even defectively packaged) goods were not reloaded on trains bound for Moscow or Leningrad (or, conversely, on ships going to Italy or France or the Arab states), but were quickly sold in Odessa at reduced prices. Thus, Odessans were occasionally treated to slightly damaged pineapples, oranges and bananas, or to imperfectly manufactured clothing and household goods. In addition, the black market was always well supplied by Soviet sailors who smuggled in from abroad transistor radios, jeans, women's stockings and similar items of Western European, American or Japanese manufacture. This flea market did booming business once a week, on Sundays, until it was closed in 1973 or 1974. (Since that time there are only government-owned stores that sell used items on commission.) Prices were high: in the mid-1970s, chicken sold on the free market for ten rubles a kilogram, roughly two days' wages of an average worker. But at least it was available. Elsewhere in the country it was often not to be found for love or money.

In one respect, however, life in Odessa was harder than in most cities of comparable size. Housing was grossly inadequate even by Soviet standards, and in very short supply. One reason for that was the population explosion during the postwar period that was already referred to which, however, was not accompanied by sufficient construction. That, in turn, was a result

of the fact that as a non-industrial city, and an old city at that, Odessa was assigned low priority in government's budgets for new housing. This hypothesis was advanced by several informants. Communal apartments were the rule rather than the exception as late as the mid-1970s. One informant, a prominent enough musician who was also active in public life, reported that he, his wife and their son and daughter occupied a single room in an apartment where kitchen and bathroom were shared by six families. There were lines in front of the bathroom and constant squabbles in the kitchen where a dozen primus stoves competed for space. The kitchen and the bathroom were cleaned in turn by the six families. One or two of the more prosperous ones wished to hire the services of a maid, but this was vetoed by the others on the ground that hired help cannot be trusted to do a good job. The normal housing allocation, it seems, was four square meters per person, but more space was alloted to persons occupying relatively prominent jobs. A department head in one of Odessa's institutions of higher learning related that his family of six lived in relatively privileged conditions, a room twenty-four meters by twenty-four meters. There was a long waiting period for telephone service, up to ten years. This was, of course, a major inconvenience, and it also affected the city's social etiquette. In Odessa, it was generally considered quite acceptable to drop in on friends without prior warning: unavailability of telephones was the accepted excuse. Finally, in the mid-1970s, Odessans had to put up with another serious problem. Between midnight and five in the morning there was no water in the city's faucets and one could not flush the toilet, either. Also, as in pre-Soviet days, the city has a high crime rate. Some sections of the city, such as the working-class district of Peresyp', are decidedly unsafe, as are most of Odessa's parks after dusk. Hold-ups, muggings and knifings are common enough (as they were, one

might add, a century ago under the tsars), and many citizens are afraid to attend outdoor dances that are held on weekend evenings. Whether the incidence of crime is that much higher in Odessa than elsewhere in the USSR is debatable. On the other hand, judging from the tales of our informants, Odessa must surely be one of the most corrupt cities in all of the Soviet Union. Bribes were taken for granted and kickbacks, too, and phony documents were commonplace. Government decrees and official instructions were routinely circumvented (sometimes all this is, ultimately, for the good because the instructions are impossible to carry out or are harmful to the interests of the State itself) and Second Economy flourishes. There was, in the mid-1970s, large-scale black marketeering, theft of State property and illegal manufacture. At least two of our informants were children of "underground millionaires" whose activities were protected by senior Party, government and police officials who saw to it that even when caught, the illegal entrepreneurs would not suffer unduly harsh punishment. Nepotism and corruption, of course, have a long tradition in Russia. They are hardly a product of the Soviet regime. Suffice it to recall Gogol's Inspector General, after a hundred and fifty years still the greatest comedy in Russian repertory, in which nearly all protagonists offer or accept bribes, and only one, a policeman, is chastised for taking more than appropriate for his lowly rank. Still, one could not, while hearing some of the more outlandish tales of "how things were done in Odessa," escape the impression that bribes, lies, and forged papers were, in the 1970s, at least in part the citizenry's response to unrealistic goals promulgated by the authorities, and also their callous disregard of their subjects' most minimal needs. Unable to influence the authorities' decisions and to obtain redress of their legitimate grievances through legal channels, the men and women of Odessa resorted to subterfuge and

deceit. Significantly, there were two separate codes of ethics (and of etiquette). Stealing and cheating were not--even in retrospect--viewed as reprehensible when practiced by individuals in their dealings with the State and its agencies. They were, by contrast, viewed as unacceptable in private life.

I. Ethnicity

No major city in Imperial Russia--or, for that matter, during the first decades of the Soviet regime, until World War II--had the ethnic variety that Odessa did. Indeed, the linguistic, religious and national mosaic of the city was among its chief attractions and accounts also for much of the exotic allure of the stories of Alexander Kuprin, and Babel, and their contemporaries. The Russians were, of course, most influential politically, but there were also Ukrainians--especially on the outskirts--as well as Jews, Greeks, Moldavians, Poles, Germans, Turks, Karaites, Bulgarians, Armenians, and even a sprinkling of Frenchmen and Italians. By the 1970s, however, as a result of the war, Soviet deportations of nationalities Stalin considered suspect (the Greeks, for example) as well as assimilation into the dominant Russian culture, the onetime variety faded. With virtual unanimity, some one hundred informants described Odessa as essentially a Russian city that is only formally part of the Ukrainian Republic, the population of which, Russians aside, consists of thoroughly Russified Ukrainians, Jews and Moldavians (Rumanians), as well as small pockets of equally Russified Poles, Germans and Bulgarians. While there are Ukrainian newspapers, a Ukrainian theater and Ukrainian schools (only three or so out of a hundred), the language of instruction in colleges and universities and the language spoken in the streets is almost exclusively Russian. Russian with a Ukrainian accent and, occasionally,

Yiddish inflection, but Russian nevertheless. True, street signs are bilingual, and official forms in government offices in Ukrainian only--- but, with only rare exceptions, Odessans filled them out in Russian. Preference for Russian was also demonstrated by the chronic inability of the Ukrainian theater to fill its performances, regardless of the play. Often, tickets were distributed free of charge at factories and busloads of soldiers were brought in as well as of schoolchildren. By contrast, Russian theaters were well attended. In fact, a theater director informed, the city's Ukrainian children's theater often staged plays in Russian.

A park administrator recalled that very few among the retirees resting on the benches read Chernomorskaya kommuna, Odessa's Ukrainian newspaper. Similarly, the local television station's Ukrainian programs were confined to late evening hours, and the park where he worked, though named for the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko, offered very few activities in Ukrainian. Readings by Volodymyr Ivanovich, a local author, were among the few such programs. There was, however, one major exception to this process of Russification.

When the decision was to be made which of the city's schools would be turned into elite institutions offering two hours of daily instruction in English, German or French, the final choice was made to use for that purpose Odessa's Ukrainian schools. Thus, Ukrainian schools became, overnight, the most desirable in Odessa's school system. Parents eager to have their children master a foreign language (and also to study that country's history, geography and literature) would hire tutors in Ukrainian to make them eligible for admission to the newly fashionable Ukrainian schools which were the only ones offering intensive training in foreign languages.

Except for Odessa's small literary and artistic intelligentsia, there was little sense of Ukrainian nationalism, even in its relatively mild

cultural and nonpolitical variety. Among writers, journalists and actors one might come across some manifestations of Ukrainian ethnic assertiveness, but even then only in private, at a social gathering, for instance, and certainly without the militancy and defiance that are rather common in Kiev and in the Western Ukraine, which was annexed by the USSR from Poland in 1939.

The doubling of Odessa's population between the end of the war and the mid-1970s was largely the result of migration of Ukrainian farmers from neighboring districts. Driven by poverty and the hope of a better life in the city, they found menial jobs easily enough, whether at factories or construction sites or as janitors and domestic servants (There was, indeed, a location in the city--Zhizhikov Street trolley station, corner of Preobrazhensky Street--where such newly-arrived farmers and prospective employers congregated), but obtaining housing was another matter. The authorities attempted to stem this unauthorized influx, primarily by means of denying them residence permits (propiska), but to no avail. The newcomers built shantytowns on the edge of the city and refused to budge. One particularly resourceful group of homeless Ukrainians hit on an ingenious tactic. Aware of the fact that Soviet officialdom goes to unusual lengths to ensure one-hundred percent turnout at elections (no matter that these were uncontested), they complained to higher authorities of being denied the opportunity to vote by those who refused them residence permits. The stratagem worked. Insensitive bureaucrats were ordered to remove at once any formalities standing in the way of these Soviet citizens' sacred right to vote. More conventional methods of obtaining residence permits included real as well as fictitious marriages to legal residents and using connections of their employers, government and private.

Because the recent migrants to the city were employed largely as "hewers of wood and carriers of water," the fact that they spoke no Russian was not a serious impediment at work. Their Ukrainian speech was, however, a symbol of their lowly social status (much as the languages of the Old Country were a similar symbol for newly-arrived immigrants to the United States at the turn of the century) and--again, like the immigrants to the United States--they made a conscious effort to shed this disability by attempting to learn Russian and to use Russian everywhere except only for the home and trusted old friends from the Ukrainian village. Significantly, these new Odessans sent their children to Russian rather than Ukrainian schools. One respondent, a male Jewish teacher of Russian and of Ukrainian at a secondary school in a working-class neighborhood, recalled:

> Most of my students were Ukrainian, but they attended Russian schools. Although Ukrainian language and literature were required subjects, my pupils showed very little interest in them. (That the same was true of thoroughly Russified Moldavian, i.e., Rumanian students was less surprising). As a teacher of Ukrainian I tried to awaken in my students an interest in their Ukrainian heritage, but the students, as a rule, remained indifferent to their national culture and ethnic heritage. At school functions, Ukrainian children refused to sing Ukrainian songs and perform Ukrainian folk dances. This attitude was not a consequence of forcible Russification. It stemmed from natural causes.

> The apathy toward things Ukrainian extended to adults as well. In adult education programs, there were hardly any lectures on Ukrainian subjects. At the school, teachers of Ukrainian were viewed as inferiors and not too many people wanted to become teachers of Ukrainian.

A very small number of thoroughly Russified Ukrainians benefited from the official policy of appointing "token" Ukrainians to highly visible political positions, where the chief officeholder (e.g. Communist Party secretary) was to be Ukrainian, and his deputy a Russian. Otherwise, being a Ukrainian was neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in seeking employment. Ukrainians, however, were shown distinct preference in admission to institutes and universities, but this policy of "affirmative action" was extended to them as persons of peasant background. Ukrainians, the reasoning went, might be expected to actually desire to work in the countryside and small towns where Ukrainian was spoken, rather than seek every excuse to remain in Odessa, as did the Russian and, especially, Jewish college graduates. As already mentioned, Ukrainians in Odessa were by and large resigned to being Russified, and some of them, in fact, appeared eager to shed their Ukrainian heritage. Such resentment of the Russians as there existed was articulated mostly as a sense of resentment at strangers from faraway places who came to Odessa to grab the best jobs and apartments. Occasionally, Ukrainians would refer to the Russians by the old and slightly derogatory nickname katsapy. By contrast, the Russians' contempt for the Ukrainians was rooted in a sense of cultural superiority to backward peasants, and their assortment of pejorative nicknames for

Ukrainian was both richer and nastier, including (in addition to the relatively good-natured khokhly) such terms as rogi (horns) and bydlo (cattle). All in all, intercommunal relations between the Russians and the Ukrainians were rather good, and intermarriage was common.

That intermarriage is not necessarily a sign of ethnic equality and tolerance was emphasized by scores of informants. Occasionally, intermarriage was opposed by relatives in a violent manner. Thus, a Jewish engineer recalled that when an uncle of his wanted to marry a Russian woman, her relatives expressed their disapproval by scalding her face with boiling water leaving her permanently disfigured. The woman broke with her relatives, and although she did not marry the informant's uncle, she ended up marrying another Jew. The engineer continued:

> Marriage to Jews was in part also a result of the fact that side by side with negative stereotypes ("Jews are dishonest, sneaky") there are also "positive" stereotypes. One of them holds that Jews are hard-working people who don't drink, don't beat their wives, and make model husbands and fathers.
>
> There was much popular anti-Semitism in daily life. Once I was accosted on a suburban train by some ruffians who said, "Why don't you goddamned kikes get railroad cars of your own," but other passengers sided with me and there was no physical violence. In the communal apartment where my wife and I lived with our small daughter, when the wife complained that the child was bothered by stray cats, she was told to "go to her lousy Israel." On one occasion I complained to the police about anti-Semitic insults

> and asked why nothing is done about them. The cops told me to shut up and forget it. On the other hand, when the neighbors found out that we were leaving the country for good, some of them actually cried, and one of them said, "Even though you are Jews, you are decent people and we are sorry to see you go."

Occasionally, popular anti-Semitism got ugly. A woman musician related that a group of semi-literate Baptists actually wanted to kill her, but that some gentile neighbors saved her. An aging actress recalled a popular saying that reflects the popular tendency to blame the Jews for any hardships of life in the USSR: esli v krane net vody, znachit vypili zhidy. If there is no water in the faucet, that means that the yids drank it all.

Popular anti-Semitism is one thing. It antedates, of course, the advent of the Soviet regime, and it was, moreover, reinforced during the years of Nazi and Rumanian occupation. Besides, that was not the chief complaint of our informants, most of whom were Jewish. Their chief grievance was official, government-sponsored anti-Semitism and systematic anti-Jewish discrimination in employment and in admission to universities. Indeed, a great many volunteered the information that this State-sponsored anti-Jewish hostility and discrimination, particularly insidious because never officially admitted, ranked high (if not highest) on the list of facts that prompted them to emigrate. Thus, a professional chess player recalled:

> Anti-Jewish discrimination in Odessa was extremely stringent, and it was common knowledge that rigid Jewish quotas existed both in the admission of Jews to institutions of higher learning and in hiring.

If a director of personnel chose to disregard instructions and hired too many Jews for his factory, office or laboratory, he risked losing his own job. Every attempt was made to flunk Jews in secondary schools and at entrance examinations to the universities. As a result, only the very best of the Jewish applicants make it. Anti-Jewish discrimination was more severe in some departments than in others. Thus, the law school [a favorite training ground for Party functionaries and the KGB--MF] admitted almost no Jews at all, and then only as non-matriculated evening session students. Similarly, very few Jews were admitted to study foreign languages [normally leading to diplomatic careers, from which Jews were barred---MF], but Jews were accepted to study engineering. Yet even then, it was often necessary to pay a bribe, with two to three thousand rubles [roughly equal to a skilled technician's annual income---MF] being a "normal" bribe. Only a very few Jews were admitted to the medical school. Anti-Semitic stereotypes portrayed the Jews as clannish, dishonest and suspicious people who work too hard and do not drink. Clearly, such people are not to be trusted. The curious paradox, however, is that, notwithstanding all the anti-Zionist propaganda, rank-and-file Soviet anti-Semites prefer Jews to Arabs. Only out-and-

> out Jew-haters, those who approve of Hitler, sympathize with Arab enemies of Israel. Anti-Semitic stereotypes change. Thus, after the Six-Day War of 1967, the Jews were no longer thought of as cowards.

Anti-Semitic discrimination in admission to universities had its occasional tragi-comic moments. Thus, an instructor at a teacher's college recalled that a Greek girl was once failed on an oral exam because the examiner mistook her for a Jew. An identical story involving a Ukrainian boy applying for admission to the Merchant Marine Institute was related by a naval engineer. For purposes of discrimination, the definition of a Jew resembled Nazi Nüremberg Laws: one Jewish grandparent was reason enough to be considered Jewish, the teachers' college instructor informed, particularly when sensitive security-related work was an issue. Other respondents questioned this claim. In any case, this particular criterion seems not to have been strictly enforced, a reflection of yet another, and widespread, rule in Odessa: doctrinal and ideological guidelines (anti-Jewish discrimination included) were often quietly disregarded for good pragmatic reasons. Thus, a technical translator and an English teacher agreed that "anti-Jewish discrimination was something that only certain institutes and university departments could afford to practice. Other institutes and departments might have liked to discriminate, but because of shrinking enrollments could not indulge in this particular luxury." This consideration, for instance, explained the relative liberalism in the admission policies of mathematics and engineering departments. They simply had to fill their admission quotas.

According to most respondents, the number of Jews in those of Odessa's college and university departments that admitted Jews altogether, fluctuated between three and five percent; in the mid-1970s, Jews

constituted a little over ten percent of the city's population. If this information is accurate, then the "Jewish quota" in higher education was higher under the openly discriminatory tsarist regime than it is under the ostensibly egalitarian Soviet system. This hypothesis was emphatically confirmed by an Odessa physician with reference to the city's medical school. Individual horror stories were numerous. An economist recalled that as the winner of a gold medal from secondary school, he was legally entitled to admission to college without an entrance examination. When he applied for admission, he was officially informed that he is being rejected "because I could not sing. They told me that they needed boys for the choir." A mechanical engineer related that he witnessed an oral examination in physics, during which a Jewish student disagreed with the examiner, who was obviously trying to fail him. The examiner then called in the police and the student was taken away. The informant himself had failed the entrance examination two years in a row, and on the third try was admitted only to correspondence courses. Subsequently, however, his parents bribed some college officials, and it was thus that he was finally admitted to the Institute of Technology. An interview with a former professor at the Institute of Technology confirmed that this was the usual route through which Jewish students were admitted to full-time study at that institution.

Unlike in Imperial Russia where individual anti-Semitism was optional, in Odessa it was occasionally enforced. One non-Jewish professor at the university was fired from his job because he refused to discriminate against Jews, and another was denied an apartment for the same transgression.

Our economist informant was doubtlessly right in observing that the policy of anti-Jewish discrimination was damaging to Soviet economy. A similar primacy of ideology over economic and even military realities obtained also in Nazi Germany. As Lucy Dawidowicz persuasively demonstrated in her War Against the Jews, Hitler's annihilation of European Jewry--potentially a source of invaluable manpower--was carried out at great cost to German economy and even the war effort itself.

The story of a food storage and refrigeration technician from Odessa is quite instructive. Originally, he had planned to become a doctor, but was told that he should not even bother applying. His second choice was the Institute of Merchant Marine, but there, too, he was not admitted because of the Jewish quota---that, in spite of the fact that his father, who died in action as a Soviet army private during World War II, was a graduate of that Institute. He finally applied to the Institute of Food Refrigeration because he found out that Jewish applicants were acceptable there. Upon graduation, he began to look for a job. Jobs, he discovered, were plentiful, and on several occasions he was told that he must only go through the formality of filling out the necessary forms. The forms required information about his ethnicity, and as soon as the personnel people discovered his Jewishness (they had earlier been misled by his non-Jewish appearance and a Ukrainian-sounding name) they would inform him that he is unsuitable for the position. In one case, a Russian official added his personal apology, telling the informant that, personally, he disapproved of such crude manifestations of anti-Semitism.

Occasionally, when forced to choose between carrying out discriminatory hiring policies and personnel needs of his factory or research institute, a non-Jewish administrator might risk choosing the latter. If possible, of course, precautions would be taken to minimize the danger of detection.

Thus, a mathematician and computer specialist related the following:

> A Ukrainian administrator told me once that he would be more than eager to hire me because he needed desperately somebody with my kind of background. He could not, however, do it because of official instructions which forbade the hiring of Jews. Ultimately, he decided to follow the procedure conjured up by other administrators facing a similar predicament. I was given a choice of part-time employment or being paid on piece-work basis rather than a normal salary. It seems that either case offered an opportunity to conceal my ethnic identity. In practice, however, additional precautions proved necessary. My research in mathematics had to be published under the non-Jewish director's name. It was just as well. I knew that certain scholarly books were not printed if they were thought to contain too many Jewish names among their contributors. One non-Jewish scientist was harrassed by the KGB because he was overly friendly with Jews and therefore suspected of being a Jew himself. I know that many leading non-Jewish scientists protested anti-Jewish discrimination as detrimental to the cause of Soviet science, but their protests had no effect.

As a technical translator and editor reported, anti-Semitic personnel policies of Odessa's government employers were known as "three don't's": don't hire, don't fire, don't promote (ne prinimat', ne vygoniat', ne povyshat'). While unpleasant to some and pleasant to others, state policies of ethnic favoritism and ethnic discrimination were shrugged off as a fact of life just as unavoidable as death and taxes. Besides, yesterday's victims might be today's beneficiaries. There was a time in the distant past, the 1920s, when Jews seeking employment were actually favored. More recently, right after the war, Ukrainian applicants were almost routinely suspected of having collaborated with the Nazis. And one never knows what tomorrow may bring.

A clearcut pattern of anti-Semitic discrimination was reported by a woman journalist who also wrote poetry and essays. In the 1970s, she worked for the newspaper Vechernyaya Odessa. It was not a very good job, but she could not afford to leave because her Jewishness prevented her from being offered other employment. Ultimately, she became reconciled to her job because her real interest was creative writing. She discerned a definite pattern in letters of acceptance and rejection slips from editors: "My poetry and essays were printed only by those journals that did not know I was Jewish, and were regularly turned down by those that did." A more subtle type of anti-Semitism was reported by a well-known novelist. He was told to avoid in his writing Jewish subject matter: "We don't want you to become another Babel." He also called attention to the fact that Babel, the Russian author most closely identified with Jewish Odessa, is never republished in Odessa itself. On those rare occasions when his work is reprinted, it is brought out as inconspicuously as possible in a faraway place, such as the Siberian city of Kemerovo.

During the 1970s, Odessa's Jewish past was systematically suppressed. A schoolteacher reported finding no books dealing with Odessa's Jews in the city's public library: apparently, these have been removed or destroyed. A journalist employed by a small shoe factory weekly Odesskii obuvshchik which was founded in 1925, did the obvious thing on the occasion of the journal's fiftieth anniversary. She reproduced the newspaper's first issue:

> The trouble was, that issue had Russian text, but a Yiddish masthead [which said "October"]. The anniversary issue I produced was confiscated by the authorities. They told me (as if this could not be checked), "How do we know this Yiddish word is not a Zionist slogan?"

Obviously, what the authorities wanted to suppress was evidence that Yiddish was once among Soviet Odessa's official languages. In a similar vein, a sculptor reported three cases when plans of monuments proposed by himself and his partner (the informant was Jewish, the partner was not) were vetoed by the authorities. The first was that of Stolyarsky, the legendary principal of a music school for prodigy children that produced scores of famous artists. The Jew Stolyarsky, who never learned to speak Russian properly, was not, they were told, a proper subject for a monument in Odessa. The second monument had been commissioned by a district council (rayispolkom) not far from Odessa. It was to commemorate the several hundred Jews from that district who were murdered by the Nazis. The informant and his partner produced a monument which showed two Jews, an old man and a child. At the last moment it was remembered that Holocaust memories must not honor Jews as such, but only Soviet citizens in general; the monument

was never unveiled. Finally, commission for a monument to two heroes of the Civil War was cancelled upon discovery that both of them were, in fact, Jews.

Anti-Semitic discrimination in education and employment is beginning to change the makeup of Odessa's Jewish community which is now showing clear signs of downward social mobility. A bookkeeper informed:

> Odessa's Jews are still to be found in such professions as schoolteachers, physicians or performing artists but these are, for the most part, older men and women. Since Jews now find it difficult to gain admission to universities, younger Jews are now employed as barbers, plumbers, clerks, and various blue-collar professions.

Anti-Semitic discrimination and popular anti-Semitism are the most pervasive form of bigotry in Odessa and they affect the largest number of people. It is also more than likely that our findings on this subject reflect also the predominantly Jewish ethnicity of our informants. We know, however, that bigotry and discrimination affected other ethnic groups as well. Gypsies were resented because of their refusal to do "honest" work in factories and preference for petty trade and panhandling. A Tatar girl was taunted in school by pupils and teachers alike, a schoolteacher reported. Germans were also discriminated against and had to endure much harrassment from their neighbors, a poet related. As a result, many tried to hide their German origins. (Because of that, an old musician pointed out, in postwar Odessa it was, paradoxically, the Germans and the Jews who felt an affinity for each other).

Finally, a form of hatred old elsewhere but new to Odessa made its appearance in the 1960s and 1970s. A structural engineer remembered:

> Even though there were few blacks in Odessa (these were mostly students from Africa), they were hated by one and all. I was once witness to a frightening scene. A few whites actually tried to kill a black because he was with a white woman. Quite a few Soviet women dated blacks, and several had children by them. The mulatto children were ostracized when they were small, and they were mistreated and insulted as adults.

Not a few informants remembered to emphasize that notwithstanding popular as well as State-sponsored anti-Semitism, innumerable close human friendships endured and new bonds were formed. Intermarriage was common, and certain population groups, such as the anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalists, were often demonstratively friendly to the Jews. Moreover, a large number of Russians and Ukrainians frequently expressed their disapproval of State-fostered anti-Jewish moods and discriminatory policies.

It may also be that the outward calm in Russo-Ukrainian relations is deceptive, and resentment of the Russians may be brewing beneath the calm surface. Thus, the newspaperwoman referred to earlier in connection with the Yiddish masthead of an old shoemakers' newspaper emphasized that Odessa's radio station was a battlefield of Ukrainian nationalists and Russian "colonists." One of the people working at the radio was the Ukrainian nationalist leader Valentin Moroz. The Russians working at the radio, she surmised, must have felt as

uncomfortable there as Jews working at radio stations where everybody was Russian. The newspaperwoman then related the following story.

The informant was a free-lance contributor to the Odessa newspaper Znamya kommunizma, often supplying theatrical reviews. On one occasion she reviewed Vsevolod Vishnevsky's An Optimistic Tragedy. That was an old play, first staged in 1933. Accordingly, her review dealt with merits of the performance, not of the text of the drama. She did not like the way it was staged and wrote an unfavorable review.

What followed far surpassed anything that she (or, for that matter, her editor) might have feared. The editor was called in to the Odessa Province Communist Party Committee and the Secretary, Mikhail Sofronovich Sinitsa, who was the absolute boss of the entire Odessa Province, indignantly told her editor that he won't put up with a "goddamned kike woman and a Russki [zhidivka i katsap]," insulting "native Ukrainian theater." The editor returned to the office deeply shaken. He called in the informant and told her to "forget about a career in journalism."

What happened then was quite astonishing. The newspaper was forced to print an announcement which not only disowned her review, but formally retracted her evaluation of the performance. "In other words," the informant said, "readers were told that I was dead wrong in not liking the performance, and the performance was to be considered wonderful." After that incident, she was barred from plying her trade in all of the Ukraine. She did, however, continue to publish in Moscow because people there had never heard of the incident.

II. Religion

While houses of worship of many faiths abounded, Odessa was never known for its piety. Moreover, the two decades of virulent Soviet persecution of religion between the Revolution and the outbreak of World War II

took a heavy toll. Indeed, shortly before the war the Russian Orthodox Cathedral was actually mined and destroyed. During the war, however, Odessa's churches actually benefited from Nazi German and Rumanian occupation. The Uspensky Cathedral was rebuilt, other churches were renovated. The destruction of synagogues, however, continued.

After the war the anti-religious drive was resumed, but it eventually subsided. Indeed, the 1970s appear to have been a period of a modest religious revival. In the stalemate between the forces of beleaguered religion and official State-sponsored militant atheism it was, paradoxically, the latter that appeared on the defensive. From all appearances, official atheist propaganda is waged perfunctorily and elicits only apathy. Unable to convince the population to turn away from religious "superstition," State-sponsored proponents of "enlightened secularism" resort to a trusted means of persuasion: they call in the police. A poetess remembered:

> Policemen harrassed both clergy and believers, especially on church holidays. While Russian Orthodox churches were mistreated, the situation of such sects as the Baptists, to say nothing of the city's only synagogue, was even worse. There was considerable interest in Christianity among the young, but it really was a quest for <u>any</u> kind of spirituality. This accounts for the fact that there was also great curiosity about Buddhism and Oriental cults. Interest in religion was the more acute because there were no books on religion available either in bookstores or in the libraries, although there was an abundance of anti-religious books.

A teacher of English and a technical translator described one police method of combatting interest in religion among the young:

> Soviet persecution of religion in Odessa was rather virulent. For instance, volunteer policemen (druzhinniki) would grab young people whom they found inside a church and detain them in prison overnight. The common criminals who were in the same cell would normally beat up these kids and rob them of all of their possessions. Still, formally the police could claim that the young men were released after questioning. But these young people would never set foot inside a church again, because they were scared and also because their parents would warn them that if they are caught again this may ruin their careers at the university and at work. Nevertheless, some young people continued to attend church.

It was the dissident Baptists, the Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, denominations with no legal status in the USSR, who suffered the most for their religious beliefs. A physician recalled that when she was still in medical school in the late 1950s, two girls in her class were expelled from the Institute because it was discovered that they were members of one of these religious "sects." The students tried to get readmitted but were unsuccessful. A worker at the factory where a newspaperwoman was employed had a perfect attendance record, never drank,

his work was exemplary, and some of his suggestions benefited the productivity of the plant. Nevertheless, the man was never accorded any recognition (or given a raise in salary) for the openly stated reason that he was a Baptist. She was once denounced for printing his picture in the factory's newspaper.

Baptists, Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses met illegally in private homes. Followers of these creeds were for the most part uneducated workers and farmers who had recently moved into the city. The Russian Orthodox Church was different. According to a metallurgical engineer,

> Very few people occupying any position of prominence would risk being openly identified as religious believers, but there were exceptions. For instance, when Filatov, the celebrated ophthalmologist and member of the USSR Academy of Science died, there was a memorial service for him at the Uspensky Cathedral. During his lifetime Filatov made no secret of the fact that he was a practicing Christian, but the authorities chose not to take notice of it *because of his very high professional standing.*

Besides the Cathedral on Soviet Army Street, there was another Russian Orthodox Church on Pushkin Street, as well as a Greek Orthodox Church. The Lutheran Church was closed, as was the Karaite Kenessa, but the Roman Catholic Church on Karl Marx Street continued to serve Odessa's Polish population. (The Russian writer Yuri Olesha was once a member of that parish). Odessa was also the home of a Russian Orthodox Seminary on Chizhikov Street, one of only three in all of the Soviet

Union, and the summer residence of the Moscow Patriarch, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. There was also a synagogue. It occupied a decrepit little house in Peresyp, a non-Jewish working-class neighborhood (the Jewish poor lived in Moldavanka, the neighborhood immortalized by Isaac Babel's Tales of Odessa).

Understandably, religious observances run the full gamut from the merely fashionable (it was chic for a young woman to wear a cross, a college instructor said), to ostentatious refusal to work on Christmas and Easter, in spite of all the warnings at the factory or the office. According to an engineer, as many as a third of the workers at his plant were absent on those holidays. On major church holidays one could definitely sense that Odessa's Christians have not altogether abandoned tradition. A lawyer reported that her son-in-law estimated that nearly half of the workers at his factory refused to work on church holidays. Most reported sick, but some, defiantly, took time off on vacation leave. The authorities tried to combat this by scheduling unpaid "voluntary" work (subbotniki) on religious feast days, but to no avail. And so, in Soviet Odessa, sixty years after the Revolution, church bells were pealed at Easter and people scurried through the stores carrying food to be blessed by the priest at the church. At Christmas, too, there was no mistaking the city's festive air. On all major holidays there were tens of thousands of people around the churches, blocking traffic. A structural engineer reported that policemen would readily allow elderly people (especially if they looked like farmers) to enter the church unimpeded, but tried to keep city folk, and especially the young, out. Occasionally, religious services were disrupted by juvenile delinquents who may have acted with the connivance of the

authorities. Several informants underscored that a growing number of young people are gravitating toward the Church, and that this causes the authorities considerable concern. Thus, an engineer's acquaintance, a graduate of Moscow University's philosophy department, a bastion of Marxism-Leninism and "scientific atheism," became a village priest. Subsequently his younger brother followed in his footsteps. Our informant volunteered the opinion that the increasing appeal to the young of the Russian Orthodox Church is due in no small part to nationalist Russian associations. That consideration, and also aesthetic appeal may account, in the opinion of an artist specializing in mosaics, for the fact that many young people in Odessa with no religious upbringing insisted on church weddings, even though this entailed a degree of risk. Indeed, it was not unusual for Communist Party members to baptize their children in a church. The latter fact underscores the tenacity of religion. A half a century earlier, in the story "Karl-Yankel," Isaac Babel described, as an exotic curiosity, a circumcision that was secretly performed on an offspring of upright Communist parents. The "criminal" accomplices were an aging mohel, who performedritual surgery, and the infant's religious grandmother, with the parents understandably outraged. Babel clearly intended to suggest that barbaric rites of this sort were a survival of a superstitious past.

Little did he know that analogous ceremonies--baptisms and circumcisions alike--would continue to be performed in his beloved Odessa on the grandchildren of the young protagonist of his story, and with the blessings of their Communist parents at that.

Three informants, all Jewish, one a structural engineer and the others a performing musician and a musicologist, reported on their

visits to the Russian Orthodox Seminary. All were much impressed with the learning and good manners of the seminarians, with their esthetic education, wide reading and serious manner. One noted, for instance that the Seminary taught rhetoric, a subject not offered in any secular Soviet school. That the Soviet authorities recognize the excellence of the seminarians' education (and are also eager to convert them to atheism) may be seen from the fact that any seminarian who breaks with religion is guaranteed university employment. The structural engineer was also impressed with the Seminary's "magnificent" museum of religious objects, and with its general affluence: there was plenty of good food at the Seminary at a time when Odessa suffered severe shortages. His two weeks at the Seminary (he was taking some measurements for purposes of construction and remodeling) were a memorable experience. The musicologist lectured at the Seminary on Russian liturgical music; he found his audience relaxed and well informed. Among those in attendance were several operatic singers who sang in the choirs of Odessa's churches to earn some extra money. All three informants, incidentally, reported with gratification that they sensed at the Seminary no hostility to them as Jews.

Finally, four informants reported active participation in illegal Jewish religious and cultural activities. A university student was a member of a Hebrew language study group, of which there were several in the 1970s; on Jewish holidays, she participated in the informal gatherings of young people in front of the synagogue. A physician recalled a colleague who always wore a skull cap and had his children taught Hebrew and Jewish observance. An economist described his parental home as being, certainly by Soviet standards, observantly

Jewish. His father had studied in a Jewish religious school (cheder). The three generations of the family represented three stages in linguistic assimilation. The grandparents spoke only Yiddish, the parents spoke Yiddish occasionally, while the children only understood the language. The economist continued:

> Religious observance was, by and large, confined to the home. Passover matza was baked at the homes of some people and then distributed among friends. [Other respondents had their matza baked at the synagogue, from their own flour---MF]. Even though this activity was illegal, some old people taught children to read the Hebrew Bible and prayer book. I was taught in this way. I know that I was not my old tutor's only pupil, but we never talked about it. But I never went near the synagogue because I knew that this might cost me my job.

Another son of observant Jewish parents agreed that old people predominated among those attending the synagogue, but insisted that an increasing number of young men and women returned to traditional Jewish values and even religious observance. In his home the future Soviet engineer saw Passover observed every year, as well as the Jewish New Year, the fast of Yom Kippur, the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), including Simhat Torah. (Curiously, he had never even heard of another Jewish holiday, Shavuot). The informant and all of his three brothers had a Bar Mitzvah in the synagogue. Although none of them could read any Hebrew, they repeated by rote the prayers after the other men. About fifteen percent of Jewish boys in Odessa, he estimated, went through the ritual of the Bar Mitzvah, were called up to read from the Pentateuch at synagogue service.

Yet another Odessan who was present at the interview insisted that he had never heard of anyone having a Bar Mitzvah in his city.

III. Newspapers, Radio, Television

Odessa had two Russian daily newspapers, Znamia kommunizma and Vecherniaia Odessa, and two Ukrainian ones, Komsomol'skaia iskra and Chernomorskaia kommuna. There were also some house publications at a number of industrial enterprises.

Three of our respondents were associated with the four dailies, all of them part-time. One, a poet, contributed general journalism, mostly on topics relating to psychology, to Vecherniaia Odessa and the Komsomol'skaia iskra. Her poetry was accepted for publication in Odessa's press only after some of her verse had appeared in Ogonek, the Moscow illustrated weekly. Even then she was accused of excessive "pessimism," a somewhat unexpected charge for a poet claiming as her teachers Voznesensky, Pasternak and Mayakovsky. The other part-time newspaperman was, by contrast, a professional writer of humor. He began to publish in 1966 in the Russian Znamia kommunizma and the Ukrainian-language Komsomol'skaia iskra. When the editor of the latter moved, in 1973-74, to Vecherniaia Odessa, he became the patron of the city's humorists. (It was then that our informant began to write for that newspaper). Vecherniaia Odessa had a column entitled Antilopa gnu, so named after a jalopy in Ilf and Petrov's The Twelve Chairs, the celebrated Soviet comic novel. Most of Odessa's humorists and satirists contributed to it. (An attempt had also been made to establish a similar humor department in Znamia kommunizma, but that was vetoed by the Communist Party committee as serving no useful purpose). It appears that the editor had dreams of glory. A half a century earlier another Odessa newspaper, Gudok, nominally the publication of railroad workers' union, had on its

staff a number of young writers, some of them humorists, who went on to become famous Soviet authors. These included the poet Eduard Bagritsky, the future team of Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov referred to earlier, and Yurii Olesha, one of modern Russian literature's most subtle prose writers.

The most detailed account of activities of Odessa's newspapers was provided by a journalist who worked, simultaneously, for the Russian-language daily Znamia kommunizma where she was a free-lancer specializing in literature, theater and the arts, and for Odesskii obuvshchik, a shoe factory weekly where she was one of only two staff members. She did most of the writing, while her boss, the editor-in-chief, was a semi-literate graduate of a school for Communist Party functionaries who had landed the job because he was a member of the nomenklatura.

The problem that plagued the two-person editorial team and that was never really resolved was how to print bad news. And of bad news there was plenty. To mention but one, the chronic non-fulfillment of production quotas was routinely blamed on shortages of raw materials and on broken machinery. As one probed the problem deeper, however, it would become apparent that it was not merely the shortage of raw material, but its poor quality that affected production the most. Normally, half of the animal's hide was punctured by large insects. The hides, therefore, had big holes, and a great many had to be thrown out; hence the shortages. To make matters worse, the tanning of the hides was of poor quality, which made even more of them unusable. Who, then, was responsible for the shortages? In practice, everybody would pass the buck blaming somebody else for the chronic non-fulfillment of production quotas. That, however, could not be admitted in Odeskii obuvshchik. Quite the contrary.

The articles and interviews insisted that the difficulties were strictly of a temporary nature, and that before long production goals would begin to be overfulfilled. Thus, a vicious circle of optimistic lies would be created. The reporter lied, and the editor, who printed these pleasant lies, was her accomplice. But then, the reporter was lied to by the people she interviewed, mostly persons in authority at the factory. Hence, reporters became but the messengers delivering lies concocted by others. But all of these lies would ultimately result in a typically optimistic headline such as "We Will Overfulfill the Production Quota in Honor of the Twenty-Third Party Congress."

The shoe factory newspaper looked like a single-sheet leaflet and was distributed free of charge to approximately a thousand workers. Before being run off the presses, the contents of every issue had to be approved by the factory's Party Committee. The informant recalled that because of the newspaper's miniscule circulation (and hence, relative insignificance) it did not have to be submitted for clearance to the Odessa Province censorship office (obllit). Still, she remembered that on one occasion she had reported that the factory was busily, quickly and efficiently producing a certain type of shoe, and that the production quota would definitely be fulfilled. This innocent-sounding item, however, was not allowed to be printed. As it turned out, the particular kind of shoe she described was worn by Soviet soldiers. Accordingly, the item was suppressed because of its military nature. Military secrets cannot be printed.

The Russian-language daily Znamia kommunizma, our informant's other employer, had a staff of some twenty persons. Some of its departments were very small. Thus, the division of culture consisted of a single

person, as did the section of the humorous feuilleton, which usually consisted of rather tame barbs at lower-level bureaucracy, petty crime, shortages, and so forth.

The working day at Znamia kommunizma (or, for that matter, any other Soviet newspaper) would begin with an editorial staff meeting called planiorka. Chiefs of the newspaper's different departments were given specific tasks for next day's issue, the next issue was discussed in detail, and the previous day's issue was evaluated. Department chiefs would then pass on specific instructions to their subordinates, if they had any, or else proceed to carry out the assignments themselves. A planiorka was an occasion for praise or criticism of individual staff members' work, and for the mapping out of long-range plans. It was also at such meetings that specific jobs were farmed out to free-lancers.

Our informant claimed that the Russian newspaper would not hire her on a full-time basis because she was Jewish. By contrast, the Ukrainian-language Komsomol'skaia iskra, had several Jews on its staff, perhaps because a few among them objected strongly to the stripping of Odessa's historical artifacts. Thus, they wrote in their columns about local Party dignitaries who stole or destroyed statues, old buildings, churches, and so forth. (It may well be that the Ukrainian editors felt that it was safer to have Jews complain about these matters. Ukrainians, after all, would lay themselves open to charges of bourgeois nationalism). Still, Komsomol'skaia iskra was rapped on the knuckles, and it gradually turned very tame. Some of its staff moved to the Russian-language Vecherniaia Odessa which had just come into existence. Komsomol'skaia iskra, or what remained of it, became concerned mostly with rural, collective farm themes, and began to recruit its new staff from among recent migrants from the

countryside. Its embattled editor, Ihor Lesakovsky, continued, to the extent that this was possible, to defend Ukrainian culture. The Soviet authorities were not too happy about it. Since, however, the newspaper was not very influential and contained no open sedition and printed no military secrets, the censors turned a blind eye to its Ukrainian eccentricities.

The informant's superior at Znamia kommunizma was the newspaper's editor-in-chief Alexander Andreyevich Shcherbakov. Because he was a former agent of SMERSH, the Soviet military counterintelligence, he was entrusted with guarding the daily's ideological acceptability. Shcherbakov was a kindly man who taught her the art of writing quickly a good, hard-hitting column. It was also he, a seasoned Soviet editor, who taught her to avoid "seeing," and accordingly, reporting the seamier sides of a story. Thus, in a column about open-air dancing in the park, she learned not to mention the fact that there was excessive drinking, muggings and stabbings. In a story about Odessa's bus station she would not "notice" that more than half of the buses were just rusting because there were no spare parts available to repair them, and that it was that fact that explained the shortage of bus transportation.

The city's newspapers were similar in their physical make-up. The first page was devoted to dispatches of TASS, the Soviet press agency, to official Communist Party releases and to press releases from the Province Party Committee. The second page featured stories about local celebrities, such as factory workers, award-winning milkmaids, and so forth. Foreign news would normally begin on page one and continue on page two. An unwritten rule was strictly observed: there was to be nothing but good news on page one. Bad news could be found on page two. Page three

consisted of local news as well as film and theater reviews, while the fourth page was taken up with sports, chess problems, and the like.

The newspapers of Odessa competed with each other. Thus, the Ukrainian-language Chernomorskaia kommuna and the Russian Znamia kommunizma were located in the same building, but even free-lancers were not allowed to work for both papers at the same time. The same rules were observed by the two Russian newspapers. Because the informant worked for Znamia kommunizma, Vecherniaia Odessa would not publish anything she wrote.

While she was not allowed to work for more than one newspaper, she was permitted to moonlight at the radio, but under one condition. No person is allowed to print the same story in the newspaper and have it broadcast on the radio. According to our informant, Odessa's radio was a battlefield of Ukrainian nationalists and Russian "colonists." Thus, the staff of the radio station included the Ukrainian nationalist leader Valentin Moroz. The Russians at the radio station were made to feel quite unwelcome, about as uncomfortable as Jews working in Soviet radio stations where nearly all of the personnel were Russian. The Ukrainians considered the few Jews at the Odessa radio as "Russians."

Two of our informants worked full-time for Odessa's television; one was a producer and cameraman, and the other an announcer. The announcer, a graduate of Odessa's Merchant Marine Institute and onetime student at the Shchukin Theater Institute in Moscow, considered himself exceptionally lucky. An ethnic Russian, he was hired as a television announcer for Ukrainian programs from among eight hundred applicants for the position. The job was not well paid at all--about a hundred rubles a month--but it was considered glamorous.

His duties as an announcer included reading the news as well as advertising. The advertisements, by the way, were quite primitive. A typical ad consisted of a simple sentence, such as "drink Soviet champagne." As he grew more experienced, he was entrusted with more responsibilities. Thus, he was charged with managing artistic activity among the young, with conducting interviews, and with serving as master of ceremonies at concerts and variety shows. Some of the newscasts as well as the agricultural program were in Ukrainian. On the other hand, his interviews with factory directors were conducted in Russian.

As he recalls, until 1972 all of Odessa's television programs were broadcast live. Prior to that time no videotape was available. True, questions for interviews were prepared well in advance, although occasionally the interviewer might formulate a question on the spur of the moment. The interviewees were, for the most part factory directors and officers and sailors of the Navy and the Merchant Marine.

Since 1970, Odessa television had two channels; prior to that there was only one. Channel One simply rebroadcast programs originating in Moscow, while Channel Two transmitted programs from Kiev as well as locally produced ones. On weekdays, both channels would go on the air at five or six o'clock in the afternoon; on Sundays, at ten or eleven in the morning. Weekday programming began with local news (Moscow's national newscast Vremia was transmitted later in the evening). This was followed by industrial news and such political news as a Communist Party congress. Normally, there was also an old film, or a newer spy thriller by Yulian Semyonov. Occasionally, instead of a movie there was a live performance broadcast from one of Odessa's theaters. The local actors were none too happy about this honor. Though quite underpaid (their earnings at the

theater were only between 80 and 90 rubles a month) the actors were not paid anything extra for having their performance shown on television. From time to time there were programs of humor and satire by local talent, usually Odessa's Club of the Merry and the Resourceful (Klub veselykh i nakhodchivykh), which will be discussed at greater length later in this study. Finally, before going off the air at eleven in the evening, there was music and songs.

The producer-cameraman worked for Odessa's television for thirteen years, from 1960 to 1973, that is almost since the introduction of television there in 1957. His job was producing films that were shown on television locally, although not a few of these films were also aired in other cities.

According to this informant, Odessa's television sometimes went on the air as early as two o'clock in the afternoon. After the station went off the air at eleven in the evening the studios were used to make films. All in all, Odessa's television station employed some two hundred people. Most of the programs were in Russian. There were hardly any Ukrainian programs other than news and interviews.

Odessa's television station had five desks. The first, and by far the weakest, was the news desk. The second dealt with children's programs, and it usually arranged for the broadcasting of performances by local school choirs, children's dance groups and the like. The third desk dealt with literature and drama. Its provenance included poetry readings and live theatrical performances. The fourth desk (where our informant worked) was devoted to the screening of films, including those expressly produced for the Odessa station. Finally, the fifth desk, which was called sociopolitical, transmitted diverse features. One series of programs, for example, described the work of traffic policemen. Another, proffered medical advice. A third, discussed consumers' issues. A fourth,

entitled "The Laws of My County," provided legal commentary. Its most frequent guest was Odessa's public prosecutor.

The national news program Vremia was relayed from Moscow. The forty-minute segment of news from the capital was supplemented by twenty minutes of local news. Both programs were broadcast live, because until the early 1970's no videotape was available in Odessa. It was only then that the television studio acquired a bus for video recordings.

The way news was produced was having cameramen shoot footage at collective farms or factories, with close-ups of smiling peasants and workers. The footage would then be brought to the studio where an appropriate text would be written for the announcer. Television interviews were relatively rare, and none were spontaneous: questions were prepared in advance.

On the whole, Odessans rarely watched local news because it was generally boring, and the posed pictures differed little from one another. The camera crew knew exactly what type of upbeat pictures were required and they wasted little time on trying to be original. Instead, the cameramen used some of their out-of-town expeditions (for instance, to a relatively wealthy Bulgarian village not far from Odessa) to buy from the farmers some food that was hard to find in the city. In fact, the informant recalled that on one occasion they went to "shoot" some footage on the location without any film in the cameras. The film crew used the trip as an excuse for an outing to the country and for doing some shopping. Although they pretended to be going on a work assignment, they did not even bother loading the cameras.

As a producer-cameraman, the informant was rather well paid. Because he was classified as a filmmaker rather than an ordinary television

employee he received 180 rubles a month. His assistant, however, was paid a mere 60 rubles a month.

Odessa's television was overseen by the Province Committee for Radio Broadcasting and Television (Obkom po radioveshchaniiu i televideniiu). Every Monday the committee held a meeting devoted to a review of the preceding week's programs. Usually there were three speakers. The first was the reviewer, the second the director of the Odessa television studio, and the third Liutenko, who was chief of the Radio and Television Committee. In addition, the work of the studio was also closely monitored by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Party's Province Committee (obkom). On one occasion, the head of this body and the director of the studio reviewed a film made by the informant. The film dealt with the disappearance of Odessa's historical buildings and their substitution with faceless and tasteless modern architecture. The two Odessa dignitaries expressed their approval, but that was only the beginning of the obstacle course. The film had then to be taken to Kiev, the Ukrainian Republic's capital, where it was to be viewed by the cinema editors of the Ukrainian Republic's Committee for Radio and Television. Following that hurdle, the film was to be taken to Moscow where it was to be screened again in order to obtain analogous clearance from the All-Union Committee for Radio and Television. Only after receiving approvals from all of these agencies, prints of the film could be made for the Soviet Union's ninety-odd television stations.

As a rule, the opinions of the Kiev and the Moscow authorities did not coincide. The officials in Kiev, as often as not, would attempt to sneak into films made in their republic at least some Ukrainian national content, while the bosses in Moscow would try to thwart any such efforts. Matters were complicated by the fact that directives from the authorities

kept changing. Moreover, even after clearing both Kiev and Moscow committees, a film might not be released because a lobbying group of one or another profession might raise a hue and cry claiming that the motion picture maligns members of their profession, that it casts slurs on doctors or firemen or locomotive engineers. Cases of this sort were far from uncommon. As a result, a television producer-cameraman lived in constant fear. Were he to lose his job, there were no other employment opportunities at all.

The informant recalls that at one time the nationalistically-oriented authorities in Kiev wanted most of the Ukrainian Republic's television programming to use Ukrainian. Indeed, only Ukrainian was spoken in the Kiev offices of the Committee for Radio Broadcasting and Television. By contrast, in Odessa all business was transacted in Russian, and most of the programming was in Russian as well. Ukrainian television films were produced in Kiev and Kharkov, but not in Odessa.

The film section of Odessa's television produced annually forty-two hours of films, inclusive of musical programs, film adaptations of theatrical performances, and one or two half-hour documentaries. A number of Odessa's television programs were rebroadcast by Moscow television. At the Odessa television studio the film section, which employed two directors, was resented by many because of its higher pay scale and opportunities for free travel to Moscow.

IV. Doctors and Lawyers

Because of its relatively balmy climate, the Black Sea port of Odessa was a major health resort. It had a total of about fifty sanatoria and many rest homes. During the high season, the rumor had it, vacationers and patients would almost double the city's population.

Rooms for rent, especially near the beaches, were expensive and hard to find, and the city's reputation as one of the country's few attractive summer resorts (and also a nice place to retire) contributed to Odessa's chronic shortage of housing.

The sanatoria in Odessa, a physician related, were intended for convalescence and therapy in semi-hospital conditions, although some people came there from the icy cities of Russia merely for a rest on the beach. The sanatoria had different medical specialties. Thus, the informant worked in one of the three sanatoria for arthritis and neurological diseases, known for the effectiveness of their mud treatments. Other sanatoria specialized in cardiovascular problems, gastrointestinal diseases, tuberculosis and so forth. In the tubercular sanatorium the entire cost of the patient's stay was borne by the state or the patient's trade union, while in the others the cost was split between the trade union and the patient. Except for the five-hundred bed tubercular sanatorium where, at least in theory, patients stayed for as long as necessary, the stays in the others averaged between three and four weeks, while in the rest homes guests were accepted for stays between twelve and twenty-four days.

Sanatoria, the doctor emphasized, operate differently from hospitals. People are admitted to hospitals when they are ill and their admission cannot be postponed. By contrast, a stay in a sanatorium is regarded as optional. Industrial enterprises throughout the USSR are allotted a small number of admissions to a given sanatorium. These free or subsidized admissions can either be given to people who are really in need of medical assistance, or they may be presented to perfectly healthy people who are being rewarded by such trips for exemplary work or other services.

Sanatoria and rest homes were owned by different trade unions, and they employed medical staffs of their own as well as outside medical consultants normally called "professors." The food in the sanatoria and rest homes was better and more plentiful than elsewhere in the city.

Cultural activity in rest homes and sanatoria was supervised by a full-time staff member called kul'turnik. It was he who arranged excursions, trips to the theater and to concerts, though the latter were paid for by the patients themselves. The kul'turnik's duties included also organizing dances and amateur variety shows in which both patients and staff participated. At the rest homes guests went bathing at the beach and engaged also in a variety of sports such as soccer, volleyball, basketball and tennis. Ping-Pong tables and billiards were available. Films, usually older ones, were shown free of charge both at the sanatoria and at the rest homes. Both institutions had libraries, which were always stocked with a lot of political books and pamphlets, Russian and foreign literary classics, left-wing Western authors and some Soviet bestsellers. An average library numbered some five thousand volumes, and had a dozen or so subscriptions to literary and general periodicals. The library had a full-time librarian.

Other cultural activities included lectures on international affairs by speakers specializing in the subject (mezhdunarodniki). These were scheduled every two or three weeks in order to enable every patient or guest to attend one. In addition, there were lectures by local physicians on such topics as diet and exercise, as well as talks on a variety of subjects by speakers from the Znanie (Knowledge) Society. These will be discussed sometime later in this study.

The informant mentioned two medical "secrets" that were common knowledge in Odessa, although neither could be openly confirmed. The first was stringent anti-Jewish discrimination in the medical field. Hardly any Jews were admitted to medical schools (fewer than in tsarist Russia); almost none to internships in hospitals; rarely were any promoted. The second was the existence by the seashore, alongside ordinary rest homes, of special luxurious rest homes for Communist Party dignitaries, the so-called nomenklatura. Rumors of their opulent life style were whispered by acquaintances of their service personnel who described it to incredulous ordinary mortals, much as similar tidbits of titillating news about the comings and goings of princes and countesses were shared by valets and grooms in Imperial Russia.

That even regular sanatoria for rank-and-file patients (most of them from the Ukraine, but some from places North) offered medical assistance significantly superior to that available to the citizenry in Odessa proper was attested by another physician, a survivor of five years of labor camps where he was sent for his refusal to cooperate with the KGB. (Specifically, he had turned down the request to help in organizing in Odessa a small "doctors' trial," in which a group of Jewish physicians would be charged--as in the other trial--with organizing, on orders from American and Israeli intelligence, a conspiracy to murder local Party leaders.)

In 1974-75, doctors in Odessa were allowed to give out prescriptions only for drugs that were locally available. The reason was that the Ministry of Health was swamped with complaints about patients who would pull strings in distant Soviet cities in attempts to get their prescriptions filled. Yet even drugs locally obtainable--if only in theory--were further

divided into three categories by medical spokesmen at annual physicians' conferences. The first were those that would be available in adequate supplies during the coming year. The second were drugs for which there would be enough to satisfy roughly half of the projected demand, and the third were those that would not be available at all. This category consisted for the most part of medicines not manufactured in the USSR and imported from the West. The amount of hard currency that was allocated for that purpose could under no circumstances exceed the amount of hard currency obtained from the sale of Soviet medical products abroad. Since, however, few Soviet drugs were sold to Western countries (many were sold to the Third World, which sales, ordinarily, did not yield any hard currency) hard currency was always in very short supply. On one occasion, the informant, now a practicing physician in the United States, upon learning that only fifty percent of needed drugs in the second category would actually be available, asked at a public meeting for instructions: which patients should get these drugs and which should not? He was told that doctors should use their judgment.

Shortages of drugs made practicing medicine very difficult. The treatment of some illnesses, the informant pointed out, requires simultaneously four different drugs, but almost never were all four available. Perhaps even more dangerous were the shortages of medical supplies that are needed to accurately diagnose an illness.

But then, there were shortages of nearly everything. It was not unusual to have twenty thermometers for eighty patients in a hospital. Needles for blood transfusion were turning dull from overuse and nurses had to sharpen them manually. Disposable medical equipment was almost unknown and nearly everything had to be used again and again. This, in turn, resulted in a very large number of post-operative infections and toxic reactions. That was unavoidable because sterilization of

needles or test tubes is never completely effective and safe. Certain kinds of medical equipment were altogether unavailable and had to be purchased illegally, or even manufactured by local talent. Thus, the informant recalled having some medical tools made for him by an Odessa factory that produced film equipment. Subsequently, it was discovered that the factory did not do it quite right, and a different stratagem was tried. An old toolmaker was brought out from retirement and placed on the payroll for one month. The needed tool was manufactured, at last, but the cost to the hospital was roughly fifty times what it would have been had the item been on sale in a medical supplies store.

Shortages of medical supplies and equipment, obviously, made it important to have connections, to be resourceful enough to tread the thin line between the legal and the illegal, and not infrequently to resort to outright bribes. But this was not the only area in which the law had to be bent. "Doctoring" statistics in an effort to make the hospital look good was another. Seriously ill patients were prematurely discharged or were even refused admission because their death would adversely affect statistical indicators of the hospital's mortality and morbidity. Conversely, patients likely to be cured were readily admitted for analogous statistical reasons. Another device that was often used was having a patient discharged and re-admitted on the same day. This stratagem, too, would have a beneficial effect on statistics which would thus show shorter periods of hospitalization per patient under treatment for a particular illness. It stands to reason, therefore, that chronically ill patients did not fare well at all. Those who had some family were simply not admitted to any hospital altogether. Although Odessa was, on the whole, relatively rich in medical facilities, the city did not have a single nursing home.

Another physician, a cancer specialist, reported that the notion of free medical help in Odessa is but a "cruel joke." The cancer clinic (dispanser) where he worked was ostensibly free of charge both to inpatients and outpatients. In reality, patients had to pay for drugs, for medical supplies, and even for the laundry. The clinic was forced to charge fees for all of these because of inadequate funding by the State.

A fourth doctor from Odessa noted that the 1970s were a period of decline in the quality of education at the local Medical Institute. Future physicians received less laboratory work and practical exercises. Instruction at the Institute was in Russian, but many of the students, especially those from the Ukrainian-speaking countryside, had difficulty understanding the language. (Such students were favored in admission because it was believed that, in contrast to applicants from urban backgrounds, they did not mind returning to the villages after graduation. In practice, however, many of the abler students from the villages would find ways to remain in the city). The Medical Institute had three departments, the therapeutic (lechebny), the pediatric, and that of sanitation, hygiene and public health. The latter was the least prestigious and had difficulty filling its quota of new students. As a result, it admitted students with poor academic records (provided they had athletic abilities) and even Jews.

Two informants represented the other free profession, the law. Odessa's city-wide College of Lawyers was divided into a half a dozen districts. Each of these had between one and three legal advice offices (konsul'tatsii) employing between two and twenty-five persons each. Not all of these were actually lawyers. The legal advice offices served also as a dumping ground for former staff members of the courts and of the prosecutor's office who were dismissed from their jobs for some transgression.

Clients would come to see the manager of a legal advice office (who was an appointee of the board of the city's College of Lawyers) to discuss their problems. They would then pay the legal fees for the particular service, as specified in the price schedule. The lawyer's salary, which was reviewed annually, was determined by the amount of work performed and by the amount of money that his work brought to the legal advice office. The lawyers were paid very well: their earnings ranged from 500 to 1500 rubles a month. The legal advice office handled civil cases, labor law, criminal law, divorces, housing problems (a lot of these), administrative law (such as appealing decisions of local government), and divorces. Occasionally, lawyers were appointed by the courts to represent a defendant free of charge.

In actual practice, judges tended to pass verdicts that were "recommended" by the authorities. In instances of that nature, a lawyer might say to the defendant, "I really cannot be of any help to you" (lawyers called such cases "Beiliss trials," after the notorious blood libel trial in Imperial Russia). Normally, the lawyer would make every effort to help his client. According to our informant, in recent years the prestige of the legal profession has seriously declined. Thus, defense attorneys are publically humiliated by judges who interrupt them, preach to them, or make veiled threats that "they are not acting like Soviet lawyers." Occasionally, judges complain about troublesome defense attorneys to the College of Lawyers.

The other informant, once a prosecutor and a judge, confirmed this information. The lawyers, she said, were a free profession but were not held in high esteem. A prosecutor, she pointed out, might be punished for some infraction by demotion to the status of an ordinary lawyer, but a lawyer could not be promoted to the rank of prosecutor.

The courts in Odessa were under the jurisdiction of the courts in

Kiev and they, in turn, were under the jurisdiction of Moscow. Appeals of verdicts were filed accordingly.

Most of the cases she tried or in which she was a prosecutor involved both petty and major, but not political, crimes. She dealt with embezzlers, murderers and rapists, as well as with people who were charged with collaborating with the Nazis during the war. The courts were often pressured and influenced by means of "humorous feuilletons" that appeared in the press and described relatively minor infringements of the law. She was also quite often subjected to political pressures but, she insisted, she refused to be intimidated.

There were two kinds of trials. In "normal" cases, both civil and criminal, a defendant might hope to be acquitted. Not so in political cases, where people were routinely sentenced without even a pretense of a fair trial.

As a prosecutor and a judge, she could not socialize "with just anybody." She had an intimate circle of close friends (all of them, she emphasized, "highly educated people") whom she would see very often. From the several allusions she made it was obvious that they were, as herself, members of Odessa's political elite, the nomenklatura. The most powerful person in the Odessa province was the secretary of the Province Committee of the Communist Party (obkom). It was he who was Moscow's and Kiev's viceroy. In the city proper the boss was the secretary of the Province Executive Committee of the Municipality (obispolkom). When all was said and done, it was their will that was the law.

V. Educational Institutions

"The schools in Odessa were uneven. Those in the inner city were very good, while those in the suburbs were terrible," an informant explained. I winced, but then I recalled that, in contrast to the United States, in the USSR desirable neighborhoods are located in the heart of the city, while those on the outskirts lack in many amenities, services, and also, apparently, have inferior public schools. And since, in the overwhelming majority of cases, children in Odessa attend neighborhood schools (bussing for purposes of social or educational equilibrium is quite unknown, and only the handful of children who attend special schools use public transportation) a classic vicious circle is created. Children of the elite attend elite public schools, which enhance the child's chances of entering a good college, while children of the disadvantaged are relegated to inferior schools. This widens even further the educational gap between the two groups of young people and also largely precludes any undue socializing between the offspring of ordinary Soviet mortals and those who are more equal than others. Yet even within the elite schools there was a pecking order. In elementary schools, where a single teacher is in charge of all instruction for a given grade, some teachers were considered particularly prestigious, and parents used pull to have their boys and girls placed in those sections. Conversely, teachers sought ways to be assigned to "better" schools, in part because there was less juvenile delinquency in such schools, children had better

study habits and were more eager to learn. Moreover, several informants suggested that schoolteachers valued pupils whose parents were in a position to help them obtain hard-to-get grades and services, medical care, etc. One informant asserted that on the first day of classes teachers would actually ask their pupils to tell them about their parents, where they work and what they do.

Fewer than a half a dozen of Odessa's approximately hundred public schools were Ukrainian; the others were Russian. In the late 1960's and early 1970's there was the danger that even those few Ukrainian schools may have to be closed because of shrinking enrollments. Clearly, having no Ukrainian schools in a major city within the Ukrainian Republic would be politically embarrassing. It was probably for that reason that these ailing Ukrainian schools (plus two Russian schools, PS99 and PS107, after their conversion into Ukrainian ones) were chosen to be "magnet schools" in which foreign languages were taught beginning with the first grade. Two former students and one teacher provided a few details. One or two hours daily were devoted to German (or English or French) language, history and geography, with instruction entirely in that language. In practice, therefore, pupils had about ten classroom hours per week conducted in a foreign language. The rest of instruction was in Ukrainian, except for the obligatory classes in Russian. A college student recalled:

> The foreign language schools in Odessa were, almost all of them, Ukrainian schools. Thus, with very rare

> exceptions, children of Russian or Jewish intellectuals could not be admitted to those schools because they did not know enough Ukrainian. Paradoxically, many of the Ukrainian-speaking children came from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, and did not really much care about learning French or English or, for that matter, their native Ukrainian. Conversely, educated Russian-speaking parents, would hire private tutors to teach their children foreign languages, or else teach them enough Ukrainian to qualify for admission to Ukrainian schools that also taught foreign languages.

This was, apparently, a "normal" foreign-language school. A secondary schoolteacher of Russian and Ukrainian reported the existence of another kind as well:

> The 'English school' was an elite institution attended for the most part by children of important Party members, KGB, and other influential people. Very few ordinary folk were admitted there. The graduates of this English school tended to enter such elite colleges as the Institute of International Relations and the Institute of Foreign Trade. Later on, another less fancy English school opened. That school admitted more plain people, but even there one needed bribes and connections to get in.

Incidentally, private tutors were very much in demand for other reasons as well. An instructor in a teachers' college informed:

> The schools in Odessa were not very good and they did not prepare their pupils adequately to pass the rather stiff college entrance examinations.

> That is why, in the 1970's, Odessa had a thriving industry of private lessons. I personally coached a great many pupils in Russian, the subject I taught at the college. At one time I earned roughly as much giving these private lessons as I did from my regular job at the teachers' college.

In addition to the Ukrainian (and one Russian) magnet schools offering intensive foreign-language curricula, there were several other specialized secondary schools. Thus, PS116 was a spetsshkola for students excelling in mathematics and physics. It comprised the last three years of the ten-year curriculum (there were rumors in the late 1970's that the school might actually close because so many of its students had emigrated). Other specialized secondary schools included a variety of trade schools teaching different technical skills, schools of art and design, theatrical schools, a ballet studio, and about ten musical schools (one of them an evening school) which combined a high school and music curriculum. Most famous of the latter was the Stolyarsky School, which trained performing artists. Its founder, Piotr Solomonovich Stolyarsky, a semi-literate musician, loved to boast of the school that bore his name, shkola imeni mene. The school's alumni include such celebrated violinists as David Oistrakh and Nathan Milstein. Their prerevolutionary forerunners, the frail and bespectacled Jewish prodigy children, were immortalized by Isaac Babel. By 1970, however, the director of that school told a music teacher, herself a graduate and a daughter of a graduate of that school,

that her daughter could not possibly be admitted because the Jewish quota now was two new students annually and that a 1500-ruble bribe would be required even of those lucky two pupils.

We shall now turn to several specialized secondary schools.

A Music School

In 1975, the music teacher referred to above was employed at the First Children's Music School, which was an eight-year school with a musical orientation. Pupils were admitted by a competitive entrance examination, with only one in four applicants accepted. A very high percentage of these students were Jewish, though it was an open secret that parents of Jewish children had to bribe the admissions people. At the same time, even Russians and Ukrainians who wanted their children to be assigned to a good teacher also had to bribe admissions officers. Most of the teachers in Odessa's First Children's Music School were themselves poorly trained, as attested by the fact that many of those who now live in the United States cannot get teaching jobs. (By contrast, the informant operates a successful small music school).

Upon graduating from the eight-year Children's Music School, students would enter the Musical School (Muzykal'noe uchilishche). Only the most gifted (roughly, one out of eight) would continue at the Odessa Conservatory. Here, too, bribes were required, sometimes exorbitant ones, as high as seven years' salary. Besides, the conservatory had a small and inadequate

graduate department of musicology. It is for these reasons that the informant continued her studies in far-off Kazan rather than in her native Odessa.

The eight-year First Children's Music School had approximately a thousand students aged seven to fifteen, both boys and girls. The informant taught four afternoons a week. This was less than full time. There was a surplus of music teachers in Odessa, and the school's administration tried to give all of them at least some work. Classes were relatively small, between twelve and fifteen students. (In America, she noted, some classes have as many as thirty-five). She did not mind having less than a full load, because she was then the mother of two young children. She taught the piano: piano, and music generally, were considered a good livelihood and were a popular choice of career. Still, even part-time teaching was not easy. Because of her children (problems with baby-sitters, petty medical emergencies, unreliable public transportation), she was always in danger of being late for her classes. On an average day, she taught from one in the afternoon to eight in the evening. Officially, a class lasted forty-five minutes, but she often taught twice as long, for an hour and a half, because the students' parents paid her with "gifts" for doing so. The children came from different backgrounds. Their fathers were sailors and doctors, schoolteachers and clerks. Curiously, she did not recall teaching any children of workers, probably

because almost no workers lived in that school district, and hers was a neighborhood school. In addition to the general curriculum, four music-related subjects were taught: piano, or some other instrument; musicology and music appreciation; music theory; and choir. Children attended music classes two days a week. Actually, only their major music subject was taught twice a week: the minor music subjects were taught once a week. There were five such music schools in the city.

A Theater School

The informant completed high school in 1957. Even though she graduated at the top of her class, with a gold medal, her parents had to pay a bribe of a thousand rubles (then equivalent to half a year's salary) to get her admitted to the university. Upon graduation from the university, she found a job at the School for Theater and the Arts (Teatral'no-khudozhestvennoe uchilishche, not to be confused with Khudozhestvennoe uchilishche, Artistic School, which trained painters). At first she taught German. Later on she taught such specialized courses as Modern Costume (including wigs), History of Costume and a subject then quite unknown in the USSR, Flower Arrangement.

The School for Theater and the Arts admitted students who had completed eight years of public school. Most of its students aspired to acting careers. In keeping with its bohemian reputation the school's student body did not reflect prevailing general college admission policies: it

was heavily Jewish. The faculty, too, was hardly politically reliable. Her uncle, who taught acting, was once an actor at the Yiddish Theater which was closed during Stalin's anti-Semitic purges of the late 1940's. The uncle taught part-time; he was also employed at the television station. Another faculty member was Konstantin Kiriakovich Stamerov, a Greek who was caught trying to escape from the USSR.

A School for Cooks

In contrast to music and theater schools, both of which were relatively prestigious, those of the Labor Reserve system were definitely "lower class." Most of their students did not do well in public schools and did not aspire to enter college. The majority were children of disadvantaged families, predominantly working class.

One of such schools trained cooks. Kulinarnoe uchilishche admitted graduates of eight- and ten-grade schools. Graduates of ten-year schools studied for a year and a half, while those with eight-grade education stayed for two and a half years. There were no entrance examinations of any kind. Still, two informants who had taught in that school insisted, the morale was good. Students at the school felt they were learning a very useful trade.

For the first two months pupils were taught theory of cooking and food technology. The rest of the course of study (sixteen or twenty-eight months) was equally divided between theory and practice, one week of each

at a time. Practice of internship was in restaurants or cafeterias. During the summer students would do their internship in Odessa's numerous rest home resorts, even though working there was officially illegal.

Some sixty percent of the pupils were boys. They were scholastically superior to the girls. A great many were juvenile delinquents, and most were relieved to be finished with public schools. Discipline was strict. The informants recalled that teachers who were in charge of particularly unruly groups of students got paid an additional ten to twenty rubles a month. Not infrequently such teachers had to summon parents to discuss their unruly offspring. All parents had to come to school every six months to meet with the teachers and the administration.

The curriculum in the school for cooks consisted of a subject called aesthetic education, which comprised literature, theater and cinema; cooking; raw materials (foodstuffs); military training; physical education; and accounting.

Two inducements attracted applicants to the School for Cooks. They knew that cooks never go hungry (nor do their families) and they liked the relatively short time in which they could learn the trade and receive the diploma. Moreover, conditions in the school itself compared favorably with those found elsewhere. Freshmen received stipends of twenty-six rubles a month, and upper classmen received more. The students also

prized the profession because they knew that cooks have many opportunities to steal food, a major attraction in conditions of endemic food shortages. In fact, so much food was stolen in the School itself, that the police had to be called in quite frequently. Total enrollment in the School for cooks was five hundred. Of the thirty-five entering freshmen, twenty-eight, or eighty percent, would graduate.

There were analogous schools in Odessa for tailors and shoemakers. In plumbing and in metal trades, factories admitted students as apprentices.

A Boarding School

The following account was provided by an informant who taught from 1961 to 1979 at the Odessa English Language Boarding School, one of two boarding schools in the city. (These boarding schools should not be confused with the five special language schools, the Ukrainian "magnet" schools, where students lived at home.)

The English Language Boarding School had six hundred students, boys and girls, aged seven to seventeen, and fifty to fifty-four teachers. Half of the teachers lived in the city; the others lived in dormitories and, in addition to teaching, supervised the students' other activities. Teaching at the boarding school was considered a desirable job, because there were only twenty students per classroom, while in the ordinary schools in Odessa there were as many as forty. Teachers who lived in the city would arrive at school at half past eight in the morning to teach between four and five classes. They could, in theory, go home by

three in the afternoon, but they had a lot of student papers to correct. Also, they were expected to visit regularly the library to study both their subject and current politics.

A normal day at the school began at seven in the morning. Teachers who lived in the dorms had to wake the students, hurry them to wash, make their beds and go to breakfast. Classes were held in the building adjoining the dormitory from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. All in all there were six or seven sessions with a break at noon for a hot lunch. The food, by Odessa standards, was very good, and in general pupils at the school were well cared for.

The curriculum was demanding. The informant, who has since taught at an American high school, estimates that in the Odessa English Language Boarding School students were taught nearly three times as many subjects as are taught in this country. Pupils intent on continuing on to college took thirteen different subjects, whereas those studying for a terminal degree took eleven. The following subjects were taught in the ninth grade:

1. Russian language
2. Russian literature
3. Ukrainian language
4. Ukrainian literature
5. Foreign language (English)
6. Mathematics (geometry and trigonometry)
7. Physics
8. Chemistry
9. Geography

10. History
11. Soviet Constitution
12. Astronomy
13. Technical drawing and design
14. Military training (like ROTC)
15. Choir
16. Physical education

The Odessa English Language Boarding School, in the informant's estimation, taught much more than most Soviet schools, to say nothing of American schools. On the negative side, independent thinking and originality were strongly discouraged, particularly in the social sciences and humanities. Pupils learned by rote, and little attempt was made to make them understand what they were taught. Still, memorization or not, they did learn much purely factual material. Because of the relatively small size of classes, pupils were called on almost every day in such subjects as physics, chemistry and mathematics. In addition to the six or seven hours of classroom work, students were daily assigned between three and four hours of homework. Curiously, even though the boarding school was oriented toward training students in English, English was considered one of the easier subjects.

Of the six to seven daily classroom hours, two or three were devoted to the study of English, or to subjects conducted in English. Courses conducted in English at various times included geography, British and American literature, technical translation and military translation

(written), as well as oral interpretation. Other subjects, such as mathematics and science, were conducted in Russian. All extracurricular activities were conducted in English and were supervised by teachers of English.

The English Language Boarding School of Odessa was established in 1961. In its early years it was regarded as an elite school. Entrance examinations were very competitive. Also, by Soviet standards, the school was very expensive. Tuition, room, board and clothing cost fifty-eight rubles a month, which was roughly half of an average worker's salary. Gradually, however, the elite character of the school was eroded by two seemingly unconnected practices. The first was ordinary corruption. A great many students were admitted through their parents' connections or simply by bribing admissions officers. The reason parents were eager to have their children admitted to the school was the clear preference shown to its graduates in admission to such elite colleges as the Institute of International Relations and the Foreign Language Institute.

(Even corruption, however, failed to undermine certain official regulations. Not one of the English Language Boarding School's six hundred students was Jewish, perhaps because the school was considered a training ground for Soviet diplomats. In the 1960's and 1970's there were no Jews at all in the Soviet Foreign Service.)

The other cause of the English Language Boarding School's decline was more unusual. Odessa's Communist Party organization began to use the school as a dumping ground for upper-class orphans or children from broken homes. The practice was rooted in the perfectly justified belief that the school offered better living conditions and superior educational opportunities than the run-of-the-mill orphanage (detdom). The boys and girls assigned to the school by the Party organization were admitted without any entrance examination. Many of them had scant foreign language aptitude. This led to a decline of academic standards, in particular the level of English language proficiency. Moreover, a chasm developed in the school between pupils admitted by normal examination and those unceremoniously dumped there by Party functionaries.

In the informant's estimation, fully half of the students did not really belong in the school. There were other problems as well. The textbooks were poor and there was an unceasing scramble for new teaching methods. New teaching aids were published periodically and everybody tried to keep up with the latest in pedagogical wisdom. All teachers belonged to one of the three methodology sections, one for mathematics, another for natural science, and the third for social science and the humanities.

The informant was herself the Academic Dean (zavuch) of the school. The real authority, however, rested with the city's methodological section. The heads of her school's three methodological sections would report once

a month to the city-wide organization, and also consider the adoption of recommendations worked out by other schools. The conflicting recommendations engendered chaos. This was further compounded by periodical directives from the local Communist Party organization to incorporate ever more politics into the teaching of all subjects, including those that do not readily lend themselves to such practices, e.g., mathematics or natural science. In practice, many teachers disregarded these instructions and wrote phony reports to mollify the Party bosses. Some teachers, however, would do as they were told, often with disastrous results. The social sciences and the humanities were far and away the most politicized subjects.

The school's eagerness to impress the authorities with mathematical indicators of successful teaching resulted in wholesale promotion from grade to grade of students who normally should have been failed. It was done rather crudely: F's were simply changed to D's and C's. On one occasion the informant had flunked a student, but while she was on vacation the director changed his grade to a passing one, and did not even bother to inform her of the fact. But students were also passed because no teacher wanted to be saddled with the additional job of coaching a failing student for no extra pay during his or her vacation time. Moreover, if a pupil was in danger of failing, the teacher had to see his parents at work (on the teacher's own time, of course) to tell them of the problem. Finally,

the teacher of a failing student could be penalized by losing his or her vacation pay. Little wonder, therefore, that hardly any teacher wanted to fail a student.

A political study meeting was held weekly. Failure to attend was punished by different sanctions, such as refusal to provide the teacher an apartment, or striking his name from the waiting list of persons eligible to purchase a car, or those expecting permission to travel abroad.

A teacher's council met once a month. The agenda of the meeting was divided into three parts: problems directly related to work, world politics, and discussion of personal lives of teachers. During the latter there was public scrutiny of individual teachers' family problems, drinking habits and love lives. Needless to say, it was this part of the council's session that generated most interest.

The school had a trade union, but union officials always sided with the principal (who was appointed by the Party organization from among the teaching staff) and never with a teacher. For teaching twenty-odd classroom hours a week, in 1979 teachers were paid 120 rubles a month. This was a pitiful wage. Skilled workers earned exactly twice that amount. Because the informant's husband was a high school science teacher earning as little as she did, she tried to supplement their income by private tutoring, typing and the like.

As the composition of the student body at the English Language Boarding School changed, with an ever higher percentage of pupils from broken homes who were placed there by the Party organization without any entrance exams, the career patterns of its graduates changed as well. While in the school's earlier years most graduates entered prestigious colleges, by the mid-1970's the majority went to work at local factories. Finally, in 1979 the English Language Boarding School dropped the English language component from its curriculum and thus became an ordinary boarding school.

Foreign Language Courses

An unusual educational enterprise in Odessa was described by several informants, including a teacher and former students at an institution called Three-Year State Courses of Foreign Languages. Though formally not a college, its graduates were awarded diplomas that were recognized as equivalents of teaching licenses. State-owned and state-operated, the courses were quite openly run for profit on a strictly cash and carry basis. Anyone could enroll upon payment of sixty rubles per month (about a week's salary). Students ranged from Soviet technicians about to be sent abroad, to high-class prostitutes with a clientele of foreign merchant marine crews enjoying rest and recreation in the port of Odessa. In the 1970's, enrollment in English courses was swollen by Jews intent on emigration. It was rumored that the KGB kept particularly close tabs on those

students. Since many of them had not yet formally applied for exit visas, this was a good way of identifying those planning to do so.

In spite of rather high tuition costs, Foreign Language Courses were very popular with the public. The school operated three shifts--morning, afternoon, and evening, with some classes on weekends as well--and was open year around, with two semesters annually. It did not own a building of its own, renting premises from other institutions, but it had about 1500 students. By all accounts, the quality of instruction was good. Many of the teachers were Jews dismissed from better positions at prestigious institutions during the anti-Semitic "anti-cosmopolitan" purges of the late forties and early fifties. These people appreciated the opportunity to remain in the teaching profession. In addition to English, French, German and Spanish, the Foreign Language Courses also offered instruction in Polish. The Polish courses were well attended because a reading knowledge of the language (acquired quite easily by persons with native Russian or Ukrainian) gave one access to books and periodicals which, by Soviet standards, contained much ideologically daring and aesthetically unconventional material, particularly after 1956. (One Soviet citizen, albeit not an Odessan, who had in those years taught himself Polish with these reasons in mind, and who was greatly enriched by it, was the Russian poet Joseph Brodsky, who has since won the Nobel Prize. Brodsky now lives in the United States.) Unlike books and

periodicals from the West, which were difficult to come by, reading matter from the People's Democracies was reasonably easy to obtain in Odessa, except at times of political tension. One could even subscribe to Polish periodicals. True, at times when Polish "revisionism" was under attack in the Soviet press, such periodicals would simply not be delivered by the Soviet mails.

Public Schools

Informants had nothing but praise for the Foreign Language Courses. On the other hand, the public schools received uneven grades. They were praised for imparting to pupils much factual knowledge (often through simple memorization) and criticized for stifling originality and initiative. Foreign language training was effective in teaching to read, but paid little attention to speaking and to aural comprehension. Among the schools' negative features several informants singled out the policy of "promoting children to the next grade no matter how badly they did on the exam and during the school year," although in some cases failing students were told to attend summer school instead of enjoying vacation. (Odessa had both sleep-away camps and day camps of the Young Pioneer organization. The latter were free of charge.) Finally, several respondents mentioned a decline in school discipline. The use of narcotics was said to be on the rise, as was teenage alcoholism, the incidence of theft (allegedly a serious problem) and teen pregnancy. Unlike in America, it was pointed

out, once a girl became pregnant, authorities would have her taken out of school (sometimes even moving her to another city) lest she become a bad example to her peers.

Higher Education

For a city its size that was, moreover, not a capital of a union republic, in the 1970's Odessa had a large number of institutions of higher education. These included some fifteen Institutes, a similar number of specialized trade schools (tekhnikumy), as well as one university with nine departments. The departments were history, philology, physics, mathematics, geography, foreign languages, chemistry, biology and law. In the estimation of a former professor of English at one of Odessa's colleges, the University of Odessa ranked below that of Kiev. It was roughly in the same league with Rostov and Kishinev, the capital of the neighboring Moldavian Republic. In addition, Odessa had a Medical School; a College of Communications; a Merchant Marine Academy; a Polytechnical Institute with departments of mechanical, electrical and radio engineering, as well as of economics; and Institutes of Civil Engineering, Food Processing, and Refrigeration Engineering.

Other Odessa educational establishments included the Institute of Agriculture; of Metallurgy; of Weather and Irrigation; the Conservatory of Music; and the three departments of the Military Academy, infantry, anti-aircraft and artillery. The city also had an evening Institute of

Marxism-Leninism. The latter had no full-time students. Other institutions selected from among their own students young men and women who studied there four hours per week such subjects as Marxism-Leninism, scientific atheism and philosophy.

The academic quality of these institutions varied greatly. (Several informants, incidentally, could gauge the adequacy of their training by the extent to which it prepared them for professional work in the United States.) Several advanced the plausible hypothesis that institutions teaching rarely taught specialties such as Communications, Refrigeration, or the Merchant Marine Academy attracted students from the entire country and tended to be very good. Conversely, those offering training readily available in many other cities--for instance, the Teachers' College--were normally mediocre. There were, however, exceptions. The Medical School, for instance, was reputed to be one of the country's best. As anywhere in the world, an institution's academic reputation would change drastically with the departure or retirement of several famous faculty members. Unlike outside the USSR, however, a Party leader's pronouncement extolling the importance of a particular field--say, chemistry--would almost immediately result in an infusion of funds to appropriate departments and institutions and quickly enhance their academic standing.

Contrary to expectations, informants tended to be generous in praise of colleges other than their own alma mater. Thus, a musicologist admired a school of engineering but declared the conservatory downright poor, and

conversely, a woman engineer was in awe of that conservatory. Another engineer was more specific. On the whole, the equipment at the Polytechnical Institute was poor, the library inadequate (he used the public library), and the teachers mediocre, but his own Department of Automation somehow succeeded in preparing him for an engineering career in America. A teacher of German at the Agricultural Institute complained that advanced degrees in her subject were offered in Odessa, but very few German books were available in the city, not even books printed in East Germany. In order to do a research paper on Heinrich Boll's Billiards at Half Past Nine, a relatively new book readily available in Russian translation, she had to go to Moscow. A German copy of the book was not to be found in Odessa, and apparently could also not be obtained by mail or through an interlibrary loan system.

Soviet higher education, an Odessa professor of philology emphasized, is highly specialized. There are about two thousand different curricula in Soviet higher education, but programs in the same specialty have identical curricula throughout the USSR. That is one reason why prospective Soviet students do not, in contrast to the United States, apply simultaneously for admission to several Soviet universities. Another is the fact that nearly all of them schedule their entrance examinations on the same day and that an applicant for admission must submit the original (not a copy) of his high school diploma. (Only a few institutions have early admission

for exceptional students--thus providing them with a choice--and a school or two that fails to fill its admissions quota may have late admissions.) Failing college entrance examinations was a very serious matter. Some students, however, were lucky. A metallurgical engineer explained:

> Unlike in America, in the USSR a student can apply only to one institution of higher learning at a time, because entrance examinations are held on the same day throughout the country. Still, a student might fail the entrance examination in one college and be admitted to another. The way this was done is that a student may have failed one particular subject which was not required in another college. Hence, if the second college had openings, that student might be admitted there. Moreover, a student who failed the entrance examinations in a college could, nevertheless, be admitted to the evening session of the other college because the entrance examinations to the evening session were held a month or so later. Also, one could be admitted on probation. In that case, the student on probation might be reclassified as a regular student---say, if one of the regular students dropped out for any reason.

For reasons stated earlier, applicants for admission to institutions of higher education tended to apply to that local school where they stood a reasonable chance of being admitted. A great many male applicants viewed admission to <u>any</u> college as the single most important consideration, because only in this manner could they avoid being drafted into the army.

(Army service, in turn, could also jeopardize one's future chances of emigration, on the grounds of previous access to military secrets.) Sometimes an applicant might be admitted only to the evening session or to the correspondence division, but even this had its silver lining. A college instructor of Russian explained.

> While it is true that students in the evening and correspondence divisions tended to be recruited from among those who were not admitted to the day session, evening and correspondence divisions did offer some advantages. Their graduates were not forced (as day session students were) to work, upon graduation, in a locale assigned to them by the authorities. They were free to look for a job where they pleased. True, evening session students had to produce evidence that they had full time jobs during the day, but there was a great deal of cheating on that score.

Naturally, the choice of career was determined also by one's predilections. Still, in addition to the decisive factor of one's chances of being admitted to the college of one's choice, there were other practical questions. Study in the College of Agriculture meant living (forever!) in a village. All but a handful of graduates of the Institute of Finance ended up as accountants at industrial enterprises, a dead-end job. Alumni of the Institute of Communications, who did not end up in the army or the police (and many could never hope to obtain such sensitive jobs), worked in poorly paid positions in telegraph, telephone, etc. with hardly any chances for advancement. Most of the Foreign Language Institute's students

could only go into high school teaching. The Law School was fine--many of its graduates could find jobs with the police and the KGB, both of them privileged institutions--but then, not many people could pass the security clearance required by these employers. Such clearance was also needed to enter the military, naval and merchant marine academies. Physics, an engineer recalled, especially nuclear physics, was generally considered a good profession---well paid, prestigious, glamorous. So were, to a degree, medicine and dentistry, both of which offered some opportunity for private practice and for survival even in prison conditions. But all this was, of course, contingent on admission to the appropriate Institute, and this in turn depended not only on normal scholastic factors and competitiveness in admissions, but also on the stringency of that educational establishment's anti-Semitic discrimination. The last consideration loomed large to our informants, the great majority of whom were Jewish. Protsentnaia norma, the infamous numerus clausus, quotas in college admissions of Jews, familiar to readers of prerevolutionary Russian history and the bittersweet tales of Sholem Aleichem, was as much a reality in Soviet Odessa of the 1970's, a quarter of a century after Hitler's defeat, as they were in Imperial Russia where--in contrast to the ostensibly egalitarian and non-discriminatory USSR--anti-Semitism was officially sanctioned. Pages from old Yiddish novels appeared to come to life again as informants would recall anecdotal incidents about Russian boys and Ukrainian girls who were failed on oral college entrance examinations

because of a suspiciously Jewish-sounding name or a Semitic nose. Periodically, rumors would sweep Soviet Odessa's Jewish community in the 1970's and parents of aspiring college students would scurry to obscure institutions where Jews, it was said, stood a good chance of being admitted. A sculptor specializing in bas-reliefs assured that the Institute of Metallurgy was just such a school on account of its chronic difficulties in filling its admissions quota. A physician related that the Medical School, as a whole, was in decline: the amount of laboratory work and practical exercises continued to shrink. Nevertheless, of the School's three departments, the therapeutic (lechebnyi) and the pediatric continued to strongly discriminate against Jews while favoring students of peasant backgrounds who would then become country doctors. Not so, the third department, that of sanitation, hygiene and public health:

> The latter was the least prestigious, and had difficulty filling its quota of new students. As a result, it admitted students with low grades but who were valuable as athletes, students from the countryside with poor academic records, as well as Jews. The peasants were favored because they did not mind returning to the villages, or so it was assumed. In reality, a good many of the better students from the collective farms found ways to stay in Odessa, while poorly trained doctors went to the villages and stayed there.

At the other end of the spectrum were colleges which accepted no Jews at all. Five former Odessans gathered at a dinner table (a professor at an institute of technology, a college student, and three engineers) agreed that there was not a single Jew at the Merchant Marine Academy, even though every year a few Jewish applicants would try their luck. The same was true of the various military schools. To get around the obstacle course of discriminatory admission policies, the informants recalled, prospective Jewish college students would often apply to third-rate out-of-town schools, as would Jewish professors looking for positions. As one of the engineers put it, "The out-of-town schools would sometimes admit them, or hire them, because provincial colleges thought that having some Odessans would enhance their cosmopolitan and intellectual image." (It should be noted that this group of informants was equally unanimous in insisting that whatever the official instructions, in practice engineering personnel decisions were made almost solely on competence.)

The observation was corroborated by an intermarried couple, in which the Jewish husband was an electronics engineer and the Russian wife a history teacher and museum employee. As the husband put it, "Jews from Odessa tried to enter universities and institutes in cities where almost no Jews resided, on the assumption that in such localities they would stand a better chance of being admitted." Their own university careers in Odessa also confirmed the pattern. An ethnic Russian, she had no

trouble gaining admission to the university. The Jewish husband, by contrast, was turned down by the Polytechnical Institute because, he was told, they did not wish to exceed the quota on the percentage of Jewish students they were instructed to admit. As a result, he entered the Institute of Communications. The irony of the situation was that had their professional interests been reversed, neither of the spouses would have had any problems entering the college of his or her choice. The Russian wife recalled:

> In the university's department of history they had as many as ten percent of Jewish students. But then, history was not considered a very desirable profession and the composition of the student body in the history department was somewhat atypical. It appears that the university authorities preferred to admit [to the history department] minor Party functionaries. A degree in Communist Party history would later qualify them for better jobs.

Both husband and wife reported a degree of "affirmative action" preference for Ukrainian applicants "because it was assumed that the graduates would return to work in the countryside." This was an important consideration because there was a shortage there of schoolteachers and technicians of different specialties, and urban students strongly resisted (often by semi-legal and illegal means) being even temporarily assigned to work in the countryside.

The most detailed account of the functioning of Odessa institutions of higher education was provided by a former professor of engineering (perhaps a teacher of the informant referred to earlier; to protect their privacy, we were not allowed to divulge the identities of different informants to each other). The engineering professor remembered:

> Russians and Ukrainians were treated almost as equals, although some preference was shown to the Ukrainians. That preference, however, favored the Ukrainian students as young people of peasant origin rather than members of a particular ethnic group. Indeed, so eager was the Institute to increase the number of students from such backgrounds, that recruiters (vyezdnaya komissiya) were sent to the Ukrainian countryside, even to distant villages in Moldavia [i.e., outside the Ukraine - MF]. Needless to say, people recruited in this manner were not subjected to the same rigorous entrance examinations as other applicants.

The professor continued:

> Parents whose children did not benefit from affirmative action, and especially those whose children were vulnerable to anti-Semitic discrimination, tried to compensate by hiring private tutors for their children so that they would obtain the highest possible grades on entrance examinations.... Because the law stipulated that recipients of gold medals [equivalent to summa cum laude - MF] were to be admitted to college without entrance examinations, high schools would generally avoid awarding gold medals to Jewish graduates.

Jewish "quotas" were strictly observed:

> The percentage of Jews in the Institute [of Communications] was 5 percent in the day session, 15 to 20 percent in the correspondence courses, and as many as 30 percent in the evening session. The 30 percent of Jews in the evening session meant that any Jew applying for the evening session who passed the entrance exam would be admitted. On the other hand, there was relatively little discrimination in the hiring of faculty because the Institute suffered from an acute shortage of teachers. The director of the Institute of Communications, himself a Ukrainian, was eager to maintain and improve the quality of instruction at his institute and he hired the best teachers he could find. As a result, even at times when other scientific institutes were dismissing Jews from teaching positions, the Communications Institute of Odessa not only did not fire anybody, but provided employment for the unemployed refugees from other colleges and universities. The Communications Institute trained specialists (mostly engineers) in such fields as telephone, telegraph, radio, television, and such subspecialties as bugging rooms with secret microphones, eavesdropping on telephone conversations, etc. At one time there were three Institutes of Communications in all of the USSR. More recently there were six. The one in Odessa was considered second only to that of Moscow. About 80 percent of the Odessa Institute's alumni were hired by the military and the KGB.

The professor described college entrance examinations:

> Entrance examinations to Soviet institutions of higher education are highly competitive.

> They are also strictly regulated by the authorities in order to implement official personnel policies. Examinations are supervised by an entrance examination committee consisting of chairman, secretary and examining jurors. There are oral as well as written examinations, each independent of the other. The chairman of the commission was normally appointed either by the Minister of Higher Education or by the Minister of the specialty taught in that institute (in my case, the Minister of Communications). The Rector of the Institute usually chaired the commission. The chairman was instructed in great detail by the local Party organization on the manner in which the examinations were to be conducted, and on the desired composition of the student body. The other committee members, including also the secretary, were appointed by the Institute's Party bureau and confirmed by either the Province or the District Party Committee. The individual who was really responsible for the activities of the committee was the secretary. It is worth nothing that the secretary could serve only for a single term. That was done in order to limit the secretary's opportunities for accepting bribes from parents of prospective students. Members of the examinations committee were not necessarily on the teaching staff of the Institute. Not a few were high school teachers. I cannot recall a single Jew as a member of the entrance examinations committee in all the years since 1945.

With all that, there was both favoritism and corruption:

> My own daughter was accepted to the Institute not only because her grades were good, but also

> because of an informal understanding that children of faculty members are always to be admitted to the institution where their parents teach. Bribes were commonplace and sabotage, if you will, as well. In the course of an entrance examination, teachers proctoring the written test or conducting an oral could either help a student or hurt him. They could, for instance, correct "inadvertent slips" in the examination booklet or help him find the right answer during an oral. They also could, if they chose, lead the student in the wrong direction by raising an eyebrow or asking "Are you quite sure of that?" and so forth.

Some of the stratagems were crude, others were ingenious. A metallurgical engineer reported:

> A reasonably common practice for gaining admission to an institute was to buy someone else's high school diploma with the name of the original owner erased and the new name written in. Such doctored diplomas were sold by college admissions officers. In addition, one could engage the services of "tutors" who were themselves members of the entrance examination commission. On oral examinations, the admission of the student was thus virtually *guaranteed. Occasionally, the method* was refined. The previous year's members of the commission worked as tutors during the year that they were not formally members of the commission, and their friends would see to it that their pupils were admitted. The procedure would then be reversed the following year. Occasionally, there were cases of outright bribes accepted by members of the commission. In the past it was not uncommon for a single student to be examined by a

> single teacher with no witnesses present. Now the examination commissions generally have three members. Still, corruption in admission to universities is rampant.

Organized extracurricular activities--musical, literary and others--will be considered in separate chapters on the arts, entertainment and intellectual life, as appropriate. We should, however, close this chapter with an excerpt from the recollections of Odessa in the mid-1970's by a young man from an affluent family, a university student, bohemian and non-conformist:

> Students in Odessa tended to demonstratively reject everything old, by which they meant anything older than five years. Anything old was considered a drag. To establish the bonafides of an interlocutor, the hip young had many code words. These would show whether the person had read the right books, attended the right school, and held the right political opinions and cultural values. They would quote the punchline of a well-known joke to determine whether the stranger knew the joke that went with the punchline. The young tended to be addicted to name-dropping and they always stood ready to engage in discussion of fashionable Western writing (say, Friedrich Dürrenmatt) or Russian poets of the 1920's, such as [the then politically unfashionable - MF] Eduard Bagritsky, a fellow-Odessan.
>
> Jeunesse dorée, gilded youth--kids without any intellectual interests but with a lot of money--used to hang out in a restaurant called the

> Seaport. These young people would sing maudlin songs of Soviet thieves and prison camps, the blatnye pesni. It was considered fashionable for young women to show off their independence by demonstratively using obscenity, mat. Young people at the university tried to break down social barriers imposed by their parents who were very consious of each other's rank and social position. Sex was the great equalizer and there was a great deal of sexual promiscuity among the young. The way to pick up girls was simply to go to one of the two main drags in Odessa, the Deribasovskaya street and the Primorskii boulevard, where girls promenaded in groups of two or three. The way to pick them up was to also have two or three young men so that each one would have a partner for the evening. The activity was called devchonok skleit'. Picking up girls was the number one passtime among the students.

The once-privileged Odessa rake continued:

> During the summer the best place to go in Odessa was the beach. A short distance from Odessa there were small seashore houses of influential people, some very important, others less so. That area was called Karolina Bugas. But enough white sand and empty space remained. The best way to have a good time was to bring some friends, start a fire and make love. The young despised the dead side of the past which they knew from tales their elders told. They listened with disapproval to stories about denunciations to the police, arrests, political witch-hunts, and struggles for ideological purity. The young tried to create instead a new code of ethics based on loyalty, magnanimity and friendship. Of these, friendship was the

> most important, and loyalty to one's friends was to transcend loyalty to family. My own friends were not elitist and they had relatively little consciousness of ethnic differences. About 30 percent were Jews. All were high achievers and almost all had attended college.

The informant concluded with undisguised nostalgia:

> Odessa had an inflated image and mystique that other Russian cities lacked. It was not only the writers and the great musicians whom everybody knew that imparted to Odessans a sense of identity. An Odessan thought of himself as a countryman of Durov, the courageous tamer and trainer of animals in the circus, and of Utochkin, the stunt pilot. The city itself may have been provincial, but the artistic community tried to instill in its members a sense of pride. One important place where artists, writers and singers used to gather was Bar Krasnyi, the Red Bar, which was located in Krasnaya Gostinitsa, the Red Hotel. I was introduced to that club by Yurii Mikhailik, a writer and KGB agent. That was in 1968 or 69. Mikhailik was a staff writer for the newspaper Mayak, the Lighthouse. It was he who opened in Odessa a museum devoted to the modernist painter Churlionis, which closed before too long.
>
> There was much glitter in Odessa, but it was mostly superficial. We must not glamorize and romanticize Odessa's youth culture, either, however attractive it may look from a distance. In reality, it concealed the lies, the hypocrisy, and the pervasive sense of futility in Odessa of the 1970's.

VI. Entertainment

By Soviet standards, Odessans were poorly housed, reasonably well fed, and provided with better than average access to education. What made Odessa's overall quality of life more attractive than that of the majority of Soviet cities was, of course, its relatively balmy climate and the seashore, and also a rather wide variety of entertainment available to the population and catering to all ages and tastes. Much of the latter were leftovers, as it were, of the relaxed Mediterranean aura of prerevolutionary Odessa, Russia's Marseilles, the colorful, cosmopolitan seaport described by Alexander Kuprin and Isaac Babel. Memories of these attributes of the city accounted in large part for the genuine affection and nostalgia so often found in our informants' accounts, notwithstanding understandable bitterness toward a regime that treated them even more harshly than most fellow-Odessans. But then, it was these informants' ancestors, witnesses of Jewish pogroms in the city's tsarist period, who coined the saying er lebt vi got in odes, "he lives like God in Odessa." Odessa was hell in many respects, but it was also in some ways a taste of paradise.

A promenade along the boulevards or by the seashore was the most common pastime, just as it might be in Spain or in Italy. And during the summer there was also the beach. A poet who worked in journalism recalled:

> True, the beach was overcrowded with summer tourists. The presence of the large number

> of tourists drove up the prices and resulted also in jammed trolley cars. At the beach, vendors sold such delicacies as corn on the cob (pshenka) and grilled eggplant (sinie). Photographers combed the beach offering to immortalize for posterity the swimmers and the sunbathers. The restaurants were overcrowded and one needed pull to get in.

The restaurants were not only packed: they were also expensive, so much so ("it might cost a week's salary") that a half a dozen reasonably affluent informants gave this as the reason they avoided them. Quite a different cause was given by several young Odessans for avoiding the public dances that were held in the open air during the summer and in various clubs in the winter. A former student at the Institute of Agriculture volunteered the information that public dances such as those at the Shevchenko park "were attended by an undesirable class of people. There were frequent fistfights and knifings at those dances and it was unsafe to walk even in the vicinity." Dances at one's college were a different matter, a young woman recalled: "It was considered quite acceptable for a girl to come to a dance alone, because she would always meet some friends there." The movies, or a cafe, or an ice cream parlor or, best of all, a party in a private home were the students' favorite winter pastimes. Thus, a food technologist explained,

> There was a Youth Cafe (molodyozhnoe kafe) which played some tame jazz and also a little music for

> dancing. The cafe was periodically criticized for being too Western-oriented and for catering to young people with long hair who wore jeans and tried to behave like American hippies. People would go to restaurants and cafes to celebrate birthdays and weddings.

Naturally, married people spent their free time differently. As a young working mother, one respondent "would take the children to the zoo or to the movies. Then there was always the park with its merry-go-rounds." Older couples exchanged dinner invitations and visited family. Odessans of all ages flocked to the city's several museums. In addition to the Art Museum, there were also an Archaeological Museum, a Museum of Natural History, a Naval Museum and a Museum of the History of Odessa. Nor were the parks an exclusive preserve of the very young and the very old.

A Municipal Park

Perceptions of parks vary. They are one thing to toddlers, quite another to teenagers, young couples, and retirees. People remembered hypnotists in Odessa's parks, and magicians and choral singing. A mechanical engineer recalled free concerts by wind ensembles, ice cream vendors, poetry readings, lectures, roller coasters, and shooting galleries with prizes. Curiously, three informants saw fit to emphasize that a park provided a haven from otherwise ubiquitous Soviet propaganda. That this impression was not altogether accurate was confirmed by testimony of a long-time employee of the city's Shevchenko Park, referred to earlier by another informant.

Though named after the Ukraine's national poet, the park in one of the Ukrainian Republic's largest cities offered almost no Ukrainian programming, except for occasional readings by Volodymyr Ivanovich, a local writer. The busy period in Shevchenko Park's calendar was March 15 to November 15. During that time there was a lot of open-air programming. Understandably, there was less activity in the winter when everything had to be held indoors. The following was the schedule of organized events at the open-air mall of the park:

1. Monday. Closed.
2. Tuesday. A 7:00 p.m. lecture on international affairs or domestic Soviet politics. Only 15 to 20 persons would normally attend, but a large crowd would arrive at 8:30 p.m. for the public dance.
3. Wednesday. Usually a concert of popular Soviet songs by the Odessa Philharmonic.
4. Thursday. The Symphony Orchestra would give a concert of light classical music, such as selections from Tchaikovsky, Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar and the Soviet composer Dunayevsky. Attendance ranged from 200 to 250 persons.
5. Friday. Normally a concert of amateur singing, dancing and theatrical groups from different factories in the city. Each factory's contingent would prepare its own program of songs, recitations of verse, folk dances and one-act plays, but each was also expected to prepare a short lecture about its factory's labor achievements.
6. Saturday. The program would begin at 6:00 p.m. with a master of ceremonies (massovik-zateinik) and a wind orchestra. This event attracted up to 500 people. The orchestra played marches and waltzes for about one hour. Beginning from 7:00 p.m., the main program, during which operatic singers performed arias and professional actors read monologues from literary works. The readings were nearly all in Russian. Actors were very poorly paid, normally only ten rubles for the performance.

7. Sunday. Ordinarily, one or two actors would read monologues from literary works, and a piano solo performance.

In bad weather and during the winter, the most common fare was kinolektorii, a documentary film preceded by a lecture. During the summer the park ran a "children's center." This was a day camp, where children were also taught different arts and crafts.

The informant recalled that on one occasion a group of musicians was barred from performing again in the park because some watchdogs of ideological purity thought that their repertory included too many foreign tunes. Such vigilance, however, was limited to public performances. At weddings or private parties one could hear music of the Beatles and even Israeli songs, such as Hava Nagila. Sometimes there were slips even in prepared political lectures. A mechanical engineer recalled that on one occasion a lecturer denounced Israel as a reactionary state, but then, obviously departing from his text, added that the real obstacle to peace in the Middle East was the PLO.

One of our informants was a full-time professional reader of literary works, an occupation apparently less exotic in the USSR than it would be elsewhere. She may well have performed in Shevchenko Park. The elderly lady's background was somewhat unusual. An electrical engineer by training, she was associated for some years with the operatic division of the Odessa Philharmonic. Eventually, she was to lose her singing

voice. Fortunately, her speaking ability was not affected, and she became a chtets-deklamator, a professional reader of poetry, prose and, together with a male partner, of short skits. For some years she was associated in that capacity with the Navy Theater. Together with her partner, she specialized in stage adaptations of Chekhov's stories: their repertory included about thirty of them. It appears, that she should not have left the Odessa Philharmonic after all because, in due time, her new profession's importance was recognized. All of the Soviet Union's philharmonics were instructed to establish "verbal" departments called lektorii, although not all of them did. A lektoriia was to enhance the impact of music with the power of the spoken word. It was to provide texts for special occasions, such as anniversaires and national holidays, texts that would impart concreteness and precision to the necessarily vague message of music which, by itself, can only create moods.

Normally, the lektoriia was only assigned a subject (say "The Soviet Army is a Bulwark of Peace"). It was then up to the lektoriia to find a published text (not to compose one) and do a stage adaptation of it. Even though the adaptation was based on a previously published text, it had to be approved in advance of performance by the Obllit, the Odessa Province Censorship Agency.

The informant performed for different audiences, including school-children. On one occasion she and her partner did a program on Pushkin

in Odessa to help children study the poet's works. They were also hired to do similar programs in the rest homes and sanatoriums in the vicinity of the city. The sanatoriums and rest homes paid a fee to the lektoriia which in turn paid the literary readers. Such public appearances were ordinarily booked a year in advance. A client (a factory, a school, or a rest home) would normally pay for one or two such appearances with monies from its education fund. Rest homes preferred evening performances, while appearances in factories were normally held in the cafeteria during the lunch hour. Occasionally, the informant and her partner would travel long distances to perform on collective farms. Different lektorii would perform in each other's city on an exchange basis. She recalled going on such visits to Minsk and to Vinnitsa, and also guest appearances in army and navy units. She liked her work, but resented the fact that literary readers from the lektorii earned forty percent less than regular actors from the legitimate theater. Within the lektoriia every literary reader was paid in accordance with his or her "rank" on the salary scale, which was upgraded with time. Still, she recalled exceptionally heavy work loads to make ends meet. When performing out of town, she travelled by horse and buggy and also helicopter. She performed for prisoners in a labor camp and even, once, in a leper colony.

As an example of "creative" work she cited a performance in which she and her male partner condensed Nikolai Pogodin's play The Aristocrats

(a comedy about the rehabilitation of prisoners by means of honest labor in a Soviet concentration camp - MF) into a dialogue for two actors which was only ten minutes in length. This "digest" made the play much cheaper to "stage" and also enhanced its mobility by dispensing with costumes and props. Pogodin's uncompromisingly Stalinist message was presumably left intact.

On occasion, the informant would recite appropriate text against the musical background of a symphony orchestra. She mentioned narrating in this manner the story of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, a Soviet heroine martyred by the Nazis, and the libretto of Sergei Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

A colleague of the literary reader, with whom she had sometimes shared the stage in Odessa was an illyuzionist. During an interview, he insisted that the profession not be confused with that of the circus magician (the two appear quite indistinguishable to an outsider) because the latter was provided by the circus with all the props. The illyuzionist had to buy his own costume, candles, confetti, handkerchief, the bird and the rabbit. All of these were written off his taxes under depreciation and business expenses.

The magician performed in Palaces of Culture, at the Philharmonic and in trade union clubs. Some of the halls seated as many as 1300 persons. Every day the musician would come to the Philharmonic to

obtain a schedule of his appearances several days in advance. This enabled him to make travel arrangements. His monthly quota was eighteen performances a month, but he would do as many as twenty-five in order to earn more money. On several occasions he performed in prisons and labor camps in the Far North. He remembered that the inmates paid the normal admission, but only the more privileged prisoners were permitted to attend. The prison guards and camp authorities, he emphasized, were genial hosts who treated visiting artists with proper deference.

Organizing a Parade

The informant was a physical education teacher for actors and circus performers. He also served as coach for sports teams of Iran and Afghanistan who were sent for training to Odessa. Officially, he was on the faculty of the tekhnikum of Electromechanics and later of the Institute of Electro-technology. In reality, however, he was an entrepreneur specializing in organization of parades and other mass entertainment spectacles.

Because of his considerable past experience with similar spectacles, and also his wide-ranging contacts among the authorities, he was entrusted in 1972 with the very responsible task of organizing in Odessa a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet state. (The USSR was officially proclaimed in 1922, five years after the Revolution).

The most important part of the job was to get different organizations in the city to contribute money to the patriotic enterprise. This, in turn, inspired a legally dubious procedure, which the informant assured me was widely in use. Men and women who wielded influence in those organizations were put on the celebration's payroll as consultants. The next step was surveying the various clubs and amateur performers to establish what resources are readily available. For example, one factory was known for its group choir. A third may have had a group of gymnasts, and a fourth a good marching band. The problem was blending all of that into a good, loud, very patriotic, impeccably Communist variety show, if at all possible an entertaining one.

The 1972 extravaganza, of which the informant was the chief manager (a printed program attested that fact) had thirty thousand participants perform for hundreds of thousands of spectators. There were singers, and dancers, and gymnasts, and bands, and floats, and thousands of banners, placards and slogans. Some of the routines were the same as those as college football games in America. Thus, hundreds of participants dressed in multi-colored uniforms were directed to rise, or bow, or lie down, with their bodies composing slogans like "Glory to the Communist Party," or even a likeness of Lenin. Incidentally, most of the active participants in the spectacle were not professional actors. The vast majority agreed to take part after being promised the gift of the uniforms that they wore

at the parade, or getting them for a fraction of the price. And thousands, of course, took part just for the fun of it.

Observances of important jubilees, the informant assured, were not allowed to occur spontaneously. It is the authorities who decided, after serious deliberation, which anniversaries were to be observed, in what manner, on what scale, and at what expense. The budget of a huge mass extravaganza was calculated by also taking into consideration the official position of professional entertainers scheduled to participate in it. Thus, a rank-and-file actor was paid seven and a half rubles for all of the rehearsals and one and a half rubles for the performance. (He was paid more for the rehearsals because these take up infinitely more time, last for weeks at a stretch, and often run late into the night. The actual performance, on the other hand, could run but a few minutes). An Honored Artist (this, in the USSR, is an official designation) would get twenty-two rubles for the rehearsals and twenty-five for the performances, that is almost equal amounts: it was assumed that these seasoned professionals would require less time for rehearsals. The highest category, People's Artists, were paid thirty rubles for rehearsals. On the other hand, an ordinary stage extra received only fifty kopeks or even nothing at all. There was no reason to worry about them. After all, these were ordinary students or soldiers.

Once the enterpreneur, such as the informant, wrote up a detailed project description, complete with a budget, he would proceed to try to

obtain approval for the script of the happening. The author of the script would not be paid anything prior to the script's approval. That is why until that moment the enterpreneur who had conceived the idea of the performance also doubled as the author of the script. Upon approval of the script by the local Party authorities, a "real" full-time director would be engaged. Bribes and kickbacks were used to facilitate acceptance of the script. These amounted sometimes to a quarter of the enterpreneur's fee.

Officially, the tentative program was put forth by two petitioners, the postanovochnaya gruppa, that is the producers, and the local Department of Culture. That program had to be approved by the Province Committee of the Communist Party. In capitals of union republics, the initiators of the happening were called shtab prazdnika, the holiday's headquarters.

The festivities, such as those in 1972 commemorating fifty years of the Soviet State, would run from three to ten days, which meant that the program would be repeated between three and ten times. The program itself, however, was not to exceed three hours. The first day was a command performance of sorts, with the audience consisting of the local Party and government elite and other influential people. Needless to say, these men and women were invited to watch the show free of charge. After that, tickets were sold, and the take of three or four days sufficed to cover all expenses of the festivities. The Odessa extravaganza of 1972, and

similar events, were broadcast on the radio and on television and were shown on newsreels in movie theaters. There never was any mention of the informant in any of them. Officially, enterpreneurs like him did not exist.

Sports, Chess

Sports, several informants pointed out, were encouraged as innocent pastime that kept young people away from objectionable pursuits, as an activity conducive to good health, and also, indirectly, enhancing the cause of military preparedness. True, the quality of sports equipment was very poor, but enthusiasm made up for it. Quite a few of our informants mentioned engaging in sports, in several cases in more than one. A student in the Agriculture Institute was a boxer, a wrestler, a weightlifter, and also played basketball. A sculptor mentioned another inducement: "Professional sportsmen were treated like members of the elite. They were given good apartments, they drove cars of their own, and had other privileges as well." Many a young amateur sportsman dreamt of becoming a professional.

One mechanical engineer took his sports seriously enough to become, for a time, Odessa's bantamweight boxing champion. His trainer, Bugayevsky, was a former boxing champion himself. In our informant's view, Bugayevsky's Jewishness was the reason why he was never sent to the Olympics. Sports activities openly emphasized their propaganda value abroad. While all of the city's sports organizations were affiliated with national bodies and

were thus, indirectly, overseen by the Sports Commitee of the USSR Council of Ministers, in Odessa they were sponsored by local organizations. Thus, the Lokomotiv was sponsored by the Railroad Workers' Union; Burevestnik (The Stormy Petrel), by teachers and students; Kolkhoznik (The Collective Farmer), by farmers; SKA, by the military; the Avangard, by Ukrainian-speaking clubs; Urozhai (The Harvest), also by farmers; Dinamo, by the police; and so forth.

Two of our informants were professional chess players. (That is, in reality they were professionals. Ostensibly all sport in the USSR, chess included, is amateur, but "everybody knows better.") One believed that there are several reasons why chess is so favored in the USSR, so heavily subsidized, and why chess champions belong to the Soviet elite. The authorities seem to think that "addiction" to chess helps reduce juvenile delinquency and combat alcoholism, that chess absorbs leisure time in a non-harmful way. The authorities, he said, would rather have the intelligentsia play chess than read samizdat or listen to foreign radio. In addition, chess helps develop decision-making abilities. As for professional chess players, they help enhance the Soviet image abroad, just as Soviet musicians and dancers do.

The second chess player provided some information about the Chess Club of Odessa, one of the country's most important chess centers. The club employed approximately two hundred paid chess players. Of that number,

about eighty had higher education in chess. These were, of course, chess professionals, though they all claimed amateur status.

Chess was an important status symbol for Odessa and for the Ukrainian Republic as a whole. There was a special Chess School in the city. About a thousand children attended that school three times a week, though there were also children who attended five times a week. People who played chess professionally were always welcome at the editorial offices of local newspapers and at the radio and television stations. One major reason for that was that the press run of a newspaper and its overall success were measured by the number of letters to the editor it received. And since about sixty percent of these letters dealt with the chess problems that Soviet newspapers print, it was natural for the editors to try to be on good terms with career chess players. In the USSR, our informant insisted, leading chess players were held exactly in the same esteem as famous scientists, writers and musicians. Chess was considered an integral part of high culture, like classical music or ballet, and Communist bureaucrats liked to get credit for advancing the cause of high culture and helping its creators. As a result, professional chess players were assigned good housing, which was very difficult to come by in Odessa. As for the Chess Club, it received not only general Soviet newspapers and all of Soviet chess journals, but all of the more important foreign chess publications as well. The latter, of course, was a symbol of special favor in which

the Club was held. Very few Soviet institutions have access to Western periodicals of any kind.

Organized Excursions

A construction engineer who was in charge of cultural activities organized by a trade union at his industrial enterprise related the following.

One very popular activity were the three- or four-day excursions (ekskursii vykhodnogo dnya) that were periodically organized. These were trips by charter buses for engineers and their families to distant cities where they would go sightseeing, visit museums and so forth. Since the demand far outstripped the number of seats available on the bus, the engineers took turns. In Moscow and in other large cities he would get in touch with theater administrators who were often retired actors from Odessa, friends of his father-in-law who spent a lifetime on the stage. Frequently he was able to obtain blocks of theater tickets at considerable discounts. Approximately seventy percent of the excursion's trip was paid for by the trade union and by the factory director's discretionary fund, with the rest being paid by the participants.

Some of the participants actually used the excursions to make money. Not only would they do a lot of shopping for themselves, but they would also bring to Odessa large quantities of scarce goods and resell them at a profit.

Amateur Ensembles

Odessa had an extremely extensive network of amateur musical and dramatic circles. Some were sponsored by industrial enterprises, professional organizations, and by the municipality. Most, however, were offshoots of student extracurricular activities at Odessa's numerous institutions of higher education. As a rule, they would spring up spontaneously, but would almost immediately be taken under the wing of some state organization which would provide it, simultaneously, with such minimal assistance as space for rehearsals and performances; some funds for instruments, costumes, etc.; and a professional director on the payroll of a city theater or orchestra. Naturally, there was a price to pay. By accepting this largesse (and how could they not?) the amateur groups abdicated their artistic independence and were, in effect, coopted to the city's official artistic organizations and the constraints under which these operated. Thus, time and again we encounter matter-of-fact references to censorship clearance of material produced by student theatrical groups, open interference by the city fathers in their affairs, and ultimately their disappearance on orders from above when their existence was no longer pleasing the authorities. On the other hand, one senses an institutional pride that many of the sponsors (from individual factories to the Party and the Young Communist League) took in the activities of the amateur artists, and an honest desire to help them. Housing an amateur

dance group or a musical ensemble consisting of one's office staff or assembly line workers, or even, failing this, being a sponsor of a group of youngsters full of enthusiasm but short of money would reflect favorably on an economic enterprise. It would show to one and all that in terms of civic pride, concern for the young, and love for the arts it towered above its competitors, the city's other factories. It would bestow on it the prized halo of kul'turnost'.

As for the participants themselves, most were attracted to the various musical and dramatic activities by the understandable lure of the limelight, the glory (the press lavished publicity on them), the adventure and the camaraderie. A few dreamt of (and several achieved) professional status in the arts. And there were even those whose misgivings (all of these amateur activities, needless to say, were quite time-consuming) were assuaged by some minor privileges that participation in such undertakings bestowed, such as exemption from compulsory work assignments in the provinces upon graduation or summer work during harvest on collective farms or, more directly, a day off from work for any day spent in rehearsals or performance. Everybody, in short, stood to gain from advancing the cause of amateur artistic activity. That the enterprise was also viewed most favorably by the city fathers taking their cues from Kiev and from Moscow, goes without saying. Accordingly, Odessa boasted a wide variety of amateur musical and theatrical groups. One of the more unusual was

remembered by an industrial engineer. Odessa may have been "the only city which boasted an orchestra in which the players were all physicians. Its conductor was Gologorsky, a well-known gynecologist."

A professor of engineering, recalling his student days when he toyed with the idea of becoming a film director (which he later abandoned, realizing that engineering is not only a more reliable source of livelihood, but also offers more intellectual freedom than thoroughly politicized arts), related the following story:

> The Odessa House of Scholars and Scientists (Dom uchenykh) established a Club of Young Scholars and Scientists (Klub molodykh uchenykh). Yurii Rublev and I were among the organizers of the new club. One of the questions we had to solve were the eligibility criteria for membership. We found a way out. A conference of young scholars and scientists was convened, and anyone who presented a legitimate paper was automatically admitted to membership. Following the conference we proceeded to stage Dr. Faustus. The play was set in the USSR and Faustus was shown as a young Soviet scientist. That the club served as a breeding ground for future professional artists is attested by the fact that the original musical score for the play was written by Alexander Krasotov, who went on to become secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers. Following the successful staging of the musical play, the Club of Young Scholars and Scientists organized two vocal quartets, one male and the other female. Among the participants were N. [known to the author - MF] who now lives in Brooklyn and Boris Lubkov, who is now a Soviet film director.

The Club's best-known creation was the Odesskii Molodyozhnyi Dzhaz Ansambl', the Odessa Youth Jazz Ensemble. Its musical director was Vladimir Bolotinsky. He was on the payroll of the Province Committee of the Young Communist League, which was the sponsor of the group. The YCL also gave the group a professional supervisor who was formerly on the staff of the Stolyarsky Music School. His name was Chomarian, and he made us practice dance routines and all that. The young people in the group did not like the idea but they had no alternative because YCL provided them with funding and also with a theater auditorium at the Lesya Ukrainka Palace. The director of the Palace, a man by the name of Pinsky (because he had only one eye, he was nicknamed "the pirate") controlled the purse strings. The theatrical and musical groups had to manufacture their own props from any materials they could find. Shows had to be written by local Odessa authors, both amateurs and professionals. The professionals were members of the local composers' union, and also the writers' union. They did not take the "kids" seriously and provided them with inferior stuff. Finally, the Odessa Youth Jazz Ensemble produced its only show. It was called U samogo sinego moria, "Right by the Blue Sea." There were fifty musicians in it, twenty dancers, and ten actors with speaking parts. One of them was Kartsev, who later became famous as a professional. The show got good reviews and it was sent on a tour. In the final analysis, it was success that destroyed the Youth Jazz Ensemble. Because of the good reviews, all the musicians of the jazz ensemble--every single one of them--were hired away by other groups. So the jazz ensemble's musicians disappeared. As for the vocalists, they went to Odessa's television choir.

We have three former students' testimonies on extracurricular activities at Odessa's colleges. Thus, at the Institute of Refrigeration:

> We had a drama circle that produced at least one professional actress. There were quite a few such circles at different Institutes. They were often coached by professional actors, such as Iosif Lvovich Berkovich of Odessa's Red Army Theater.
>
> Our Institute also had musical groups and readers of poetry and prose (chtetsy). And this, mind you, at an Institute with only two thousand students. Other institutes had as many as fourteen thousand. Theatricals, variety shows and similar extra-curricular activites were very popular with young people. But after the boys and the girls got married, they tended to lose interest. Take us for instance. I had a family to worry about and my wife no longer had the time for such nonsense because she was always busy hunting for food, cooking and other household chores, all of them doubly difficult in conditions of an overcrowded communal apartment.

A writer of comic prose whose career began as a contributor to student newspapers and variety shows recalls:

> Odessa's Polytechnical Institute, with 16,000 students, was considered to be on a par with analogous schools in Kharkov and Kiev. I studied there electrical and mechanical engineering but, to tell the truth, I was more interested in the rich and varied extracurricular activities. There was a dancing group, a symphony or orchestra, a choir, stand-up comedians, singers, even a small music studio. All of these were on a near-professional level. Formally, they were all affiliated with student clubs. We lacked some elementary facilities. Thus, the drama circle's annual

major play from the Russian classical repertory was performed in a rented hall, for example at the municipal Ukrainian theater. The variety ensemble (samodeyatel'nost') performed also out of town, taking its two-hour show on the road to Kishinev, Dnepropetrovsk and Leningrad. All told, about three hundred Institute students were involved in the different extracurricular artistic activities. The expenses of these various groups were underwritten, I believe, by the teachers' trade union and by the Institute administration. We also did some amateur shows for television. These were paid for by the Polytechnical Institute. The reason for the administration's reasonably generous financial support was that such extracurricular activities were a matter of prestige for the Institute. As for the students who participated, besides the pleasure of performing, there were also some practical inducements. Upon graduation (the course of study lasted five years) participants in extracurricular activities were given a pick of job assignments, while the others had to accept potluck. Also, participants were local celebrities. Their comings and goings were reported in detail in the local press which also featured their photographs. Honestly, those were the happiest years of my life.

Unlike American college athletes, student artists in Odessa were not shown any favoritism. Their academic performance was judged by the same standards as that of other students. That, in spite of the fact that extracurricular activities were a serious drain on one's time. I am not speaking just of the rehearsals. Student artists

had to visit collective farms, which were the official protégés of the Institute, over which the Institute had accepted shefstvo. And so we would have to travel to the country, and give extra concerts of songs and dances to the collective farmers---on our own time and, of course, without any pay.

At the university:

The theatrical circle staged such foreign plays as Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie and A Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, as well as Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman and A View from the Bridge. They also tried to stage Ionesco's Rhinoceros, but the university's administration vetoed it.

Our many extracurricular activities were supervised by a full-time adminsitrator. His official title was zamprorektora, or associate deputy director, po khudozhestvennoi chasti, for artistic affairs. Occasionally the man was referred to by his simpler title zavklubom, director of the club.

Every spring there was a small festival of extracurricular activities. Academic departments of different colleges competed with each other, and one of them would win a prize---for example, enough money to buy a piano. The winner would also be sent to perform out of town, on collective farms. That was no bargain in itself, but it was considered an honor.

Following the performance of a college play, there usually was a party at the student club for the performers and a selected invited audience. At

> this kind of party we would play such unconventional Western music as jazz and the Beatles.

Amateur cultural and entertainment activity was not confined to the city's educational institutions. The professor of refrigeration engineering cited earlier informed:

> Factories in Odessa had their own choirs, musical groups and drama circles. They also staged variety shows. I remember that on one occasion the secretary of the factory's Party committee came to the dress rehearsal of a variety show. The secretary found the show disrespectful of authority and the show was cancelled. Some time later, after some changes were made in the show, the ban was lifted. By then, however, the writers and the actors were so angry, that they themselves sabotaged the show and they saw to it that hardly anybody came to see it.

What these non-student efforts amounted to in practice was described by a former khudozhestvennyi rukovoditel', "artistic manager" of a narodnyi teatr, "people's theater":

> This amateur theater attracted mostly old people with time on their hands. Because such theaters were of very poor quality, young people generally stayed away from them. But we definitely needed young actors. The way we got some was by appealing to the factory's Party organization to order specific people to join the amateur theater. They were also lured to the theater by promises of apartments and trips to resorts. An actor in the People's Theater was also exempt from working at the factory on days of performances or rehearsals. That was a good deal, because rehearsals

usually lasted for two hours, while people worked at the factory for eight. Thus, an actor was actually rewarded with six free hours.

Although as an "artistic manager" I was supposed to be in charge of the repertory, in actual fact I was simply told which plays we were to produce. Certain plays were simply physically beyond our reach. Some of them, for example, required an ability to do the rather strenuous acrobatics of Ukrainian folk dances, which my senior citizens could no longer perform. Also, we were asked to stage plays that were much too demanding for a primitive group such as ours, for instance Griboyedov's Woe from Wit, Gorky's Lower Depths, Gel'man's Steel Workers, Tenyov's Liubov' Yarovaya. Sometimes we produced Ukrainian plays. As a reward for a successful production, actors were sent on excursions to Kiev and to Moscow.

Amateur theaters and also the choral group of the Lesya Ukrainka trade union center lacked any props or decorations, and even had to rent costumes. We did not own any of our own.

There were, at any one time, between three and four such People's Theaters in Odessa, and a similar number of "People's Collectives" of dance. All of them were subsidized by trade unions. Rehearsals and performances were held in the building of the trade union club. Sometimes we would perform in Poltava and in Kiev, and there were competitions for the title of the best People's Theater or People's Collective of dance.

An interesting stratagem was used to inflate the "cultural statistics" of different industrial enterprises. Take, for instance, the following rather typical situation.

> A local school has boys and girls eager to participate in amateur theatrical performances, or sing and dance. But the school has no budget for such activities. On the other hand, a nearby factory has a budget for cultural activities, but no people interested in participating. The school and the factory might form a partnership. Then, at the end of the year, both the factory and the school would report that they have a theatrical circle, a choir and a dance group.

There were two city-wide student-run cultural enterprises. The first was the theater Parnassus (Parnas) in its two incarnations. The original Parnassus, according to a high school teacher of physics and mathematics, was established in 1956, during the heady days of Khrushchev's "secret speech" attacking Stalin and the cultural thaw that ensued. The theater proved too irreverent and controversial and was soon disbanded. Parnassus II was established in 1958 under the patronage of the Young Communist League:

> I think the second Parnassus was set up the better to channel student ferment in the direction of activity over which the authorities had control. Still, the competition to join the group was fierce. Out of the two hundred people who auditioned, approximately ten were admitted to the acting group, plus four musicians. All of them were given a mere ten days to rehearse for a new show.
>
> I had long wanted to become a professional actress but my mother was dead set against it. My parents did, however, agree to my joining the non-professional student theater Parnassus. The director was a professional. His name was Abelev. He was the husband of Lia Bugova, a leading lady of Odessa's Russian theater and before that an actress in the Yiddish

> theater which was closed during the anti-Semitic purges of the late 1940's. I remember the excitement when Parnassus was invited to perform for the Polytechnical Institute in Leningrad. Everybody was eager to go because most of the student cast of Parnassus dreamt of becoming professionals and wanted to get as much exposure as possible.

What ensued became Odessa's theatrical folklore, much like Stanislavsky's lunch with Nemirovich-Danchenko. As in all folklore, frequent oral rendition created several variants of the legend of which the main outline is as follows.

The recently deceased great Soviet comedian Arkadi Raikin heard of the impending arrival of young geniuses from Odessa and decided to see for himself. A command performance in the middle of the night was organized for the grand old man. Here the variant versions of events begin. One informant, herself a member of the troupe, claims that Raikin wanted each and every one of them to transfer to the Theater Institute in Leningrad, but that the offer was turned down by the patriotic Odessans. Others dispute this particular claim. Be that as it may, Raikin did succeed in luring away three of the visitors, the actors Victor Il'chenko and Roman Kartsev (Katz), and the writer Mikhail Zhvanetsky. (Several informants pointed to this as an example of the shameless raids of Odessa by Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev enterpreneurs intent on stealing the city's best artists and musicians.) For a time, the three all worked for Raikin. His, however, was essentially a one-man show and it offered no opportunities

for advancement. The three Odessans left and created their own show. Zhvanetsky ultimately became a comedy writer, acquiring some renown during the heyday of glasnost' in 1987 and 1988.

The writer of comic prose referred to earlier described the format of Parnassus presentations as a series of short sketches, "mini-plays with loosely unifying plots":

> As a rule such plays also included dances and songs. Censors did grumble occasionally about them. They said the plays were too disrespectful, too critical of authority, or too sexy, but in reality most of the material was innocent enough. Favorite topics included cheating on exams, pleading with teachers for better grades and so forth. Still, Parnassus was intimidated by the authorities into avoiding risky subjects, especially political ones. Gradually, the theater became tame, conventional and boring. It was this tameness, conventionality and boredom rather than any administrative fiat that ultimately killed Parnassus.

These accounts are by and large confirmed by another former Parnassian, who then went on to become a professional teacher of dance and gymnastics to actors in the legitimate theater. She mentioned one more member of the troupe, Zorik Abrutin, who became a professional: he now works at the Odessa Operetta. A typical Parnassus "miniature," she recalled, was very gently satirical, emphasized outlandish costumes (some of them resembling American punk rockers of the 1980's) and mimicked the language of "youth

culture" of the time. Nevertheless, she emphasized, in spite of its generally very apolitical character,

> All of the material of Parnassus Theater had censorship clearance. It was called litovannyi, that is, it had the seal of approval from Glavlit, the censorship agency. Because of this official approval, the secretary of the Odessa City Party Committee (gorkom) Bondarchuk felt it was safe enough to advertise his affection for the theater. To show his appreciation, he got all of the actors exempted from the requirement that they work in the countryside upon graduation. All of them were allowed to remain in Odessa.

Within a few years after the demise of Parnassus, a youth venture called Klub vesyolykh i nakhodchivykh, the Club of the Merry and the Resourceful, came into being in Moscow and, before long, in Odessa as well. Known by its Russian initials KVN, it existed approximately from 1969 to 1974. A newspaperman specializing in humor explained:

> The KVN was divided into three sections. The first was for authors, the second for actors and the third for trainees, candidates for full-fledged membership in the first two groups. All in all, Odessa's KVN numbered about fifty members. These were for the most part people between the ages of eighteen and forty, predominantly students, young engineers and so forth. When KVN was allowed to perform on television it was the second-best program then aired on Soviet TV (only Aleksei Kapler's Kinopanorama was superior to it). The KVN was exceptionally popular with the public, and the performers themselves had

> a great time. It was, however, subjected to stringent censorship. The censors were always on the lookout for "subversive" material. A great many KVN "graduates" later became professional authors and journalists. One of the writers, Khait, still lives and works in Odessa, but many others moved on to Moscow or Leningrad. Muscovites claim that Odessa's theaters are provincial and that Odessan humor is parochial and inappropriate for the rest of the country. I say it is just plain sour grapes.
>
> In 1972 a man by the name of Lapin became chairman of the All-Union Committee for Radio and Television. Not content with having the work of KVN heavily censored (he did try to make it tame and conformist), Lapin wanted to close it down. In 1973 he did just that, and KVN ceased to exist.

Within the KVN one found a number of "specialists." A popular lecturer on music recalled that there were punsters, stand-up comics, clowns and several others. Supervision by the censors was thorough:

> Comedy and variety shows that were organized by the students were not allowed to get overly spontaneous. Not only were the texts of performances prepared and cleared by the censors in advance. So were the questions from the audience and the answers to them. True, the censors could not catch everything because, after all, these were oral performances. Hence, an actor's gesture, or an inflection of his voice could create effects that could not be predicted by an examination of the written text.

> The KVN operated under many constraints. It could, in principle, criticize bureaucrats, but was not allowed to point its finger at anybody in power, at specific big-shots. The number of taboos was so great that gradually the performances became bland. Finally, they were discontinued altogether.

While the Odessa KVN existed, it participated in competitions with similar clubs from other cities. Each city's club was asked, for example, to present a brief comic stage presentation on the same assigned subject. The Odessa KVN, however, sponsored an event that existed in that city alone. The newspaperman specializing in humor related its history:

> In 1968 a Day of Laughter was proclaimed in Odessa called the yumorina, or "humorine," and it was to be observed on April 1, the April Fool's Day. In 1973 the editor of Komsomol'skaya iskra [a local newspaper - MF] had moved to Vechernyaya Odessa [another local newspaper - MF] and in this latter capacity became the patron and protector of Odessa's humorists. Thus, he established in his paper a comic column called Antilopa Gnu, so named after a jalopy that plays an important role in [Ilf and Petrov's comic novel] The Twelve Chairs. Members of Odessa's KVN tended to gravitate toward that column. It was their favorite publishing outlet.
>
> And so, with the editor's assistance, in the mid-1970's, people from all over the USSR flocked to Odessa for the annual Day of Laughter. Some of those in attendance were professional actors, writers and newspapermen. Others were amateurs.

> For five years Odessa was the site of humorous parades, with people dressed up as clowns, or carrying funny posters, or what have you. Gradually, however, the crowds became unruly. People marching in the parade, and also some spectators, began to get arrested for drunkenness. More ominously, the police noticed that yumorina also encouraged people to tell anti-Soviet jokes. And then there was also a purely local problem to consider. The Day of Laughter brought to Odessa professional satirists from the entire country, and inevitably Odessa became the butt of jokes and comic feuilletons by practitioners of investigative journalism. Quite understandably, that did not endear the Day of Laughter to Odessa's city fathers. In 1977, yumorina, the Day of Laughter was liquidated by the authorities. It is now no longer observed in Odessa. Instead, it got taken over by the Bulgarians who also established a Museum of Humor in the city of Varna.

The most poignant story was related by a former member of a 100-man Odessa Symphonic Jazz Orchestra, an amateur group sponsored until its demise by the Municipal Industrial Cooperative (Promkooperatsiya). The orchestra played in the city and also went on tour. Musicians did not get paid, but their expenses were reimbursed. The informant's original music training was in the navy. He played in the navy and later in the merchant marine. Prior to its withdrawal of sponsorship (financial problems, it seems), the Industrial Cooperative supported it for the usual reasons. Odessa's art and music groups competed with each other for prizes

and trips, and the winner's sponsor would receive much favorable publicity and, indirectly, some tangible benefits as well. After the Symphonic Jazz Orchestra fell apart in the late 1960's, its remnants found another sponsor. That sponsor, it so happened, was the Odessa KGB.

Most of the refugees from the defunct Symphonic Jazz group began to look for other employment. The informant himself made ends meet by playing in parks in the summertime and doing engineering work in the winter. The most important part of his career, however, had to do with his work as a musician on Soviet passenger steamers plying the Mediterranean and also more distant routes. The passengers on these cruise ships were, in their overwhelming majority, not Soviet. The Soviet Merchant Marine operated those vessels to earn foreign currency.

Most passengers would board these ships in groups organized by foreign travel agents and other foreign organizations. To please this clientele, Soviet vessels tried to assume a "Western" look that would allow them to compete with "capitalist" cruise liners. The Soviet musicians on those ships, of whom the informant was one, were paid only twenty American dollars per month. Still, by shrewd shopping while abroad and reselling, upon return home, this merchandise on the Odessa black market, they would end up with two hundred rubles a month, more than ten times the original amount at official exchange rates. (Between 1965 and 1972, Jews were allowed to work as musicians on such Soviet Merchant Marine vessels. After 1972

the purge of Jewish musicians began). Before 1972, the informant estimates that as many as a hundred Soviet musicians plied the sea at any one time, with four to six musicians per ship. Their repertory was for the most part foreign, especially tunes from American musicals by George Gershwin, Cole Porter, etc. On several occasions the respondent journeyed as far as Australia on such large steamers as Taras Shevchenko and Shota Rustaveli. The trip to Australia took four months, including a cruise to Fiji Islands. The ships also accepted tourists for fourteen-day cruises in the vicinity of Australia and New Zealand. Sometimes they would also hire an Australian band. In 1972, the informant was fired from his job, ostensibly for giving out, without proper authorization, autographs on his picture while in New Zealand. Everybody knew, however, that he was really fired because he was Jewish. It was then that he decided to leave the Soviet Union for good. He left the USSR in 1975.

The informant related the following love story. A fellow Soviet musician on the cruise steamer had an affair with a passenger from New Zealand. The other New Zealand tourists were very discreet and it seems that no member of the Soviet crew knew about it. One day the woman brought her Soviet lover a gift, whereupon he was called in by the ship's political officer to explain why she had given him a gift. When the lady got off the ship, the political officer made sure the musician could not even say goodbye to her. On the return journey to Odessa, the musician was told that he would never be allowed to sail again because of the sin of

fraternization with foreigners, and the authorities kept their word. Other Soviet ships returning from Australia and New Zealand reported that a young woman from New Zealand would always meet the Soviet cruise liner, hoping that her lover might be aboard and asking about him. That is how the romance ended.

VII. The Arts

For merely a large Soviet city that was not even the capital of a union republic, Odessa had an impressive array of cultural institutions and a lively artistic life. Thus, Odessa boasted an opera and ballet that were housed in a stately building; one of the country's two or three fine operettas; a Russian drama theater, and a Ukrainian one; an army theater; a children's theater; a puppet theater; a philharmonic orchestra; a permanent circus; and some twenty movie houses. This, in addition to amateur theaters and trade unions and students' clubs where films were regularly shown. Our informants included some thirty professional actors, directors, and theater administrators, as well as filmmakers, painters, sculptors and musicians. Many more were regular concertgoers, theater buffs, movie addicts and museum regulars. A distinct majority were men and women of strong opinions and also, one may add, occasionally faulty memories. On a number of occasions we were faced with significant disparities in accounts of purely factual incidents, which we then had to somehow reconcile.

Theater

There was near-concensus among our informants that the city's theaters were, on the whole, undistinguished. Several attributed it to their systematic "raiding" by the theaters of Kiev and Moscow, with the result that more promising actors did not remain in Odessa for long. Two or three suggested that, for whatever reason, the actors in Odessa were quite good while the

directors were rather poor. Many blamed the theaters' timidity in the selection of repertory: plays that were at all controversial (even those that were running in Moscow and Leningrad) were rarely staged in Odessa. And everybody agreed that there was great excitement (and lively business for ticket scalpers, who charged four to five times the nominal price) whenever an out-of-town theater would arrive in the city. One informant recalled a visit by a Japanese Kabuki troupe; several remembered performances by Yuri Lyubimov's avant-garde Taganka theater from Moscow. (Not that everybody was enamored of it. One Odessa actress spoke disapprovingly of Taganka's "silly experimentation").

Different theaters had their ups and downs. Thus, in the 1970's the Ukrainian theater was in decline in part (as a secondary school teacher of Ukrainian suggested) because of the poor quality of recent Ukrainian plays, and also, as many informants reported, on account of public apathy. Even recent migrants from the countryside, native speakers of Ukrainian, ostentatiously boycotted the theater to demonstrate their eagerness to assimilate into Russian culture. The Ukrainian theater's excellent actors did not avail. One informant, a veteran of Odessa's Russian stage, recalled attending an evening performance at the Ukrainian theater with only thirteen spectators in the auditorium. To cope with the situation, free tickets were distributed to workers at factories, and large numbers of schoolchildren, soldiers, and vacationers from rest homes were brought in to help fill the hall. These, however, were half-measures. Clearly, something had to be done to spruce up

the theater's repertory. A daring and imaginative decision was made. The Ukrainian theater--always on guard against charges of Ukrainian "bourgeois" nationalism--would propose to stage a play based on the writings of Sholem Aleichem, a Yiddish author. (According to one respondent, this was a "provocation" designed to get the anti-Semitic Soviet authorities angry.) Specifically, the Ukrainian theater wanted to do a play based on the Yiddish writer's Tevye stories, the same ones that inspired the American musical Fiddler on the Roof. (A similar play had earlier been suggested by the city's Russian theater, but the Party secretary simply said, "Who the hell needs it?", and that was the end of the matter. The material's "progressive" character, the veteran Russian actor recalled, was summarily dismissed by the anti-Semitic Party functionary.) The same informant continued:

> As I said, the Ukrainian theater in Odessa is in trouble because of poor attendance, and it may be for that reason that the authorities treat it with greater leniency. Still, when the Ukrainian theater wanted to stage Tevye, the local authorities said, nechego delat' sinagogu, "no reason to start a synagogue around here." And so the Ukrainian theater began to rehearse Chekhov's Uncle Vanya, but in Ukrainian Uncle Vanya lasted for only eight performances. A half a year later the Ukrainian theater was allowed to stage Sholem Aleichem's The Grand Prize. The play was a smashing success. It ran for two hundred performances and made the lead, Vanya Tverdokhlib, the Ukrainian actor, famous.

In the 1960's, Odessa's Children's theater (Teatr Yunogo zritelya, the Theater of the Young Spectator) was considered by some the city's finest.

Directed by Pakhomov, a graduate of the Theatrical Institute and a son of a local Party boss, the theater was famed not only for its productions of children's repertory, but also of such "adult" plays as Fonvizin's eighteenth-century neo-classicist comedy The Minor and such Soviet plays as Boris Lavrenyov's The Forty-First and Konstantin Trenyov's Lyubov' Yarovaya. Ten years later, apparently, the children's theater was in decline, at least in the opinion of one of its actresses:

> The repertory of the Youth Theater was very limited, perhaps because the theatrical authorities in Odessa were less willing to take risks than those in Moscow or Leningrad. We did not, for instance, stage any plays by Yevgeni Shvarts, or [Antoine de] Saint-Exupéry, or even Alice in Wonderland. We did, however, perform the Swedish fairy tale, [Astrid Lingren's] Little Boy Karlsson Who Lives on the Roof and Alexandre Dumas' Three Musketeers.
>
> Occasionally, we conducted in the theater discussions of plays with schoolchildren who were brought there in groups. By the way, in the theater's repertory there was a definite quota on the number of plays that were to be Soviet Russian, the number that were to be translations from other Soviet languages, and the number of plays from the Russian classical repertory. Foreign plays were few and far between.

The now defunct Teatr minyatyur, which resembled a cabaret and a variety show, specialized in short satirical sketches. This is how its former director described it:

Mikhail Zhvanetsky, a writer of satirical prose and verse, was officially a member of our permanent team. Zhvanetsky scribbled down a great many short sketches and stored them in a box. I would then rummage in the box and select a few pieces that might be suitable for the next show. As I already told you, the Theater of Miniatures no longer exists largely because it ran so frequently into trouble with the authorities on account of the iconoclastic character of its presentations. The authorities expected it, by the way, and were always on the lookout for subversive material that we might try to sneak in.

Our theater employed ten actors, five or six technicians, plus one author, Mikhail Zhvanetsky. A few of the actors, such as Roman Kartsev and Victor Il'chenko, also worked for Odessa television. Because our shows were relatively short, we could do three or even four performances daily. The shows were exceptionally popular. Even the KGB would invite us to perform for them. On one occasion Polyansky, a member of the Politburo, declared that our theater really belongs in Moscow, and that he would have us moved there, but he never delivered on his promise.

We would spend in Odessa no more than four months a year. The rest of the time we went on tour to all the capitals of union republics and to many other large cities. Whenever we were to go on tour we had to obtain permission from Kiev: our program had to get the okay of the republic's Ministry of Culture. Sometimes, however, we would try to outfox the authorities. The printed program would list the items we were authorized to perform. In actual fact, we might substitute some of them with something

else. And because this material was something the audience enjoyed more, we would usually get away with it.

One informant, though a physician by trade, reported that "she spent most of her waking hours" in Odessa's theaters. She reported the following:

> Odessa's theatrical life was of reasonably high quality, but it hemorrhaged through systematic raids by Moscow theaters and other large cities, too. Thus, for example, the Odessan actor Komissarov was lured away by the Maly Theater in Moscow. Two other Odessa actors, Zerkalova and Korneyev, were lost the same way. The Odessa Opera also felt the impact of these systematic abductions of its best singers. Those "stolen" by Moscow included Elizaveta Chavdar', Bela Rudenko, and Oleinichenko. Odessa's famous Operetta lost Kolya Blashchuk. The Theaters of Odessa were quite conservative in their repertory as well as their artistic creed. True, there were occasional exceptions to this excessive prudence. For instance, Mikhail Bulgakov's Flight was staged in Odessa. Another play that created a stir was Vsyo v prodazhe, "Everything is for Sale." Oleg Tabakov starred in this play. The audience was regaled with scenes showing college admissions officers accepting bribes, a director of a hospital similarly influenced by patients seeking admission to a ward, and illicit gifts received by officials issuing certificates of admission to rest homes. Not surprisingly, this play was soon dropped from the repertory. Still, when all is said and done, Odessa's theaters are now in decline.
>
> I was a doctor in the Fourth Sanatorium, the "closed clinic" (zakrytaya klinika) that treated only members of nomenklatura, the Party and State elite. Naturally, mere actors were not supposed to be treated at the

clinic, but because its director was a theater aficionado, actors were admitted.

In Odessa, very ordinary people--not just intellectuals--were regular theatergoers. There existed an organization called Borzovik that sold blocks of theater tickets to factories which in turn resold them to workers. It may well be that Odessa was the country's most theater-conscious city. It was perhaps for that reason that Moscow and Leningrad theaters would occasionally first try out their new productions in Odessa.

Working conditions in the Russian Drama Theater (and presumably similar conditions in other theaters) were described by a veteran actor:

The theater was run by a small clique of executives and Party bosses. They were usually members of the nomenklatura and could be transferred from job to job. Thus, for instance, a former director of a theater was transferred to become director of a sports complex. The new theater director who replaced him had previously been in charge of the city's prisons.

Decisions whether to stage or not to stage a play were quite arbitrary. For instance, Eduardo de Filippo's Italian play Filumena Marturano was removed from the repertory after only two performances for no apparent reason. Very often the number of performances of a play is determined by the political authorities for ideological reasons rather than artistic considerations or even financial ones. Foreign plays, for instance, usually attracted a full house performance after performance, but the authorities would limit the run of the play, God alone knows why. And that, mind you, in spite of the fact that Soviet theaters, except only for a few in Moscow, Leningrad or Kiev, receive no subsidies and must show a profit. Under these conditions--being forced to perform mediocre Soviet plays

> that are poorly attended and not being allowed to capitalize on foreign plays that are enormously popular--the eight hundred or so legitimate theaters in the Soviet Union lead a pitiful existence. There was indeed a time in Odessa when actors did not get paid for months in a stretch. Nowadays actors do get paid, but the average monthly salary of an actor is a mere hundred rubles. Much higher salaries are unusual. The salary scale for actors ranges from ninety to a hundred and thirty rubles. The exact salary is determined jointly by the director of the theater and the city's Department of Culture. But then, my son-in-law, a highly skilled engineer, also earned less than two hundred rubles a month.

An actress spoke disparagingly of the theater in which she was employed:

> The Russian theater was good between 1962 and 1967, but went downhill after 1968, as did most of Odessa's theaters. Only the operetta maintained its high standards. The Ukrainian theater of Odessa was artistically quite impressive, but it did not have much of an audience in this very Russified city. The Russian theater of the late sixties and early seventies was so poor, that hardly any actors spoke without the distinctive Odessa accent. And that, mind you, was the theater built by Vladimir Bortko, a well known director from Moscow who lost a leg during the war and who was forced to move to Odessa after he was eased out of Moscow because of serious alcoholism.

The several informants who offered comments on the repertory of Odessa's theaters agreed that it was more cautious and conservative than warranted by Soviet conditions in the mid-1970's. A college professor noted that the Russian classics were performed, and such recent Soviet playwrights as

Aleksei Arbuzov and Victor Rozov, and Ibsen and Brecht. On the other hand, Odessa theaters avoided staging Tennessee Williams or William Gibson's light comedy Two for the Seesaw, even though these were then being performed elsewhere in the USSR. An engineer whose father was a stage technician complained that for every interesting Soviet play (such as The Warsaw Melody or 104 Pages About Love) the public had to endure several boring potboilers that were staged to please the city's Party dignitaries. A theater director summarized the situation as follows:

> The classics, both Russian and foreign, were staged regularly. There were frequent revivals of Shakespeare, Ibsen and Shaw. Yet even among the classics there were exceptions. Strindberg, for instance, was hardly ever staged. And such "modernist" plays as those by Albee, Beckett and Ionesco were almost never seen in Odessa's theaters.
>
> A common strategy of theatrical directors was to stage a dozen patriotic Soviet plays, and then try to sneak in two or three foreign plays. Foreign plays shown in Odessa included The West Side Story, Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five, The Diary of Anne Frank, and Thornton Wilder's Our Town. All of these Western plays were very popular with the public.

Finally, a journalist reported an unusual occurrence. It appears that, while on a visit abroad, an Odessa theater director obtained somehow the text and the score of The Man of La Mancha. The musical proved a great success in Odessa.

Cinema

Analogous comments about repertory of the city's cinemas emphasized that the more controversial fare was accessible only to restricted audiences. Thus, a physician recalled that "especially risqué films (particularly foreign productions with too much sex in them) could be seen only at closed showings for the Communist elite and for the local artistic colony. West Side Story and La Dolce Vita were shown in this manner." The information about these "closed screenings" (zakrytye prosmotry) was confirmed by a professional chess player and by a college professor. Occasionally, the very opposite stratagem was employed. An engineer reported that "films that were not shown in the city because they were ideologically dubious were, paradoxically, shown in the countryside on the assumption that the peasants could not understand their heretical allusions." The common denominator of these seemingly contradictory approaches was, apparently, the desire to restrict the number of viewers. Thus, the semi-suppressed film Andrei Rublev (only a censored version of this nationalistic and quasi-religious account of a medieval Russian icon painter's life was exhibited in the USSR), the college professor pointed out, "was shown only in an obscure movie house on the outskirts of the city," where few people would even be interested in its subversive message. Be that as it may, an engineer concluded:

> Films shown in Odessa were not the same that one could see in Moscow or in Leningrad. For instance, Tarkovsky's The Mirror was not shown in Odessa at

> all. On the other hand, there were inconsistencies. For instance, certain 35 mm. films were not shown because they were ideologically dubious, but their 16 mm. versions were screened. Films seized from the Germans during the war (they were called trofeinye) were shown for many years and enjoyed great popularity. One of the most acclaimed films of the 1970's was the American motion picture The Magnificent Seven.

Nevertheless, an enterprising Odessan with the right connection could see, in the 1970's, an impressive number of foreign films. Two informants came up with the following list: Scandals of Clochemerle, Wild Strawberries, Twelve Angry Men, Rome Eleven O'Clock, Nights of Cabiria, Divorce Italian Style, and Sounds of Music. One of them, obviously a serious moviegoer, remembered even the names of favorite actors: Fernandel, Mastroianni, Jean Gabin, Bourville, Hervé, Anna Magnani, Gina Lollobrigida.

Four informants--two script writers, an actor and a director--offered some information about the Odessa Film Studio which was called Kinofabrika. The director recalled that the studio was very primitive and provincial. Located on the seashore, it looked like an ordinary summer house. Yet Odessa was the city of the great filmmaker Dovzhenko, and it was there that pre-revolutionary Russia's silent film queen Vera Kholodnaya shot her motion pictures. Primitive or not, Odessa's and Yalta's film studios were valuable because they had sunshine and the sea, which were great attractions for movie makers from Russia's North. (The director, by the way, had left Odessa many years earlier, but made annual visits to the city to see friends and

relatives. Odessans, he emphasized, emigrate not only abroad, but also within the country. He related the following anecdote about the Odessa jazz musician Leonid Utyosov. Utyosov used to say that of Odessas there is more than one though less than two. You often hear that nowadays all of Odessa (Vsya Odessa) lives in Moscow, but in Leningrad people say that half of Odessa (pol-Odessy) lives in that city. And since to this day there are still some people left in Odessa, what we have is poltora Odessy i yeshcho nemnogo---one and a half Odessa, and then some.

A scriptwriter agreed that the Odessa studio was provincial, but said that mild climate and a picturesque seashore were not its only attractions:

> Filmmakers prize the studio's proximity to the city of Odessa with its many mementos of the revolutionary past. It was in Odessa, for instance, that the mutiny on the battleship Potemkin took place, an event that inspired a classic film of the same name.
>
> The Odessa film studio employs approximately three hundred people, including four full-time scriptwriters. In addition, the studio also has part-time and free-lance scriptwriters.
>
> Films about Odessa are the studio's specialty, but it makes motion pictures on other subjects, too. And conversely, other studios occasionally make films about Odessa. Films made in Odessa were usually a collaborative effort of a script writer and the director of the projected motion picture. This type of arrangement is popular because the director shares the honorarium for the script, and in exchange, the scriptwriter knows, the influential director would use his connections to secure approval for the script.

The director, a film actor explained, would normally be listed as co-author, and as such would get half of the author's fee. He confirmed that scriptwriters were usually eager to enter into such contracts because this would assure them of having the script accepted. And although while the scriptwriter would normally do all the actual writing, he would stand to benefit from the director's suggestions. Still, the most important consideration was obtaining official approval. Scriptwriters, especially beginners, would stand a very slim chance of having their texts accepted without the active intervention of the projected film's prospective director. The film actor continued:

> Kinofabrika, Odessa's film studio, was quite small, certainly not to be compared with Mosfilm or Lenfilm. Even so, the Odessa studio employed about six directors and the same number of operators. It produced annually between three and four films. The Odessa studio was frequently not in use, and it was then rented out to other studios, such as Mosfilm or the Armenian studio of Yerevan.
>
> The Odessa pavilion for indoor shooting was much sought after. Still, it was the natural sights that were the studio's main attractions, such as the seashore, the sea itself, and also a number of city backdrops, such as several streets and monuments. The single most famous sight were the stairs leading to the sea that are known throughout the world from the film Potemkin.
>
> Most of Odessa's productions were quite mediocre. Such were Opasnye gastroli (Dangerous Guest Appearances), Muzykal'naya komediya (A Musical Comedy) and Chelovek igrayet na trube (Man Playing the Tuba).

> Most of Odessa-made films did not deal with Odessa subject matter. Still, there were exceptions, such as Zhazhda (Thirst) which told of the water shortage in Odessa during the Nazi and Rumanian occupation. On the other hand, Lev Slavin's film Interventsiya (Intervention) which is set in Odessa, was shot in Odessa by Leningrad filmmakers because they needed the background of Odessa streets, monuments, skyline, and beaches.
>
> Although Odessa is located in the Ukraine, most of the films were done with a Russian soundtrack, even if the film's locale was Ukrainian, such as the Gogol story The Fair of Sorochinsk.
>
> Occasionally, the Odessa studio would film live performances of the theater on the ballet. Directors were always eager to film theater performances of the classics because this was both profitable (no royalties had to be paid to authors) and also politically safe.
>
> The studio in Odessa was very provincial, certainly inferior to Kiev's and even to Yalta's. A good source of extra income for actors was providing dubbing (ozvuchanie) for foreign and non-Russian Soviet films, such as Georgian. Some non-Russian language films, however, are not dubbed even today, but have only Russian subtitles (titry).

The film actor's account was supplemented by that of another script-writer at the Kinofabrika:

> There is no questioning the fact that the best talent was to be found in Moscow and in Leningrad, at Mosfilm and Lenfilm. And yet Odessa's provincial studio had

its virtues. I am referring not only to the sea and the sunshine. Because of its distance from Moscow, the Odessa studio was less closely supervised by political authorities in the capital. Moreover, working in Odessa offered young people more opportunities for creative work. In Moscow and in Leningrad, all important positions were occupied by established, major figures in Soviet cinema and these people were not overly hospitable to young upstarts. True, there was another important film studio in the Ukraine, the one located in Kiev, but the Kiev studio was a hotbed of Ukrainian cultural nationalism. Hence, non-Ukrainians, whether Russian or Jewish, would migrate from the Kiev studio to the Odessa studio which was Russian both linguistically and culturally.

The film studio in Odessa benefited from the various resources of a relatively affluent cosmopolitan and colorful city. Thus, for instance, many foreign goods were available in Odessa: they were smuggled in by sailors from abroad. Also, people at the studio were inspired by the city's old artistic traditions, especially those of Babel and Bagritsky.

Odessa's film studio consisted of several sections. Each of them was eager to make money and hired gifted people who were likely to produce money-making films. The work of the Odessa studio also benefited from the fact that its director was Lidiya Gladkaya, a pragmatic woman who prior to assuming her post at the studio was a professor of Marxism-Leninism. It was during her administration that the studio produced Vasili Shukshin's film Two Fyodors and Natasha. It was also then that the studio released Spring on

Zarechnaya Street, which was directed by Khutsiev, a leading figure in Soviet cinema. These two films earned us the reputation of a "progressive" studio. You see, Lidiya Gladkaya was always willing to listen to other people's opinions. Unfortunately, Gladkaya was later kicked upstairs to become secretary of culture for the Odessa Province Communist Party Committee. During the 1960's, Odessa's studio also did films with such celebrities as [actor and idolized rebellious singer] Vladimir Vysotsky. Unfortunately, during the Brezhnev era, in the early 1970's, the studio began to decline.

Each Soviet film was classified as belonging to one of four categories: highest, first, second or third. The classification of a film determined the monetary bonus paid the cameraman, the set designer, and the director. It also determined whether the film, when completed, would be screened widely and where, and the degree of publicity it would receive. The ratings were ostensibly based on artistic merit. In reality, however, they were determined by political considerations. To make sure my film got a higher rating, I would invite an influential person to be a co-author of my script. This was, of course, a fiction. I did all the writing. But it was a worthwhile stratagem.

Music

It appears that Odessa's musical life, once the city's foremost claim to fame, has fallen on evil days. Once internationally renowned, a cello teacher sighed, musical Odessa is now provincial backwaters. In the last

forty years--that is, since the end of the war--the city has produced almost no famous violinists and pianists, except only for the pianist Yevgeni Mogilevsky. (Another informant who voiced similar sentiments cited as the one exception Bella Davidovich who now performs in the United States.) Political pressures in musical life, the cello teacher continued, were fierce. Thus, only winners of State prizes were allowed to give individual concerts. Still, when it came to repertories, even the most celebrated of soloists had to obtain approval from the repertory committee (repertkom). For concerts within the USSR additional approval had to be secured from Moskontsert, while programs of visitors from abroad had to be cleared with Goskontsert. Should a musician dare play something that was not approved by these agencies, or give an unauthorized performance (which many were tempted to do to earn extra money), he could be fired or even jailed. Still, unauthorized concerts were common because many performers needed the additional income.

There were in Odessa a few "dissident" musicians of modernist proclivities whose original work could not possibly be produced either in their home town or, for that matter, anywhere in the USSR. The cello teacher mentioned three names: Alfred Schnitke, Misha Meyerovich, and Edison Denison. They earned their livelihood by composing background music for motion pictures. The general atmosphere, however, was gradually becoming more permissive. Thus, in the 1970's the ban was lifted from the works of two émigré Russian

composers, Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff, and also from certain works of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, earlier stigmatized as quasi-Nazi in spirit. On the other hand, he had no recollection of any performances of Bruch, or Webern or Aaron Copland, and he had never heard of Arnold Schoenberg prior to his arrival in the United States.

A piano teacher insisted that Odessa may currently be in decline, but it is still a major center of musical life. She confirmed that "modernist" music, though taboo as recently as 1961, was gradually introduced in the repertory after that time. She first heard Bela Bartok's music in 1965; by 1970, "Bartok was already performed as regularly as Beethoven." By 1970, too, they began to perform some previously shunned works of Shostakovich, such as his First Sonata, as well as nearly all of dodecaphonic and atonal music, though only in the Conservatory, with no outsiders in attendance.

The Odessa Conservatory, of which she was a graduate and where she was then employed as a teacher, had an enrollment of approximately five hundred. It had five departments: orchestra, piano, vocal, musicological, and choral and conducting. Upon graduation, the informant was asked to join the Conservatory's staff. That was a distinct honor. Moreover, it meant that she would not have to work in the provinces. Therefore, she eagerly accepted the offer. She taught the art of piano accompaniment and also performing in chamber music ensembles. Occasionally, she was invited to give solo performances. She worked at the conservatory until her departure from the USSR in 1973.

Odessa, she maintained, was definitely "backwaters" (zakholustye), but then, all Soviet cities are, except only for Moscow and Leningrad. In post-Stalin years, no musician from Odessa was ever sent for a concert tour of the West. That Odessa is "backwaters" was also attested by the fact that such native sons of the city as David Oistrakh, Emil Gilels and Sviatoslav Richter all moved to Moscow. In fact, a poet informed, Richter, an ethnic German, refused to ever perform in Odessa: his father had long been hounded in that city because of his German ancestry, and was ultimately driven to suicide.

A detailed description of "outreach" musical activities was provided by a violin teacher who was also a soloist with the Odessa Philharmonic and a vice-chairman of the city's "Znanie" society which organized popular lectures and concerts.

In Odessa, "Znanie" was active not only among the local industrial enterprises, but also in the thirty or so sanatoriums and rest homes. These health establishments accommodated fifteen thousand patients, with the patient population changing every month. Once or twice a month, "Znanie" organized lecture/concerts in each of these sanatoriums, making for almost two lecture/concerts every day of the week.

The plan for the combined lecture/concerts was put together by the district Committee (raikom) of the Communist Party which decided on the general theme of each presentation. Typical themes were "The Legacy of Lenin,"

"The Blossoming of the Soviet Ukraine," and so forth. Most were heavily politicized. Only ten to fifteen percent dealt with classical music as such (for instance, "Pushkin's Works as an Inspiration for Music"; "The Music of Mussorgsky"; "Tschaikovsky, the Great Russian Composer"). Western music was hardly ever the subject of such lectures plus concerts.

Everybody in any position of authority tried to outdo everybody else in proving his Communist orthodoxy and militancy. As a result, the lectures tended to become more and more overtly political. This process was known as zasiranie mozgov, stuffing people's minds with shit. It is more than curious that the Communist Party boss in charge of "Znanie's" musical activities did not, according to the violin teacher, know much about music. He could not read music scores, and did not distinguish between popular, light classical and folk music. The official's name was Barabanov.

It was he who decreed, probably on instructions from his superiors, that music performed under "Znanie's" auspices was to consist of up to sixty percent of pre-revolutionary and Soviet Ukrainian music, up to forty percent of pre-Soviet and Soviet Russian music, and not more than ten percent of foreign music. The latter was performed very selectively. Thus, Bach was permitted, albeit rarely, and the religious titles of such compositions as "St. Matthew's Passion" were left intact. Wagner's operas were never performed, only the overtures to them. And such modernistic composers as Arnold Schoenberg were never played at all.

The violin teacher's account was by and large confirmed by a professional lecturer on music (he estimated that he must have given some five thousand lectures!). Because he appears not to have been associated with "Znanie" society, his repertory was significantly broader. It included Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky (after his visit to the USSR in 1962), and even "George Gershwin and American music." The lecturer commented:

> Although, after 1956, Stalinism in music was by and large overcome, pressures on symphony orchestras continued unabated. Thus, orchestras were told to perform, in that order, Ukrainian Soviet composers; Other Soviet composers; Ukrainian classics; Russian classics; and only lastly, foreign composers. The orchestra would often lose a lot of money on concerts of Soviet or Ukrainian music. To make the hall look less empty, they would bring in large numbers of soldiers who would sit in boredom through the concert. Then, to recoup its financial losses, the orchestra would perform popular music or even sponsor variety shows.

The "Znanie" combination of lectures and concerts were not universally popular. Thus, an impresario who was also a performing musician recalled:

> Musicians in my orchestra resented the fact that they were often forced to appear on the same program with a boring lecture. What irritated them most was that a great many people seemed to believe that the combination of lecture and concert was the musicians' idea, that they were to blame for it.
>
> The repertory of my orchestra--as well as the repertory of Odessa's theaters--changed very rarely. A major reason for that was that we performed for an audience

> a large part of which were patients in the sanatoria and rest homes, vacationers, and visitors to the city. These people were transients. They stayed in Odessa for about a month, and then a new contingent of them would arrive who had not yet seen the program. So there was little incentive to change it. Classical music was a status symbol, but a lot of people had no use for it. I remember that when I was an administrator of the Odessa Symphony Orchestra we were paid in advance for a concert we were to give in a coal-mining town. Then the director of the coal mine told us to keep the money, but to forget about the concert because the coal miners hated serious music and would much rather see a movie. You see, the director was eager to impress his superiors by demonstrating to them that high culture was being fostered in a coal-mining town, and the concert that never was would appear on his list of activities. This kind of phoney culture that exists on paper alone is quite common in Soviet Russia. Also, not a few people there attend the theater or the opera not to see a play and not because they like music, but to see the glitter and the decorations and the beautiful building.

Two informants volunteered the observation that imposing buildings housed mediocre musical ensembles. A lecture on music declared that behind the facade of the Odessa Opera one found below-average singers and a terrible orchestra. According to an engineer,

> The building of the Odessa Philharmonic was very nice, but the repertory was terrible. The orchestra was not too bad, but the conductor was awful. Fortunately, a great many artists from other cities came to perform in Odessa, especially during the summer when the many rest homes around the city were packed. There were many visitors from such neighboring Communist countries as Rumania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, but I cannot

> recall any musicians from the West. There were many Soviet visitors from other cities, of course. In order to ingratiate themselves with their hosts, they performed some music by local Odessa composers, however poor their compositions might have been, such as Konstantin Dankevich's Bogdan Khmelnitsky.

Working conditions at the Philharmonic Orchestra were described by a pianist who had long been associated with it:

> At the Philharmonic Orchestra every musician was assigned a "grade" which depended on talent and years of service. The grade determined the salary of musicians. Three grades were determined locally, but the first grade, the highest, could be bestowed only by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture in Kiev. I had the highest grade.
>
> My instrument was the piano, but the Philharmonic often went on tours of little towns where there were no pianos. In such cases I would play the accordion. I also played the accordion to accompany singers and dancers in the villages. My norm called for thirteen concerts a month, but musicians in the lower three categories had far heavier labor quotas. If I had extra concerts, I got paid overtime. Such extra concerts were usually performed out of town, but I was not allowed to play for private individuals. Some musicians did, nevertheless, give illegal (levye) concerts because one could make a lot of money that way. Sometimes I would travel with singers from Moscow, such as Zinovi Shulman. I accompanied him on the piano.

The majestic edifice of the Odessa Opera (now called Odessa City Theater of Opera and Ballet) was completed in 1884, almost exactly a century ago. Of its 1665 seats, 1606 tickets were sold to the public, and 59 seats

were always kept on reserve for Party dignitaries should they, at the last moment, decide to attend. To have no seats available for them would have been downright dangerous. It was therefore grimly ironic, that the Opera's director was ultimately fired from his job for the crime of keeping these seats empty. The official charge was "embezzling state property." These and other details of the activities of the Odessa opera were related by an informant who had worked there in an administrative capacity for thirty years, since the end of the war to the mid-1970's.

The opera employed about six hundred people, including tailors, stage-hands and theatrical extras (mimans). The reputation of the Opera was quite respectable, and singers from Moscow would regularly sing at some performances. It received an annual subsidy which ranged from half a million to a million rubles.

The opera-going public in Odessa showed a strong and consistent preference for the classical repertory. The favorites were Eugene Onegin, Ivan Susanin, The Queen of Spades, Prince Igor and Mussorgsky's The Sorceress. Of foreign classical repertory those most popular were Rigoletto, La Traviata, The Barber of Seville, Carmen and Gounod's Faust. The informant could not recall a single Wagnerian performance, or a performance of music by the émigré Stravinsky, or, for that matter, Dmitri Shostakovich's criticized Soviet opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk. On the other hand, there was strong pressure to present more "good" Soviet operas, such as The Cruiser Potemkin, The Silent

Don, The Young Guard, Leleya and Bogdan Khmelnitsky. (The ballet's repertory, a music teacher recalled, was quite similar, with Tschaikovsky's Giselle and Gliere's The Red Poppy, among the most frequently performed.) Even though permission to stage every opera was issued by Obllit, which was the local censorship agency (the official body entrusted with supervising the repertory, Glavrepertkom, was located in Kiev), the opera's director was often taken to task by the Party authorities for allegedly inadequate efforts to promote Soviet repertory. On the other hand, the director of the opera was also under strong pressure to earn as much money as possible. Accordingly, the company tended to perform that which the public preferred. To steer a middle ground and to offer Caesar that which is Caesar's, the number of operas in any single season's repertory was more or less "equitably divided" between the classics, both Russian and foreign, and Soviet works. The number of actual performances, however, was quite another matter. Fully ninety percent of Odessa Opera's performances were of Western and prerevolutionary Russian classical repertory---which was what the public wanted.

The opera was relatively inexpensive. Tickets sold for thirty kopecks to one ruble eighty. When there were guest artists from other cities, prices went up to the range of fifty kopecks to three rubles. When there were foreign artists, top tickets sold for as much as four rubles. The opera was open year round, closing for vacations of two months (more recently, only one month).

When Soviet opera was performed, the management would invite soldiers and schoolchildren to attend free of charge in order to avoid the embarrassment of an empty auditorium.

Because the opera, notwithstanding the state subsidy, tended to lose money, at one time operatic singers were forced to perform elsewhere in order to bring in some money into the opera's coffers.

Generally, lead singers were expected to perform twelve times a month, while those singing secondary roles sang almost daily. On the other hand, there was no recording studio in Odessa and singers could not earn extra money by producing recordings. To compensate, they would moonlight by singing elsewhere and by starring in films produced by the Odessa studio.

The Secretary of the Opera's Party organization was ever vigilant against possible inroads by foreign elements and alien ideologies. Thus, he would occasionally complain that too many artists and musicians bore suspiciously Jewish-sounding names. He was also not overly fond of Western operas, in spite of the fact that these were sung in Russian. (Only Ukrainian operas, such as A Zaporozhye Cossack Beyond the Danube or Natalka Poltavka were sung in Ukrainian.)

The opera provided an illustration of the workings of Soviet nomenklatura. Odinokov, the man who in 1976 was appointed director of the Odessa Opera was a former deputy director in charge of political education of a Soviet jail. (The information was confirmed by another informant.) On one

occasion, during a rehearsal of Eugene Onegin, Odinokov inquired why only half of the singers in the chorus sing at certain times while others are taking it easy, and why certain instruments are hardly being used while others are being played constantly. The violinists, for instance, are driven like slaves, while the man with the drums hit the big drum only once. This writer's protestations that this is an old Soviet joke did not avail. The informant insisted that Odinokov's story was absolutely authentic.

A seemingly timeless problem of the Russian theater, one that seems to have roots in the eighteenth century (we should recall that it was only in 1672 that the first play was staged in Moscow by Dr. Gregori, a German Lutheran pastor) is scarcity of appropriate repertory, particularly of lighter fare. In prerevolutionary Russia, the shortage was alleviated by hundreds of translations from West European languages, causing Chekhov to complain about the avalanche of "Offenbach confections." Under the Soviet regime the situation was further aggravated by suspicions that Western plays, including innocent comedies, are, when all is said and done, carriers of bourgeois ideology. Moreover, even the most innocent of bedroom farces offended the rather bluestocking sense of Soviet decorum. And with the virtual demise of Soviet comedy following the 1946 denunciation and expulsion from the Writers' Union of the humorist Mikhail Zoshchenko, "lighter" repertory of Soviet theaters was effectively restricted to the very few prerevolutionary Russian comedies. The 1952 appeal for Soviet Gogols and Saltykov-Shehedrins fell, quite understandably, on deaf ears: would-be Soviet comedy writers

would simply not take the risk of mocking even Soviet bureaucrats. The situation eased somewhat after Stalin's death and the Khrushchev 1956 thaw that followed, but the shortage of comedy continued to plague the Soviet stage. It is against this background that we should view a popular Soviet theatrical fad of the 1970's, that of turning commercially successful and ideologically unobjectionable plays into musicals.

A high school teacher of mathematics and physics reported seeing a musical version of Lev Slavin's Intervention, a popular play with a Civil War setting in which villainous foreign expeditionary sources vainly attempt to occupy Soviet Odessa. The schoolteacher did not enjoy the show:

> The musical version of the play was performed at the Odessa Operetta. Its star was Mikhail Vodyanoi, an aging and tawdry matinee idol. The old ham always found ways to flatter the high and the mighty of Odessa. It was that talent that kept him and the Operetta theater afloat.

Vodyanoi had other detractors as well. A married couple, he a civil engineer and she a teacher at a theatrical school, described him as "the very vulgar old showman Vodyanoi who had no singing voice but who did have a speech defect." But Vodyanoi had admirers as well. A foundry engineer recalled with a touch of nostalgia:

> The operetta theater in Odessa was exceptionally good. In addition to such classics as The Gypsy Baron, Countess Maritza and The Merry Widow, it also performed such Soviet operettas as Dunayevsky's White Acacia

> Tree. Certain stars of the operetta, such as Vodyanoi (rumor had it that his real name was Wasserman), enjoyed the status of real matinee idols.

We were fortunate in locating an informant who occupied in the Odessa Operetta Theater a position roughly analogous to that of the informant cited earlier in connection with the day-to-day activities of the city's opera. The Operetta (Teatr muzykal'noi komedii) was founded in 1947 in Lvov. At first its performances were in Ukrainian, but gradually the language was changed to Russian. In 1953 the Lvov Operetta visited Odessa. And because Odessa had two theaters of Russian drama, a swap was arranged. Lvov received a Russian theater and Odessa acquired an operetta. The informant was associated with the operetta since its founding in 1947 (except for a brief spell in a circus), and for fourteen years, from 1961 to 1976, he was both an actor and a deputy director of the Odessa operetta. He emphasized that normally that kind of administrative position required Party membership and "Aryan" ethnicity. As a Jew and a non-Party member he could not normally be seriously considered a candidate for it. But no other qualified person was at hand, and he had a job offer from Leningrad. Thus, he was promoted from acting to permanent deputy director.

In the mid-1970's, the Operetta was earning enough money and required no subsidies (the situation appears to have changed a decade later). The repertory was mostly classical, primarily creations of Kalmann, Lehar and Offenbach. Most popular shows were Silva, Countess Maritza, The Princess of the Circus and The Gypsy Baron. Frequently performed works from the Soviet

repertory included Dunayevsky's The White Acacia Tree and The Free Wind. The then director of the Operetta, Matvei Osherovsky, introduced into the repertory such new Western musicals as The Man from La Mancha, as well as a new Soviet operetta with an Odessa setting. The latter was a trilogy. The libretti were based on three plays by Grigori Plotkin (that the last of them was written in collaboration with Matvei Osherovsky, the director of the Operetta, may have enhanced the latter's admiration for their artistic merit). Music for the first two was by Oskar Sandler, a Kiev composer, while that for the third was by Solovyov-Sedoi, a leading Soviet composer. The first part was called At Dawn (Na rassvete), and its cast of characters included the legendary gangster of turn-of-the-century Odessa, Mishka Yaponchik ("Mike the Jap"), the prototype for Isaac Babel's Benya Krik from The Tales of Odessa. The second was called The Four from Zhanna's Street (Chetvero s ulitsy Zhanny), and the third At One's Own Mooring (U rodnogo prichala). Another Soviet operetta in the repertory was Russkii sekret, an adaptation of The Tale of the Left-Handed Smith from Tula and the Steel Flea, Nikolai Leskov's classic nineteenth-century comic story with a strong nationalistic flavor. The music was by Dmitriev.

None of these, however, were the public's favorites. Odessans were firm in their loyalty to Western operetta and modern Western musical comedy. Unfortunately, their tastes did not coincide with the predilections of Odessa's cultural bosses whose inclinations favored Soviet creations. The repertory of the Odessa Operetta reflected this conflict. The Operetta

staged four new shows annually. Of the four, three were Soviet and only one non-Soviet. As often as not, however, the non-Soviet was modern Rumanian, Hungarian or Polish. Hardly ever was it Western European or American: these were very rarely approved for staging. If approved, however, the Western show (just as classical Western European operetta) was performed very frequently, while Soviet musicals were seen rarely, and then only on less popular weekday nights. Western shows appealed to the audience not necessarily because of their higher artistic merit. Their chief attraction were picturesque costumes, interesting plots, sexual innuendos not to be found in Soviet musicals, and above all the absence of tiresome didacticism that was obligatory in Soviet operettas. Actually, these attributes could sometimes also be found in non-Soviet but Soviet-bloc musicals. Thus, the Hungarian Maya lasted through three hundred performances, while the average for Soviet musicals was only fifty. (The one exception was the Odessa trilogy, of which the first part, At Dawn, was performed a hundred times, in part, quite possibly, because of its romanticized non-Soviet setting.)

The leading star of the Odessa Operetta was, already mentioned, Mikhail Vodyanoi. He played the male lead in scores of operettas and musicals, including, in 1960 or so, the first performance in the Soviet Union of My Fair Lady. The way Odessa Operetta obtained rights to My Fair Lady was rather unusual. Some people from Odessa saw an American troupe perform the musical in Moscow, and the American theatrical enterpreneurs, in a moment of

generosity, agreed to give the Odessans the right to stage it in Russian in Odessa without requiring any royalties. Very soon, however, Yekaterina Furtseva, then Minister of Culture, forced the Odessan to make a present of the musical to Moscow theaters.

A postscript on fun and games for Odessa's high and mighty. Our informant, who remains in touch with old friends, learned that in 1983 the Odessa police discovered the existence of an underground brothel staffed by little girls. It seems that one of the girls' mothers overheard her daughter's telephone conversation with a friend. An investigation revealed that the Odessa Operetta's venerable star Mikhail Vodyanoi was a frequent guest of the establishment. Vodyanoi left Odessa for several months and the incident was ultimately forgotten.

Painting and Sculpture

In contrast to singers, actors and musicians, Odessa's painters and sculptors did not move to Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. A half a dozen informants were unanimous on that score. A ceramic sculptor explained:

> Musicians and singers were lured to Moscow by the capital city's orchestras and the opera, and actors wanted to join its famous theaters. Painters, sculptors and graphic artists had no such inducements to move. Quite to the contrary, they were better off staying in Odessa, because life was easier in Odessa where one could not only obtain commissions from local sources, but even get them by mail from anywhere out of town---including Moscow and Leningrad.

The ceramic sculptor described painting and sculpture in Odessa of the mid-1970's:

> The buildings of the art exhibits were impressive and their collections of prerevolutionary art were generally good. Several museums also housed respectable enough collections of Western art.
>
> In contrast to Moscow and Leningrad where one might see some ideologically dubious and off-beat painting, the art in Odessa that was available for public viewing was all of the officially approved kind. Indeed, much of it adhered very firmly to Communist orthodoxy. I am speaking of painting. In decorative and applied art there was considerable freedom of expression.
>
> You ask what would happen if a non-conformist Soviet painter were to point to the art of such left-wing artists as Picasso. Nothing. He might score political points, but otherwise it would not do him any good. Still, there were some non-conformist artists in Odessa, but they all paid a rather high price for their independence. Take Oleg Sokolov. He was a gifted painter who initiated Western art. No museum and no official enterprise of any kind ever bought his canvases. Sokolov lived in abject poverty. But since he steered clear of all political activity, he was not arrested. Non-conformists, as you can see, were punished by economic sanctions.
>
> In Moscow, an unconventional painter like Glazunov can earn his livelihood by selling his work to private individuals and to foreigners. This was, clearly, out of the question in Odessa.

> Let me cite another example for you. Yuri Yegorov was a gifted Odessa artist, but he was a "modernist." To keep body and soul together (or, more exactly, to keep body and soul apart), he produced two kinds of paintings. The first, unconventional, he kept for himself alone and showed only to trusted friends. The other kind, normal Socialist Realism, was intended for art exhibits and for sale to Soviet museums. Yuri Yegorov was not alone. There were others who painted "for the drawer." A few Odessa painters owned as many as two hundred canvases that were never shown in public and were stored in their studios. On the other hand, in the 1960's, some paintings were actually commissioned for export abroad. These semi-modernist paintings were commissioned by Soviet organizations, and they were paid for in full. Then, after being exhibited in the West, they were simply returned to the painters.

A painter insisted that in the 1970's Odessa, far from being artistic backwaters, was in some ways more interesting than even Moscow or Leningrad. There were some very original painters in the city, he argued, and cited the names of Frumina, Sinitsky, Shelyuta, Yegorov, Nudelman, Pavlov, Sychov and Khrushch. None of them was a run-of-the-mill practitioner of Socialist Realism. As a result, few of their canvases could be sold, and most of them were supported by their wives. True, a few had private protectors and patrons, and several supplemented their family budgets by disability pensions and the like. Some, such as Khrushch and Yegorov, lived in extreme poverty, though not in conditions of actual starvation. All succeeded in retaining

their artistic integrity. Official and unofficial art were kept quite separate. Unconventional art, including abstract painting, could not be publicly exhibited. One could, however, produce it without fear of reprisals, and it was quite legal to sell it to private individuals. In fact, there was even a State agency that bought this kind of art. Inostranny Salon (Foreign Salon), a Moscow art gallery, sold such paintings to foreigners only, and only for foreign currency.

Another painter offered additional information on the state of the vocation in Odessa.

The Odessa Painters' Union (or Artists' Union, Soyuz khudozhnikov), with a membership of about eighty-five men and women, included not only purveyors of orthodox Socialist Realist canvases, but also some painters who tried to continue the traditions of pre-Soviet Odessa painters, themselves, followers of French Impressionists. In fact, some of the painters who taught at the Odessa Art School, such as Frayerman and Golgelf, were themselves French-trained.

To be admitted to membership in the Painters' Union, an applicant had to have a painting of his accepted three times. First, it had to be accepted to be exhibited in Odessa; then it had to be included among those of the Odessa paintings that were selected to be shown in Kiev, at the Ukrainian Republic exhibit; and finally, it had to be chosen among those of the Kiev paintings that were to be displayed in Moscow. Normally, paintings submitted

for such competitions were cheerful landscapes, not overtly political ones.

Occasionally, painters created "for the drawer," that is, essentially, for themselves. Sometimes, they did work commissioned by friends and other private individuals. Most often, however, they painted canvases commissioned by State organizations, either for themselves (to adorn their factories, offices and farms) or for special exhibits. Paintings intended for special exhibits tended to end up in warehouses or even be destroyed because of a shortage of permanent exhibits that could provide them with a home. Provincial museums, as a rule, normally display artifacts from local history or folk art, but not paintings by artists who are not native sons.

Painting in Odessa, the informant continued, was not provincial at all. True, there were some technical difficulties. Brushes, paint and canvases were far more difficult to obtain than in Moscow or even in Kiev. Otherwise, however, one could do the same work here as anywhere else in the country because commissions were received from every corner of the USSR. In fact, working in Odessa offered certain advantages. Ideological pressures to create rigidly conformist Soviet art were not as strong in Odessa as, say, in Moscow. At the same time, there was less risk of commercial seduction into blind imitation of Western art, as there was in Moscow among painters who had become dependent on sales to Western diplomats and newsmen. Odessa's painters, our informant insisted, were more original and less corrupted by Soviet ideology and Western money.

The Painters Union in Odessa was an exceptionally busy enterprise, and its studios were humming with activity. Only a third or a quarter of the painters working in them were union members. The others were not artists, really, but ordinary artisans mass producing posters, placards, and portraits of Soviet leaders. The latter were either copies of canvases by other painters, or were made from highly retouched photographs. And because old leaders were frequently disgraced and replaced by new ones, while political and economic campaigns followed each other in rapid succession, there was always plenty of work. It is also worth noting that a competent painter in Odessa earned roughly as much as a university professor, and professors in the USSR are among the better-paid professionals.

Most of the commissions were brought to the union by a travelling salesman of sorts. The referent, as he was called, was no artist himself and he knew little about painting. He travelled far and wide throughout the country trying to convince city fathers, Party secretaries, factory directors and collective farm chairmen to place orders for canvases that would adorn them and their enterprises. Painting in Odessa was thus a thriving business.

Our informants also included two sculptors. Sculptors belong to the same Artists' Union (Soyuz khudozhnikov) as painters, and the first sculptors' account complemented that of the previous informant. The sculptors also had a referent who travelled throughout the country looking for orders for public monuments. Naturally, the referent from Odessa had to compete with

referenty representing artists' unions of other cities who were also hustling orders in the provinces. Thus, the painter explained, in the commercial side of Soviet art there was an element of private enterprise.

When all the orders arrived in Odessa, a commission of the Union would decide which sculptor was to get which job. In this way, everybody could earn a living, though some earned considerably more than others. Upon receiving an order for a piece of sculpture (normally, a public monument of political nature, or a bust of a writer or an artist, or, more rarely, a cemetery tombstone ordered by a private client) the sculptor would travel to the location where the monument was to be erected. As a rule, he would take with him an architect, to determine what kind of monument would harmonize best with the particular location. Upon return to Odessa the two would make a drawing of the projected monument, and the artistic council of the Artists' Union would then voice its approval, disapproval or recommendations for specific changes. The council, for instance, might declare that the sculpture being proposed was "too tragic," or "too depressing" and should be made more optimistic and more upbeat. Generally, suggestions were relatively minor. After all, members of the council were themselves sculptors, and often good sculptors, too. (There were in Odessa non-conformist sculptors as well. One of them, Vitya Golkov, not a member of the union, produced work in the manner of Western Cubists.)

Sculptors were admitted to the Artists' Union in the same manner that painters were. A sculptor had to provide evidence of having been represented in three exhibits, in Odessa (city-wide), Kiev (All-Ukrainian Republic) and Moscow (All-Union, countrywide). The exhibits, as pointed out in an interview with a painter summarized earlier, had to be a progression of sorts. The best works from the Odessa exhibit were sent to Kiev, and the best works from the Kiev exhibit were sent to Moscow. Hence, an aspiring member of the Union had to be chosen twice by elimination from among his peers.

Private customers might be allowed to come to the Union directly, place an order, and request that they wanted it to be done by a specific sculptor. Nevertheless, even such private customers would have to pay all the taxes, overhead and administrative expenses charged to all customers, public as well as private. Once in awhile, a customer might turn directly to an individual sculptor. While not quite legal, the practice was tolerated, and since such customers tended to be very influential people, they could furnish the sculptor with their own marble and other raw materials and, more importantly, subsequently guarantee a degree of immunity from prosecution for infringements of the law. Thus, a few senior Party functionaries ordered in this manner tombstones for members of their families.

Unlike in literature or even in painting, in sculpture, our informant explained, there was not much work of samizdat nature. A sculptor was,

in theory, free to chisel any kind of statues, but they simply would not sell. About ninety-five percent of the informant's sculptures were sold to museums and other public institutions. He could not recall any works in sculpture that were done by artists for themselves and without any intention of sale.

The sculptor confirmed the observation (voiced in an earlier interview by a painter) that while Odessa's musicians and actors may have felt a strong urge to move to Kiev or to Moscow, neither sculptors nor painters had such desire. They could continue living in Odessa while receiving commissions from all over the country.

Working conditions were good. The union provided him with a very large and sunny studio, and his wife brought into the marriage a comfortable apartment. True, in recent years, sculpture in Odessa deteriorated, but the painters, designers and graphic artists were as good as any in the USSR. Their one serious disadvantage was a sense of isolation from the outside world. Not even reproductions of works by Western artists could be purchased anywhere in Odessa.

Our second sculptor began his career as an architect. His estimate of his own work, which was limited to monuments, was quite modest. It did not aspire to the stature of great art, he said. Rather, it was very ordinary propaganda hackwork which he did solely because it offered a livelihood. In his view, such politicized sculpture served as symbols of

an abstract religion. It replaced, as it were, closed and destroyed churches.

Most popular by far were sculptures that depicted heroic figures of military commanders and Communist Party leaders, but there were also others, such as the statue of the writer Maxim Gorky. The work brought in by referenty, the travelling salesmen who roamed the country in search of commissions (the salesmen received ten percent of the gross sum of the order) was rather minor. Orders for major monuments were awarded by competition. One such monument was to "Odessa, the Heroic City (gorod-geroi), an official designation that was bestowed on it. Occasionally, a competition was held with no prize--and no order--awarded.

A quaint incident reflecting official prudery in sculpture was reported by an economist. It appears that in the early 1960's an important Party official was scandalized by the fact that the Odessa statue of Laocoon featured a male figure with a naked penis. To avert disaster (children may see it, after all, and even Madame Yekaterina Furtseva, the Minister of Culture), the penis of the statue was ordered knocked off, but the disfigured statue attracted even more spectators, particularly children. That fact, and also protests form the city's artistic elite, caused the Party to reverse itself, and the male statue was to be restored to its previous state. Unfortunately, the new penis was made of a gypsum that did not blend with the color of the statue's marble. As a result, the lines of visitors

gawking at the statue grew even longer. When this writer expressed some misgivings about the authenticity of the story, the informant produced a poem entitled "Ispravlenie Laokoona" (Fixing Laocoon) which appears in Ivan Riadchenko, Ulitsy vpadayut v okean (Odesskoye knizhnoye izdatel'stvo, 1963), pp. 73-74.

In addition to the painter who started off as an architect, we had one informant who was a member of Odessa section of the Architect's Union, which numbered about a hundred members. According to the former, Odessa's architects were well trained and were considered among the best in the country. They were, however, chronically plagued by shortages and poor quality of building materials. Also, in order to build quickly and cheaply, public as well as residential buildings tended to be carbon copies of each other. The full-time architect agreed, and cited the fact that shortages of elevators resulted in the practice of having no elevators at all in buildings up to five floors in height. Buildings that did have elevators installed, would lose them permanently the first time they broke down. They were never repaired, let alone replaced. But then, she added, there was little new construction in Odessa altogether.

Architects working on public buildings had to be mindful of an official "hierarchy" in their appearance. Thus, an edifice housing a union republic's headquarters of the Communist Party (e.g., the Ukraine's in Kiev) was "entitled" to eight Corinthian columns. That of a province (obkom), for

instance, Odessa's, was entitled to a mere four columns. A war monument in Odessa had to be smaller than an analogous monument in Kiev. And so forth. The pecking order had to be observed. In theory, that is.

The former architect recalled that on one occasion an architect and city planners were discussing specifications for the new Party headquarters in Odessa---of course, with all the official instructions and specifications in mind. After much effort, plans were drawn up, and these were then submitted to Comrade Yepishev, the Odessa Party boss, for his approval. Disregarding all official guidelines, Yepishev decided on the spur of the moment what he wanted the building to look like. Needless to say, his wishes prevailed.

A Soviet joke comes to mind.

"Can one ride a porcupine? Yes, but only under three circumstances. If the porcupine has been shaven. If one can do it with someone else's behind. Or if the Party orders you to do it."

VII. Intellectual Life

Lectures

Public lectures were an important part of the city's intellectual life. They were also, of course, one of the means for the ubiquitous political indoctrination of the population. It is for that reason that a discussion of the subject inevitably overlaps to some extent with our accounts of the activities of municipal parks, of cultural life, of the mass media and others.

As was already pointed out, the chief purveyor of public lectures was the Znanie (Knowledge) Society. Chief, but not only: a refrigeration engineer recalled that Kul'tprosvet (Culture and Education) provided some competition. These were allegedly significantly better and even featured slides, but unlike those of Znanie, Kul'tprosvet's lectures had an admission charge of two rubles. Those of Znanie were mostly political and boring, the informant complained. They were usually held on paydays, and the director of the factory warned that if the lecture is poorly attended, he might hold up the distribution of biweekly paychecks. Not surprisingly, workers would invariably find the argument persuasive.

A college instructor of Russian estimated that of the fifty people or so who attended her lectures on Tolstoy about three were really interested in the subject, while the others were simply pressured, and not very gently at that, to attend the cultural event. Znanie, by the way, was not a fair employer. The informant gave ten lectures, but was paid for only four. Presumably, the Society (or some of its officers) pocketed her fee for the other six. The Society itself appears to have been quite affluent, as attested by its beautiful building.

A construction engineer who was in charge of organizing cultural activities at his industrial enterprise recalled that Znanie lectures were normally scheduled during the lunch hour, even though in reality they often lasted up to two hours. (What's fair is fair: the additional hour was office time, not the workers'.) Political lectures did not always go smoothly. In the mid-1970's, a vitriolic anti-Israeli lecture met with hostile reception from a heavily Jewish audience of construction engineers. Most of the time, however, the presentations were not controversial and the political ones stirred no emotions. Art, literature and popular science were traditional subjects. Two new and popular areas in the 1970's were sociology and sex education. The latter, the informant's wife interjected, was the subject of separate presentations for men and women---to avoid embarrassment.

The Znanie Society, a librarian related, had its own staff of part-time lecturers specializing in a variety of subjects, such as international relations, economics, literature, health, art, etc. Occasionally, a client (normally, an industrial enterprise) might actually commission a special lecture on a subject of its choice, but most lectures were "canned," and clients chose from among the available assortment of ready-made presentations. The text of every single lecture had to be cleared with glavlit, the censorship agency, and the lecturer was expected to read that text, not to improvise or otherwise depart from it. Glavlit restrictions also resulted in another feature of Znanie discourses. Even seasoned speakers with expertise in their subjects would not, as a rule, answer questions from the floor on the spot, except only for the most innocent and purely factual queries. Ordinarily, a lecturer would say that he had to double-check something in his books, and would bring answers to these questions in a

few days. This delay would provide him with an opportunity to check with the authorities on the politically correct answer to a query. It is for that reason that the audience was usually asked to present questions in writing.

Two informants described Znanie lectures from opposite vantage points, as it were, those of the lecturer and of the official hiring such lecturers. The organizer of entertainment in one of Odessa's parks reported the following:

> Most of the lecturers working for Znanie do it strictly for the money. My job was to find a lecture on a popular subject because it was important that I get good attendance. Lectures in our park were usually well attended, particularly so if the lecture itself was short and was combined either with a concert or with a film. Several of Odessa's parks, including the Lenin, the Komsomol and the Shevchenko park, offered such combinations of lectures and either concerts or films. I must admit that we would often cheat in reporting attendance. We would greatly inflate the number of people present. This we did in order to obtain more money for similar events. In reality, a lecture alone would attract between thirty and forty people. A lecture combined with a concert or a concert alone was attended by about a hundred people. There was no admission charge.
>
> In my experience, lectures dealing with current politics were well attended. I think that was because many people were afraid of war. Lectures on politics reassured them that there would be no war.

> The park paid for these lectures. That is, we paid Znanie, and Znanie paid the lecturers.

That lecturing for Znanie was lucrative for some was confirmed by a novelist who estimated that occasionally his earnings from this work reached six hundred rubles a month, which was a lot of money, about a half a year's average salary. Some of his lectures were held in a hall that seated a thousand people. While he was aware that a large part of his audience was pressured to attend, his sense of guilt was eased by the knowledge that not a few of them were also exempted from work for that worthy purpose.

The Znanie lecturer, whose full-time job was teaching Russian and Ukrainian in a high school, related the following:

> The text of every Znanie lecture had to be approved in advance. The lectures were then quite literally read, with no improvisation on the part of the lecturer. Therefore, you may say that most lecturers were not authors of their texts, but merely their reciters. Znanie lectures were probably the best known, but there were other presentations as well. There was, for instance, a lecture bureau of the Odessa Province (oblast'). The Party and the Young Communist League had lecture groups of their own. Finally, there were seasonal lecturers who worked in the spring after the sowing and in the fall after the harvest. Many of the lecturers in Odessa were from out of town, particularly Kuzbas. As a rule, attendance of lectures was obligatory. Moreover,

people were not permitted to leave until the end of the presentation.

Znanie had several sections, such as the atheist, the political, the literary, that of science and technology and so forth. Each section had to approve lectures in its field and was responsible for their contents. We lectured not only in Odessa, but also in small towns and villages.

Occasionally, various cultural or Party organizations would commission special lectures, that is lectures on a particular subject. The subject of the discourse could be chosen by the customer, but the choice of the speaker was the sole prerogative of Znanie. The Society would send any speaker of its choice. Still, such "made-to-order" lectures were rather rare.

The customer paid Znanie a fee for the presentation. Approximately forty percent of that fee went to the lecturer. The high season for lectures in Odessa was the summer, because of the demand at the sanatoriums and rest homes.

After every lecture, the speaker would present to his home office a certificate from the Party organization which contained an evaluation of the effectiveness of his presentation and also certified that the lecture was attended by a given number of persons.

The city's House of Scholars and Scientists (Dom uchenykh) regularly sponsored lecture series which university students were allowed to attend. The talks dealt with various areas of science, with the fine arts, music and the like. Occasionally, sailors were invited to relate their impressions of faraway lands. The House had other attractions as well. There was a cafeteria there where one could have a chat with friends, and also special circles for extracurricular activities for children. These ranged from ballet and physical education to mathematics, microbiology, painting and foreign languages. From time to time, the House of Scientists sponsored kapustniki, which were evenings of humor and satire. Our informant, at that time a student at the university, believed that the House of Scholars and Scientists was the best place in Odessa to meet interesting people, or to enjoy a game of chess.

"Salons"

Public lectures in Odessa had high visibility. By contrast, the two private gatherings apparently tolerated by the authorities, and reported by our informants, led a discreet existence. For fifteen years, a woman journalist ran in her apartment an informal literary salon of sorts where people gathered to discuss artistic and social subjects. Toward the end of that period, however, it became obvious that someone had been reporting to the police about these privately organized meetings. Even though the conversations were politically innocent enough, it was inadvisable to continue because any unauthorized assembly was illegal and punishable by law. Accordingly, the informant disbanded the "salon."

Another informant reported attending, while a student in Odessa between 1960 and 1974, meetings of an unofficial but apparently tolerated Rachmaninoff

Circle. That was an informal society of lovers of classical music organized by a physics professor on his own initiative. A small group of people would meet in his one-room apartment which was equipped with a record player and an amplifier. The professor owned about six thousand recordings of all kinds of classical music. The informant knew for a fact that this "salon" was registered with the authorites in Moscow rather than Odessa, although she could not explain the reason for that. Every Monday from six to half past eight in the evening the professor would play new recordings to his guests, while the wife served tea and cookies. Another mystery was that there was no charge for membership in the group, not even to reimburse the host for the expenses. Occasionally, the professor would give brief talks about individual composers, and sometimes he would even play his own compositions. The weekly meetings were attended by fifteen to twenty-five persons. For a time, meetings were also held on Thursdays to accommodate the overflow audience of students, but the students stopped coming and the Thursday meetings disintegrated. The professor died in 1974. After his death the widow tried to carry on, but without much success, and the Rachmaninoff circle fell apart. The "salon" was also known as the Nikolai Pirogov house, named in honor of a famous Russian physician. All in all it existed for about twenty years.

Bookstores

There was a chronic book hunger in Odessa. Not a single informant was satisfied with the availability in the local bookstores (there were only several of them, it appears) of legally published books and periodicals including, a student emphasized, those bearing the imprint of Odessa's own Mayak Publishers. In order to purchase the latter, she emphasized, one had to travel to Kishinev, the capital of the neighboring Moldavian Republic. Book hunger was exacerbated by the popularity of the hobby of book collecting.

Not surprisingly, in conditions of shortages the scarce merchandise (defitsitnyi tovar) was diverted to the black market. An employee of the printing and book distribution system volunteered the information that certain books were not sold in the bookstores at all: all copies were sold under the counter. This procedure was followed most often in the case of translated foreign books which were always in great demand and could therefore be sold at high profits (three to four times their official price) on the black market. A saleslady from a bookstore reported that on one occasion, as a very special favor, she was allowed to purchase one copy of such a book for herself.

Even books that were actually placed on sale were often sold out in a matter of hours. Another college student recalled her vain attempts to purchase multivolume sets of Lion Feuchtwanger and of Sholem Aleichem: translations of both the Yiddish classic and the modern German author of novels on Jewish themes were great favorites with Soviet Jewish readers. The only way to get good books in Odessa, she insisted, was to deliver huge quantities of scrap paper. (The procedure of exchanging 20 kilos of scrap paper for a single copy of a hard-to-get book is described in Maurice Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria: Western Literature in Post-Stalin Russia, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977, pp. 75-77). She also described a curious but apparently widespread method of dealing with the embarrassing problem of excessive demand for books and periodicals which the authorities merely tolerated, and simultaneous apathy toward highly politicized publications which the authorities wished to promote. The student recalled:

> If one wanted to enter a subscription to a literary journal (even a less popular one, like Oktyabr'), or

> Murzilka, the journal for pre-schoolers, one also had to subscribe to unpopular journals that the bookstore had to get rid of, such as Bloknot agitatora, or Yunyi Leninets, or something else for which there was little demand, such as the Ukrainian-language publications. This procedure was called nagruzka, "accepting an overload." Otherwise, one could not even buy an issue of a newspaper, to say nothing of subscriptions to good newspapers, or multi-volume editions of literary works, or journals for which there was much demand, such as Yunost' or Inostrannaya literatura.

The student's account was confirmed almost verbatim two years later and thousands of miles away by a boarding school teacher:

> In order to subscribe to Murzilka, a journal for pre-schoolers, the subscription to which cost a single ruble, I had to spend six rubles on subscriptions to Bloknot agitatora, Kommunist and Izvestia. It was just as difficult to subscribe to [the illustrated weekly] Ogonyok and [the satirical journal] Krokodil. To subscribe to these, one had to waste money on subscriptions to journals one did not want, but which the subscription agency was trying to promote.

The same tactics were employed in the sale of books. A librarian explained:

> Political books were "promoted" in rather ingenious ways. Thus, in the bookstores of Odessa books were sold in "gift baskets." A good book was wrapped

together with a copy of a political book that nobody wanted. By employing this technique the bookstore would force people to buy the "full basket" of books. Actually, the procedure was similar to that employed in other stores which sold, for instance, hard-to-get ladies' gloves---but only on condition of the customer's willingness to also purchase a bottle of eau de cologne which nobody wanted. Hard-to-get books were also distributed as a special favor to a large number of book trade employees (including the director and the entire staff of the printing plant, and the entire staff of the wholesale distributor of books). You see, it was like that: everybody had to bail somebody out. People understood the predicament of the bookseller who, they knew, had no alternative---he simply had to sell those political books. Hence, customers bought these political books, knowing that the booksellers were themselves victims and hostages of politicized Soviet book publishing and book distribution.

The librarian concluded with a Soviet anecdote of the 1970's:

Brezhnev was preparing to go abroad on a state visit. Many people were eager to be appointed Brezhnev's deputy during his absence, but the boss insisted that the deputy be able to solve three problems. He had to undertake to make good vodka and caviar

> readily available to all; he was to solve the Soviet Union's perennial housing problem; and he was to publish and actually sell ten million copies of Brezhnev's collected works.
>
> Upon Brezhnev's return, his beaming deputy gleefully informed him that he had succeeded in solving all three problems. By forbidding all export of vodka and caviar abroad, he placed them within easy reach of the Soviet population. By allowing free emigration, he created millions of vacant apartments and thus solved the housing problem. "But what about the books?" Brezhnev asked. "Yes, I managed to do that, too," the deputy replied. "I had them printed in ten million copies, as per your instructions, and there were long lines of people waiting to purchase them." "But why?" Brezhnev inquired in astonishment. And the deputy proudly explained, "You see, I had them printed on toilet paper."

There are always shortages of toilet paper in the USSR.

As in other areas of Soviet life, in the purchase of books certain groups of the population enjoyed special privileges. Thus, an instrumentation engineer reported the existence in Odessa of special bookstores for veterans of World War II. These were ironically nicknamed "Thank you, Hitler" (spasibo Gitleru). And a writer informed that at the Province Committee (obkom) of the Communist Party a bookstore sold books that were difficult to obtain elsewhere.

Possession of a private library was an important status symbol, and a clearly privileged student from the Institute of Technology described the contents of his own collection. A "with it" non-conformist young man simply had to own some Hemingway (by contrast, Dreiser was out because he was a darling of the Soviet establishment) and also some Remarque, particularly his older writings such as All Quiet on the Western Front. Among more recent anthologies published in the USSR, two were de rigueur, those of British and of American short stores of the 1960's. Then, one simply had to have some of the early Feuchtwanger, particularly his historical romances with some Jewish content. Other books in fashion included Hubbard's King Solomon's Mines and Heller's Catch-22. Any multivolume set was considered a prized possession simply because such sets were difficult to obtain. (A metallurgical engineer reported waiting in line almost all night for a subscription to one such set.) In the category of Russian books, science fiction was a must, though foreign science fiction was nice, too. As a rule, young people would refrain from displaying either pre-revolutionary books or books published before the war. Also undesirable were books about World War II. To "hip" students, this was ancient history with which middle-aged people were for some reason obsessed.

Libraries

According to our professor of engineering, the two main libraries in Odessa were the Gorky Library on Korolenko Street and the Lenin Library on Preobrazhensky Street. The Gorky Library appears to have been a repository library which received all books published in the USSR, and it had a restricted collection (spetskhran) of forbidden books which were accessible only by special permission. No books could be taken out of either library's

building. Moreover, one had to wait between one and one and a half hours for a book that was to be read on the premises. Both libraries were used by students as well as the general public. There were several other smaller but useful collections. One of them was at the House of Scholars and Scientists (Dom uchenykh). Generally, libraries subscribed to few general periodicals. It was not unusual for a small library to subscribe only to one or two of the literary monthlies, and foreign books were difficult to get. The informant remembered trying to check out at one of the libraries a book by Elsa Triolet, a French Communist author of Russian origin, only to be told that he would be seventy-sixth in line. A similar experience was reported by a student. It was not unusual, she said, to have to wait a year for a popular book. Naturally, there was favoritism. Influential people would get a popular book first.

The existence in Odessa's libraries of special collections of "forbidden" books accessible only by special permission was confirmed by a metallurgical engineer, but denied by a professor of English at the Agricultural Institute. Neither the Gorky nor the University library had such books, he said, even though their collections were otherwise quite comprehensive. True, the libraries bought few foreign books. A major reason for that were their limited budgets of foreign currency. Accordingly, they resorted frequently to interlibrary loans or to the so-called referativnye zhurnaly which are annotated digests of scholarly foreign periodicals. In spite of his position as chairman of a college English department, the informant had no access to English-language publications, except only for such British and American Communist newspapers and the Morning Star and the Daily World. A professor at the Communications Institute maintained that his institution's library was quite adequate for teaching purposes. True, the library had absolutely no foreign books or periodicals (the only foreign-language journal available

was the Soviet New Times which was used for language practice), but he could obtain foreign professional journals through the interlibrary loan from Moscow, though only in his specialty. Getting an article through the interlibrary loan required about a month. (Incidentally, the informant emphasized several times the secretiveness of the Soviet scientific establishment. The Odessa Institute of Communications received once a request from America for some information in connection with an article published in a Soviet journal by one of the Institute's professors. After very serious discussion by the Institute's Party organization, it was decided to send no reply at all to the American scientist.

The libraries in Odessa, like the city's bookstores, were victims of government pressures (or downright coercion) to purchase huge amounts of political books for which there was little demand and, moreover, to demonstrate that reading of these books was being actively "encouraged." One youthful informant recalled that in order to check out from the public library the allowable maximum of five books, he had to include in that number at least one overtly political book. When returning the books, the librarians would question him about the contents of the political book to make sure he had actually read it. And a newspaperwoman insisted that the most desirable books were not only scarce, but many could not be checked out at all, which policy inspired a suggestion that a sign be posted at the library: ne shar' po polkam zhadnym vzglyadom - zdes' knigi ne dayutsya na dom, "Don't stare greedily at the shelves. You cannot take books with yourselves."

Three informants (two librarians and a schoolteacher) provided detailed accounts of Odessa libraries.

The schoolteacher reported:

The Odessa Public Library (publichka), once considered very good, deteriorated of late because of losses of book holdings as well as of personnel. The personnel situation deteriorated in the late 1940's after large-scale dismissal of Jews and their replacement with inexperienced people and equally unqualified outright political appointees. Thus, the library's director was both inept and malicious. A great many books that were pilfered during the German and Rumanian occupation were never replaced. Before the war, library patrons could take a great many books home, but this was considerably curtailed after the war because of large-scale thefts of books. The book thieves were called nesuny, "carriers."

The library had a sekretny fond, or secret holdings, to which people were admitted only by special permission that was cleared with the KGB. Materials stored in these restricted holdings included verbatim reports of early Communist Party congresses, Soviet periodicals of the 20's and 30's, as well as old and therefore politically taboo encyclopedias.

The Library of Foreign Literature was founded in the late 1950's. For monetary and other bribes, the library's director and the chief librarian sold passes allowing the bearer to use the library. Within the library itself, many foreign books and

periodicals, especially those of a political nature, were issued only to those readers who, in addition to the admissions pass, could also produce certificates entitling them to this special privilege. These were the same kind of certificates that the Public Library's secret holdings required of those wishing to consult Communist Party documents marked "for internal use only" or publications considered "obsolete" (ustarevshie), that is, politically outdated.

Because of the many book purges which resulted in the destruction of much of its book holdings, in the 1970's certain sections of the University Library contained little more than textbooks. Odessa also had a province (oblastnaya) library and district (rayonnye) libraries for individual neighborhoods of the city.

Mention should also be made of bookmobiles, which were called peredvizhki. Because librarians had to prove that they were "pushing" political books (just as book salesmen and bookstores did), readers who wanted to check out a good book were literally forced to also take out a political book; a similar method was used in bookstores. Analogous strategies were common in accepting subscriptions to periodicals. Thus, people who wanted to subscribe to [the popular

> humor magazine] Krokodil were also forced to subscribe to Sputnik agitatora [a particularly boring propaganda journal - MF].
>
> The library organized evening programs around a specific theme. Typical subjects for such evenings were "The Lenin Anniversary," "A Collective Farm Woman Is a Mighty Force," or a specific modern author.
>
> The library catalogues were, on the whole, good, but there were degrees of catalogue accessibility. There was, for instance, the general catalogue, but then there was also a restricted catalogue to which only few people had access. In addition, there were four other catalogues, by the name of the author, by the title of the work, by subject matter, and of articles in periodicals.
>
> The thoroughness with which Jewish culture was obliterated in Odessa could be seen from the fact that on one occasion, when I tried to find some books of Jewish interest, I could not find a single entry under "Jews" or "Jewish" among all the books dealing with political and historical subjects in the Soviet period.

A novelist remembered that a friend whose research required that he consult a volume of Sigmund Freud's writings discovered that the book is kept in the "secret" library collection, and that access to it required two permissions, one from the university's rector and the other from the Party organization (partbyuro). It was also rumored that the secret archives

contained such sensitive information as documentation that the eminent Soviet novelist Valentin Katayev, since deceased, was a member, before the Revolution of the extreme right-wing Union of the Russian People and had himself written at that time several anti-Semitic articles.

A professional librarian told the following story:

> I worked for many years at the Central Library of Odessa's Trade Unions. The library was located in the Palace of Culture of Oblsovprof, the trade union organization. Mine was the central library in a system that consisted of about 260 small libraries, mostly at industrial enterprises.
>
> Readers at the library preferred to read fiction and there was very little demand for political books. On the other hand, a librarian would be penalized if statistics were to confirm this fact. She would be accused of not trying to disseminate political books, of failing to create an interest in such books. As a result, we developed the following procedure. Readers were allowed to take home the books and journals they wanted, but only on condition they also checked out five or six political books or pamphlets. In this manner, the librarian could demonstrate that she did her patriotic duty and that people in her library were aware of the importance and desirability of reading political books. Naturally, the librarian's clients were fully conscious of her predicament, and they dutifully

checked out political books which they did not in the least intend to read.

Occasionally, I was asked to compile special reading lists. Because these reading lists were "for show," they had to be highly politicized. I recall preparing this kind of list of novels for model "brigades of Communist labor." It included Fadeyev's The Young Guard, Polevoi's Tale of a Real Man, Gladkov's Cement, Ostrovsky's How the Steel Was Tempered, Aleksei Tolstoy's The Road to Calvary, and Fedin's An Unusual Summer [all of them classics of Stalinist Socialist Realism - MF].

The library had a permanent staff, but it was also helped by volunteers (obshchestvenniki). The volunteers' only reward was having the first crack at good books. In exchange for that, the volunteers were particularly helpful in forcing on people books and pamphlets that the authorities considered particularly "beneficial."

From time to time the library organized "readers' conferences, at which some literary celebrity would talk to readers about his work. Conferences of this sort were attended by as many as five hundred people. Invitations to these conferences were highly prized. Only two or three people were invited from an industrial enterprise. Occasionally, readers would criticize an author's work and the author would try to defend himself.

The account was confirmed and enlarged upon by another librarian:

> The library had set quotas for different types of books that patrons were allowed to check out. Not more than forty percent would be fiction, and no less than twenty-five or thirty percent was to be political literature. It was in this way that statistics on reader demand were being faked. In practice, library patrons who were aware, of course, of the librarians' predicament, would merely pretend to check out political books. In real fact, they would not even bother taking them home. Political books would be checked out in the patron's name and they would also be checked off as having been returned. This procedure made it possible for the library to claim that quotas had been met---thirty percent of books were political, and two percent or so were "scientific atheism." The procedure, therefore, was as follows. If a library patron wanted to take home the usual maximum of four books, no more than two of these could be novels. The other two were political. They could be taken home or, at the very least, had to be checked out in the client's name.
>
> By the way, Soviet library procedures on lost books are rather unusual. The patron may lose his library copy of War and Peace and the library may be willing to accept instead a copy of Anna Karenina.

Censorship

Censorship was ubiquitous, although much of it was informal in character. It assumed a wide variety of disguises. All of them, however, shared a recognizable trait. Each and every one possessed the power to prevent the public existence of the printed or spoken word, or a graven image, or even a musical tune. It affected equally works of art and purely technical communications. And while the rationale for a ban could often be guessed, it could never be ascertained. In contrast to censorship in other countries and other times (including Imperial Russia), in the USSR censorship does not operate in accordance with published rules. Much of it, therefore, appears capricious and much of it was simply an official's subjective extrapolation of current political moods. In the mid-1970's even the existence of censorship in the USSR was not officially admitted, although it was, of course, common knowledge. (The advent of glasnost' finally revealed the "secret"). We know, however, that the atmosphere of paranoia surrounding the workings of the censorship at that time was by no means peculiar to Odessa alone (see, e.g., Marianna Tax Choldin and Maurice Friedberg, eds., The Red Pencil: Artists, Scholars, and Censors in the USSR, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

A metallurgical engineer required permission from Glavlit, the censorship agency, to print a small announcement of technical procedure on a separate sheet of paper. A professor of English at the Agricultural Institute also had to obtain Glavlit clearance:

> I wrote a textbook which included examples of English usage. Naturally, these were in English. I had to translate every English word into Russian before obtaining permission to publish. Similarly, censorship clearance was required for every single page of any kind of material to be duplicated on an ERA

> machine. In theory, one could appeal censorship decisions to the central censorship office in Moscow, but in practice such instances were exceedingly rare. I understand that in Odessa there was considerable turnover in censorship personnel.

One does not normally think of rank-and-file engineers or, for that matter, professors of foreign languages as persons likely to come in contact with censorship. Certainly, physicians do not come to mind in that connection, either. Yet one of our informants, a doctor, did so:

> I needed a Glavlit censor's permission, including the censor's number, to get some prescription blanks printed. In my opinion, censorship is partly to blame for the scarcity in Russia of copying equipment. Another reason, of course, is technological backwardness. When an individual or an enterprise in Odessa acquired a new typewriter or, more precisely, new keys, a sample of the letters ("now is the time for all good men...") was to be deposited with the police to enable them to trace any typewritten document. It is also because of censorship considerations that on holidays and weekends all office typewriters had to be locked up in a special room, lest they be used to type unauthorized samizdat. Naturally, security was even more stringent with respect to copying equipment similar to the American Xerox machine---say, stencils. These must be kept in rooms with metal doors and iron

bars. Generally, only people with KGB clearance had access to them.

Calling cards that a Soviet citizen from Odessa would give a foreigner were to have no home address on them. In order to have a business card printed, one needed permission of one's supervising organization. Thus, a district hospital needed the permission of a province hospital. I was once denied a request to authorize the printing of some business cards. Because I did not have the censor's permission with the censor's number, I had them printed illegally. They were printed in Cyrillic script alone to make it less obvious that the cards were meant primarily for foreign acquaintances.

Any printed text required, strictly speaking, four censorship clearances. The first authorized the setting of the text in type (k naboru). The second was authorization to produce a "model copy" (kontrol'nyi ekzemplyar). The third permission from Obllit [province branch of Glavlit - MF] was to roll it off the presses (podpisano k pechati). The fourth clearance was to disseminate the work (k vypusku v svet).

Three separate formal censorship approvals were required for his one-man exhibit of paintings to open, an artist recalled. The first two censors

were, respectively, from Glavlit's Odessa province and Ukrainian Republic division of exhibits. The third approval was the most difficult to obtain. The inspector was the Ukrainian Republic's Minister of Culture. By contrast, the censorship intervention related by a sculptor was both informal and indirect. Thus, a statue of the novelist Yuri Olesha who died in 1960 which was duly commissioned and paid for, was ultimately vetoed by the municipality's cultural bosses because of a change of heart. It appears that on second thought they decided that Olesha, who spent many years in quasi-exile in Central Asia, was not ideologically upright enough to merit a monument. Official though unacknowledged Soviet anti-Semitism of the 1970's was the obvious reason for the other censorship interventions:

> I was commissioned to do a plaque commemorating the music teacher Stolyarsky who had trained many famed violinists. Subsequently, however, the order was cancelled because Stolyarsky was a Jew.
>
> On another occasion the authorities of a district outside Odessa, the rayispolkom, had commissioned a monument commemorating the several hundred Jews who had lived there before the war and who were later murdered by the Nazis. My partner, who was not Jewish, and myself [a Jew] produced together a monument which showed two Jewish-looking figures, an old man and a child. It was not until some time later that the authorities had realized that there was an unwritten but strict policy of not erecting monuments to Jews. Then there was an analogous case of a statue that was to

> honor two heroes of the Civil War. When the authorities found out that both heroes were Jews, the contract was cancelled.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the anti-Semitic moods of the time affected also the fortunes of the writings of Isaac Babel, one of the city's most famous sons and the chronicler of Odessa's Jewry. A novelist remembered:

> In 1967, the Odessa publishing house wanted to bring out a volume of Babel's short stories. Some Babel had been published in the late 1950's, and nobody expected any trouble. Ultimately, Odessa publishers were not allowed to reprint his work because Babel's writings are synonymous with Jewish Odessa. Instead, the Babel volume was published in a less conspicuous place, the Siberian city of Kemerovo. I recall that on one occasion, when my own writing was criticized, one of the bosses told me outright, 'We don't want you to become another Babel.'
>
> You ask about censorship. I was once requested by the KGB to suppress, ostensibly on my own initiative, a short story I had written. You see, they did not want it to be known that it was the KGB that did it.

Another professional author insisted that she would not have been admitted into the Union of Soviet Writers had it been known that she was Jewish. Quite widely published in Odessa as well as in Moscow and Leningrad, she nevertheless had frequent run-ins with the literary editor-censors:

> Sometimes as much as two-thirds of my text would get cut. Moreover, they also felt free to make some additions to my text. Yet in all those years I had never met the official censor in person. Believe it or not, I have been censored even after my departure from the USSR [in 1979]. I saw in America a Soviet film. My name got deleted from the list of credits.

An interesting case of Soviet censorship of broadcasting from a fraternal Socialist country was reported by a television announcer:

> Television in Odessa had to contend with some real competition from abroad. Not far from Odessa, in the city of Izmail, people could actually view Rumanian television programs. Now, the Soviet authorities were quite unhappy about that, and in order to wean Soviet viewers from Rumanian television, they would air on Odessa TV films, talk shows and opera until half past two at night. In addition, the Soviets were actually jamming Rumanian TV by broadcasting on the same channel.

The television announcer continued:

> Odessa television station consisted of five (and sometimes six) 'editorial desks.' These 'desks' were agriculture, industry, political education, literature and drama, humor and satire, and music. Each 'desk' had its director and between three and five writers who were expected to come up with new ideas for their segment of the program.

> Upon voting an idea acceptable, the 'desk' would bring it for approval to the 'artistic council' and following that, to the city and province Communist Party Committee, the gorkom and the obkom. Formal censorship would not intervene until just prior to the live broadcast. The real job of censorship was done by editors. The official censor would merely see to it that the broadcast contain no references to military objects, politically taboo subjects (such as mention of historical 'unpersons') and so forth. Just before going on the air, the censor would check the contents of the news. In fact, in order to go on the air, the news broadcast had to obtain signed clearances from three persons. The three were the editor, the editor-in-chief, and the 'formal' Glavlit censor.

And yet, the television announcer pointed out, between one and two o'clock a.m., censored Odessa television had an uncensored competitor. It was the Russian radio transmission of the Voice of America: "At that time of night, there was hardly any jamming, in contrast to daytime when jamming was very heavy. Notwithstanding the daytime jamming, a great many people listened to the Voice of America regularly."

Two scriptwriters formerly associated with the Odessa Film Studio described the exceptionally thorough censorship scrutiny in that medium.

The first summarized it as follows:

Censorship procedures in the cinema were rather complicated. Studios had "creative groups" (tvorcheskie obyedineniya) which dealt with different types of films, such as motion pictures based on literary classics, science fiction, juvenile films, etc. Each creative unit kept a file of scripts, including commissioned ones.

First of all, a script had to be approved by the editor. The next hurdle was having the script examined in Kiev by the Chief Administrator of the Cinema for the Ukrainian Republic. Usually, the script was hand-carried to Kiev by the Odessa editor together with the director of the Odessa studio for fear that the director, if alone, was likely to be intimidated by the bureaucrats there. In Kiev, the Odessa director and editor might have to haggle about various details of the script. The script would have to get the okay from as many as thirteen different departments, depending on the subject matter. To make the sailing smoother, the editor and the director of the Odessa studio would hire consultants. Thus, if a film touched on any military topic, they would hire a senior military man as a consultant---at a considerable expense to the studio, I may add. After the script would obtain all the approvals, the shooting would begin. And then, the finished reel of the film would be scrutinized by the same people all over again,

> and once more different scenes might have to be redone, re-shot and re-voiced. Once more this wrought havoc with the studio's budget as well as its timetable because there was no predicting how much reworking would be necessary.

A less "formal" and more personal account was provided by another scriptwriter:

> First of all, the script must get the seal of approval from Obllit, the Odessa Province censorship office. But neither I nor, to the best of my knowledge, anyone else, actually got to see the censor himself in the flesh. I only remember delivering the envelope to the secretary. But even prior to its submission to the 'formal' censor, the script had already been informally 'edited' and 'corrected' by several people within the hierarchy of the Odessa studio. Each of them offered not only artistic, but also overtly political 'suggestions' that had to be carried out if the script was to be referred to the next step in the chain of command. As a result, there was really little work left for the 'formal' Obllit censor who might, for propriety's sake, cross out a few politically dubious passages.
>
> While the shooting of the film was still in progress, those parts of it that were already complete were scrutinized by approximately twenty people in three

different cities, five in Odessa, five in Kiev and ten in Moscow. Each of these three groups could veto the picture. It could ban the appearance of the film altogether. That, however, was rare. More commonly, the studio was asked to shoot anew a scene or a series of scenes in the film, which was a very painstaking and a terribly expensive procedure. I remember instances when the decision of the formal screening board was informally but successfully appealed. A motion picture (or, perhaps, only a section of it---I no longer remember) was shown to a very powerful person. That very powerful person could be the Secretary of the Province Committee of the Party (obkom), or some bigshot in the KGB, or some dignitary in Moscow. All that individual had to do was to make a couple of telephone calls. I was told by people with first-hand knowledge of the matter that the obkom Secretary or somebody as powerful would tell the local boss that he must be out of his goddamn mind to object to this film. He would tell him that he, personally, viewed this film and found nothing politically objectionable in it, that it is a fine Soviet motion picture. An informal telephone call like that could effectively overrule the formal decision of the Screening Board and the film would then be allowed to proceed to the next level of political clearance or actually be released to be shown to the public.

A film actor remembered:

> Censors are most suspicious of films with modern settings, but even historical films are not exempt from censorship intervention. Thus, the historical film Andrei Rublev [which relates the story of a medieval painter of icons---MF] was cut from six hours to only two hours. As you see, sixty-six percent of the film was suppressed. Because fear of the censors is so intense, film directors often engage in preemptive self-censorship. They usually shy away from risky subjects (or risky treatment of safe subjects) for two reasons. You see, not only is the film likely to be banned, but they are also afraid to lose their jobs. One particular feature considered especially risky in Soviet motion pictures are jokes. One is not even allowed to crack jokes about policemen and firemen, to say nothing of the Party. One may only joke about minor bureaucrats and about drunks.
>
> Imported foreign films are severely cut by the censors not only because some of their contents are politically objectionable, but also for such non-political reasons as showing in a positive light rebellious children who disobey their parents, or because of explicit portrayals of sex.

A characteristically Odessan twist of the procedure was reported by a mechanical engineer. He had it on good authority that during the preview of foreign films ordinary scissors and tape were used to cut out erotic

sequences. The excised part of the reel was cut into individual slides which were sold as titillating foreign pornography. The censors and the technicians shared in the profits.

Censorship in music was either structured and institutionalized, or intuitive and improvised. An administrator of an orchestra routinely required every three to five months a certificate of clearance for the ensemble's repertory. An additional certificate was required for each out-of-town performance. Because such certificates were issued only shortly before the day of performance, the censor's disapproval (no reason was ever given) meant that all of the orchestra's rehearsals would have been wasted, and a new program would then be rehearsed from scratch. Still, the administrator conceded, his musicians were quite aware that censorship in music was incomparably milder than in the theater and for that they were grateful. Music, after all, is politically far less controversial than is the spoken word.

Two Odessa violinists offered some concrete examples of censorship of music in practice. Their different backgrounds and ages (the older man was admitted to the Odessa Conservatory in 1914!) make the similarity of their testimonies the more remarkable. The senior informant offered an assortment of interesting tidbits. Thus, he pointed out that at one time the music of Shostakovich could not be performed in Odessa. Ironically, that was when the composer resided in Odessa as an exile. Richard Wagner's music was, in effect, proscribed as reactionary, and Bloch's Baal Shem was renamed

"an improvisation" because the original title had religious overtones, and Jewish ones at that: the composition bears the name of the founder of Hasidism. But then, Russian Orthodox religious music, such as the liturgical compositions of Grechaniinov, could not be performed altogether. Tcherepnin and Scriabin were not officially banned, but neither of the two was ever included in musical repertory. With the notable exception of old recordings of Fyodor Chaliapin's basso voice, emigres --both composers and performers--were shunned. It was only recently that the ban on Igor Stravinsky was lifted. Programs of concerts required the approval of the Committee for Radio Affairs of the Party's Province Committee (obkom). [The younger violinist, who was also vice-chairman of the city's Znanie Society made several similar observations:] Whenever the Central Committee of the Party in Moscow would come out with criticism of a specific Soviet composer, his work was immediately banned from performance. At different times this affected Shostakovich, Prokofiev and others. On the other hand, acting on hints from above--and over the years people would acquire the ability to recognize such signals--even anti-Soviet emigres might be performed. Thus, after many years, we performed in Odessa Rachmanioff, Stravinsky and Glazunuv. On the other hand, certain emigres were never readmitted into the canon of liturgical music, such as Grechaninov, the composer of liturgical music. Occasionally, lack of political vigilance would get into serious trouble even high-ranking

Communist functionaries. Thus, my political boss Barabanoc went through some very hard times for overlooking the fact that, following the Sino-Soviet break, Radio Odessa continued to use as its musical theme a song that mentioned Comrade Mao as a great friend of the USSR. Indeed, censorship extended even to classical music. Thus, Glinka's A Life for the Tsar was adapted by the Soviet composer Asafyev and renamed Ivan Susanin. In a similar vein, the old musical score of Tschaikovsky's 1812 Overture was adapted by a Soviet composer. The adaptation that is now performed exclusively in the USSR omits the tune of God Save the Tsar [the Imperial Russian national anthem--MF], even though the contrast between the anthem and the French Marseillaise is crucial in Tschaikovsky's original composition.

A dramatic instance of the speed with which Soviet censorship operated as related by a professional organizer of mass spectacles. He remembered working on the final touches of plans for a parade in Kishinev on the night of October 14, 1964, when a telegram arrived from Moscow announcing Khrushchev's ouster. The telegram was received within minutes of his dismissal. It was clear to all in authority in Kishinev that this meant they had to get rid of all the portraits of Khrushchev and all the references to him on posters and placards that were to be featured at the parade. Since they did not yet know who was to succeed Khrushchev

(it was Brezhnev), the Party leadership in Kishinev did the safe thing. All of Khrushchev's portraits were replaced with portraits of Lenin. The following morning the parade was received by Nikolai Podgorny, another Soviet leader, who in his speech made no mention of Khrushchev.

Needless to say, censorship supervision of the theater was rigid and thorough. "An actor who was to read on the stage a Chekhov or a Maupassant story had to have censorship clearance," a veteran actor recalled, "and most of the censors were retired army officers or kadroviki, former factory personnel managers." A professional reciter of poetry and prose (chtets-deklamator) confirmed this claim:

> The ideological purity of such material as Chekhov's short stories (as a rule, two actors appeared on the stage at any one time) was supervised by the obkom, that is the Province Party Committee, more precisely the Committee's cultural department, and by other such bodies. On one occasion, perfectly innocent material about Lenin as a child was banned because it made Lenin look somewhat silly.

Censors were on the lookout not only for objectionable material, but for objectionable authors as well. Thus, a newspaperwoman recalled, "After the American playwright Edward Albee made some anti-Soviet pronouncements, his play All in the Garden which was already in dress rehearsal, was not

staged. A similar [!] play by another playwright was shown instead."

The administrator of the Odessa Operetta reminisced:

> Censorship was everywhere. As I said, the play Na rassvete (At Dawn), the first part of the trilogy about Odessa, the one set in 1917, was taken to Moscow. The Glavrepertkom [the central agency supervising theatrical repertories---MF] did not like the play because such negative personages as the gangster Mishka Yaponchik [allegedly the prototype for Isaac Babel's Benya Krik---MF] who was played by Mikhail Vodianoy were shown in a sympathetic light, while the Bolsheviks in the play were colorless. But Lidia Zhukova (who subsequently emigrated, lived in Chicago, and died in New York) wrote an enthusiastic review of the play in Pravda. After that the play was staged in Moscow. In general, whenever a play was banned, one could appeal to higher authorities, sometimes successfully.
>
> I also remember the play The Wedding in Malinovka which was in the repertory for some twenty years, through the 1970's. The male lead was once again Vodianoy; the music was by Aleksandrov. The play was set during the Civil War. When a sequel to the play was written featuring the personages during World War II, it was banned on the grounds that the Communists in the play

> were not particularly attractive. The theater appealed the ban to the First Secretary of the obkom, the Odessa Province Party Committee. The Secretary came to see the play for himself and he had the ban lifted. So as you see a ban could be appealed.

The administrator of the Operetta cited two instances of censorship intervention which reflected the official anti-Semitic moods of the Brezhnev years. The first involved the Operetta's director Matvei Osherovsky. In 1971, while on a visit in London, he went to see the musical Fiddler on the Roof which was performed by a visiting American troupe. Osherovsky was lucky. The Americans gave him the musical score of the show for free, and with it permission to perform the musical without requiring any royalties. It was the second time that Osherovsky was the beneficiary of such American generosity.

Upon return to Odessa, Osherovsky, much to his surprise, discovered that he would not be allowed to stage--not even free of charge--the then internationally famous musical. A musical that was, moreover, based on stories of Sholem Aleichem, who has the distinction of being considered in the USSR Yiddish literature's most famous "progressive" author. Osherovsky and his associates sought help in Kiev, hoping to have Odessa's unfavorable decision overruled. They shrewdly argued that staging a musical about anti-Semitic persecutions in tsarist Russia would be good

public relations for the Soviet Union. It would help refute, they said, Western lies about mistreatment of Jews in Soviet Russia (where, as everybody knows they are treated as equals). It would contrast, they insisted, the situation of Jews under capitalism and in a Socialist State. Staging Fiddler on the Roof, they suggested, would even yield some benefits inside the USSR. It would send a signal to Soviet Jews that Stalin's policy of suppression of Jewish culture is being reversed, and this would dampen Jewish eagerness to emigrate, which is harmful to Soviet economy in addition to being an international embarrassment. Ultimately, nothing availed. The Secretary of the Ukraine's Communist Party in Kiev said, "We have no Jewish problem here, so why raise the issue, why stage this musical?"

The Operetta administrator's other story dealt with Old Houses (Starye doma), a musical with a libretto by G. Golubenko and V. Khait. The play portrayed old and picturesque denizens of Odessa slums who refuse to move from their homes to better quarters. While none of the characters were openly identified as Jewish, the play implied that these old men and women were Jews, and the music was definitely "Jewish." Even though much time and effort had already been spent on rehearsals, and a lot of money invested in costumes and decorations, the musical was banned in 1977. Officially, Old Houses was banned because of its "alien ideology." At the same time, the Operetta's director Matvei Abramovich Osherovsky was forced to resign. It seems that he was "set up" by a professional rival

who wanted to get rid of him. That became apparent when the play was allowed to be staged in the distant city of Sverdlovsk. Subsequently, in 1980 or so, Old Houses was staged in Odessa as well.

A similar case was reported by an actress of the Children's Theater. Odessa's Theater of Russian Drama was rehearsing Karl Gutzkow's nineteenth-century German play Uriel Acosta. Lia Isaakovna Bugova, formerly an actress in the then defunct Yiddish theater, was to play the female lead. Notwithstanding the fact that three months of rehearsals would thus go down the drain, the play's Jewish subject matter, and particularly its idealized rebellious Jewish hero, evoked displeasure in the Province Party Committee, the obkom and the production was banned. The informant insisted that the ban was really inspired by the theater's anti-Semitic director Vladimir Bortko.

A theatrical director summarized the formal procedures of censorship of the stage:

> Material to be shown in performance was submitted in writing to the obkom, which then returned it to the theater with mandatory cuts indicated in red pencil and with instructions to begin the rehearsals and then show it to them again. Since the artistic council of the theater does not decide on the repertory, tickets were ordinarily sold out before the program obtained clearance. First, a rehearsal is attended by instructors of the chief of the administration of culture. Then the chief comes to see

> the show for himself. The final and decisive opinion is that of the third secretary of the obkom, who is the one who normally deals with problems of ideology. He is the one who is ordinarily authorized to give the show a green light.

A roughly analogous procedure was followed in variety shows. I interviewed a husband-and-wife team in which the husband was a magician and the wife sang satirical couplets. When the texts of the songs that she was to perform were ready, they were first shown to the authorities at the Philharmonic. (It was under the Philharmonic's auspices, and in its building that the variety show was presented.) Following that, the texts were submitted to Obllit, the censorship authority for the Odessa Province. It was only after both agencies gave their approval that the wife would start rehearsing the number.

Censorship, the theatrical director emphasized, is quite inconsistent:

> It is worth noting that repertory approved for staging in Odessa may be banned, say, in Lvov. That is because there is no single standard on what is and what is not permitted. It should also be pointed out that when a show is banned, the theatrical authorities will not be told explicitly the reasons for the ban. Normally, they will only be given hints (sometimes meaningless ones) about the show's untimeliness, unsuitability,

> unclarity, potential for misunderstanding and consequently for causing harm that was quite unintended by the play's authors, producers and actors. One must emphasize that the author and producer were not allowed to attend the session of the Party organization at which the fate of their show was being decided. There were other cliches that are used to justify a ban of the show. These included such questions as "Is this disgraceful situation typical of a Soviet factory?" or "Is this what you would have the audiences believe a senior Soviet administrator is like?"

The theatrical director was convinced that no Soviet censor or other Party functionary relished the idea of banning theatrical productions. Unfortunately,

> Soviet bureaucrats are afraid of each other. On the other hand, within the theater, people who by no stretch of the imagination can be called political nonconformists or dissidents cannot be trusted not to overstep the boundaries of what the Party can tolerate. That is because administrators, producers, directors and actors are all thirsty for artistic as well as financial success. They all crave applause from the audience---at any cost. Hence, they are willing to take risks, hoping they can get away with them. In my own Theater of Miniatures

> an actor once read a few Pravda editorials with a straight face, and the audience roared with laughter.

The pervasiveness of the censorship inspired some folklore. Thus, the magician related the story of a man who tried to distract a censor by frequent telephone calls, hoping this would benefit the author of a text that was to be scrutinized on that day. And a theatrical gymnastics coach reported rumors that for a bribe, one could obtain censorship approval for a literary text.

Censorship affected not only the creation of new literary and cinematic works, new paintings and statues, but also the continued existence of cultural products that were originally created with the blessings of that same censorship. Reference was made earlier to the fate of portraits and placards that had in the meantime become an embarrassment: they were destroyed. Not unexpectedly, the chief victims of such retroactive censorship were books, first and foremost those books that were within the Soviet authorities' easy reach, those stored in institutional and public libraries. Obviously, censorship of privately owned books was a more difficult matter.

A schoolteacher reported that the holdings of the Public Library were purged several times annually. Books that were removed from the shelves were burned in the presence of three designated representatives of the authorities. Such purges were euphemistically known as "clearing the bookshelves of obsolete material," generally defined as politically sensitive

materials older than five years. Some of these older books were retained, and others were moved to special collections accessible only by special permission. An instrumentation engineer spoke of special lists of books to be removed from the shelves that were received by libraries. He pointed out that not a few of the books that were ostensibly destroyed were in fact saved either for private use by the very people charged with their burning, or for re-sale on the black market. A college student remembered that occasionally certain back issues of magazines would mysteriously disappear from the library. Such fate befell, for instance, a 1962 issue of the literary monthly Novy mir which featured Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Occasionally, subscribers to encyclopedias and other multivolume sets would receive letters from the publishers that contained also sheets of cigarette paper. Such letters instructed recipients to paste the cigarette paper over pages that contained information that had in the meantime become objectionable. One result of the procedure was a popular student parlor game. It consisted in a comparison of different editions of reference works and ascertaining the precise nature of politically-inspired changes in their contents. A newspaperwoman was more specific. In the 1970's the libraries in Odessa were instructed to destroy books by such recent émigrés from the USSR as the Leningrad literary scholar Efim Etkind, then already a professor in Paris, and the Yiddish poetess Rakhil Baumvol, by then residing in Israel. According to the newspaperwoman, in several instances librarians removed the books of the shelves and forged documents

attesting to their destruction. Then they took some of the books home, and sold the rest on the black market.

Two librarians described the book-burning procedure in some detail. Moreover, their testimony was not based on hearsay. They were both eye-witnesses to the events they reported. Here is the account of a librarian employed at the Central Library of Trade Unions which was located in the Palace of Culture of Oblsovprof, the Odessa Province Council of Trade Unions:

> The censor who was employed at our library periodically received from the authorities lists of "obsolete publications" (ustarevshie izdaniya). Upon receipt of this kind of list the library had ten days to clear the bookshelves of the "obsolete" materials. This was an incredibly difficult job, because in a typical very small library with ten to fifteen thousand books, as many as eighty percent were political books, that is those most likely to contain many "obsolete" items.
>
> By 1963 I was working for a larger trade union library. The library had a staff of three and it housed 120,000 volumes. I and my two colleagues removed approximately three thousand books. These books were then burned in the presence of the censor. Nobody dared conceal any of the books slated to be burned, but then, nobody cared much, either. You see, these were political books that had fallen into disfavor and were declared subversive.

> The process of book burning was so thorough and strict that upon discovering that some of the books to be burned were missing from the shelves (they were either lost or mislaid or never returned) we actually purchased a number of them. You see, we did this because we were afraid that otherwise the inspector might think that we had concealed these books, and this was a serious offense. As I said, the extra books we had bought were burned together with the others.
>
> Later on, when we were making an inventory of our holdings, we were not allowed to report that we had three thousand books fewer on the shelves than at last count. Instead, we were encouraged to submit phony figures in order to avoid reporting that we had a purge at the library, and that three thousand books had been burned.

The other librarian was employed at the Public Library. Her report was somewhat different:

> The Department of Culture of the Odessa City Executive Committee (Gorispolkom) received from Glavlit, the censorship agency, lists of books to be delivered to the city Executive Committee (Gorispolkom); some were to be pulped, that is used for scrap; and still others were to be destroyed by burning.

These purges of library collections are conducted systematically and in accordance with established rules. Thus, for example, most newspapers, political books and pamphlets automatically become "obsolete" after three years, and are then supposed to be cleared off the shelves and destroyed. Pravda, Izvestia and the Odessa Province newspaper are to be kept for five years, after which they, too, become officially "obsolete" and are to be destroyed. These rules applied to public libraries. Special libraries, such as the Lenin Province (oblastnaya) Library or the Gorky Scientific (nauchnaya) Library, have special collections where such "obsolete" books, newspapers, pamphlets and journals are stored. But these special collections are accessible only to researchers with special passes.

In the past, book purges used to take place occasionally and affected only specific titles. Now, as I said, such purges occur every three or five years. In addition to these regularly scheduled purges, there are also, from time to time, special purges occasioned by major political events. Thus, for example, huge book purges took place after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. I personally participated then in these book purges of libraries and bookstores. Then there was also a

major book purge after Khrushchev's downfall in 1964.

Following Khrushchev's 1956 speech, all of Stalin's writings were destroyed except only for the sets of his collected works. In reality, however, some were only reported destroyed. A great many were reported lost. In fact, they were stolen by library personnel either for themselves, or for their friends, or for sale on the black market.

An indirect result of the book purges was a rule that forbade the acquisition by libraries of any old books. You see, the purges made all of the old books suspect. They might, after all, contain information that is by now an embarrassment.

Another censorship procedure consisted in cutting out entire pages from certain books, and even encyclopedias, with scissors and razor blades, and glueing in new pages in their stead. A book subjected to this kind of surgery was considered a "new and revised edition." Incidentally, the recent rule [in the 1970's] which allows foreigners to receive from the USSR only books published in the last five years is also a manifestation of censorship. In this manner, foreigners won't be getting any "obsolete" books.

Forbidden Books: Samizdat

With all that, however, censorship in Odessa was not totally effective. One important location it failed to control totally was Starokonny Market, the site, until the late 1970's, of a flourishing second-hand book market. Ilya Rudyak, an Odessan now living in Chicago, evokes its memory in a 1988 collection of short stories:

> Montaigne and our countryman Babel, [the occult guru of anthroposophy] Madame Blavatskaya and Marquis de Sade, the full set of [the luxurious prerevolutionary art and literary journal] Zolotoye runo [The Golden Fleece], individual volumes of Eugene Sue, Nabokov's Lolita, Henry Miller, [the prerevolutionary "pornographic" novelist] Artsybashev--all of these were openly displayed. (Ilya Rudyak, Tol'ko v Odesse, Northbrook, IL: Parus, n. d., p. 16).

According to one informant, vendors at the semi-legal market were prudent. Trusted old customers were offered truly subversive merchandise, while others were sold only relatively safe second-hand books. This may explain the disparity in reports on the kind of books that were available on the Starokonny Market and the second-hand bookstore on the Martynovsky Square, formerly the Greek Square. Thus, a poetess found there old volumes of verse by Marina Tsvetayeva and Anna Akhmatova, whose lyric poetry had long been in official disfavor and was rarely published. The books were

very expensive. She paid for them the equivalent of a month's salary. A novelist bought, among other books, a new volume of Franz Kafka, a long maligned "decadent" writer, printed for the first time ever in Russian in 1965. He then added wistfully that following his emigration his own books were sold surreptitiously on the same "grey" Starokonny Market. A newspaperwoman reported that the books one could buy were old, out-of-print and in official disfavor, but not outright proscribed publications:

> One could purchase on the Odessa black market Russian translations of Agatha Christie, Garcia Lorca and Alexandre Dumas. They were expensive, but they were available. So was the poetry of Nikolai Klynev and Sergei Yesenin ["peasant poets" of the 1920's, both subsequently in disfavor, particularly the former---MF]. The only books on sale, however, were old Soviet or pre-Soviet Russian books. I do not, however, recall ever seeing on sale Nabokov or Orwell or any of the really "subversive" foreigners, nor do I recall ever coming across any books in foreign languages. Yes, prices on the book market were terribly high, but the operation itself was quite open and perfectly legal.

A professional chess player recalled that books on the Starokonny Market were very expensive, some costing up to a hundred rubles, roughly a month's salary. For the most part, however, these were hard-to-get but perfectly legal Soviet books, such as the adventure novels of Alexandre

Dumas and Jules Verne, or the recently published volume of Kafka. On the other hand, "a book by Solzhenitsyn would be offered only to highly trusted people." Apparently, a theater director was one such person, for he acquired there some books by both Solzhenitsyn and Nabokov. So was, one gathers, an economist. Unsuccessful in her attempts to buy the Kafka volume (sold out on the Starokonny Market, to say nothing of the bookstores), she did find at the second-hand book dealers a volume of Nikolai Gumilev's verse then unpublished in the USSR since the poet's execution by a Soviet firing squad during the Civil War; Eugene Zamyatin's We, an anti-Utopia also never printed in the Soviet Union until the advent of glasnost; Albert Camus' The Plague, apparently--like the other two--printed abroad; George Orwell's Animal Farm, published in Russian in America; and the most subversive single book, Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago.

An interesting assortment of forbidden reading was described by a structural engineer:

> For the most part, proscribed (kramol'naia) literature consisted quite simply of back issues of Soviet journals that were no longer available---say, those that featured some work of Solzhenitsyn's. But I also read in Odessa [the Paris journal] Kontinent and other émigré magazines. At the Starokonny Market one could get all sorts of books in typewritten form, including Russian translations of

> George Orwell. A girl I knew would invite her friends to her house and she would let them read there all sorts of foreign publications, including Playboy magazine. The girl's father worked at the Customs Office and he would bring home materials that were confiscated from people entering the country.

According to a college Russian instructor, the scarce Kafka volume cost roughly as much as an entire bedroom set consisting, in addition to the beds, of dressers and night tables. She recalled buying in Odessa an illegal copy of Boris Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago (since published in the USSR) but emphasized that she did her "shopping" for forbidden books in Moscow. In her belief, only Moscow was better supplied with this kind of merchandise than Odessa. Owners of illegal publications, samizdat and otherwise, had to observe some conspiratorial precautions:

> Some people hid forbidden books in their apartments. There was a sacred oath of sorts that readers of forbidden books had to honor. Under no circumstances were they to divulge the name of the person from whom they had obtained the book. Should the book be found during a police search of the apartment or in another manner, the owner was to say, "I found this book in a public bathroom--- or on a park bench." And one had to stick to this story no matter what.

Real samizdat publications were illegally duplicated and disseminated. An economist mentioned, in addition to Solzhenitsyn, some wartime writings of Vasili Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg, most likely those that were subsequently collected in a Black Book of Nazi crimes against Russia's Jews, a volume that was destroyed by Soviet censorship but was subsequently published in the West. The innocent and benign countenance of the book stalls at the Starokonny Market that was painted by some informants contrasts with that offered by a high school teacher:

> There were police informers [stukachi] all over the second-hand book market. They reported to the police who sold what, who bought what, and who said what to whom. Sailors returning from trips to foreign countries would smuggle in some books. Some friends of mine and myself translated a number of these books into Russian. On one occasion we were about to manufacture some samizdat Jewish books, but we did not have the money for the expenses. We then sold our blood to the blood mobile, and used the proceeds to buy typing paper and carbon paper.

That returning sailors were also a source of illegal émigré publications was confirmed by an electrical engineer:

> During the 1970's, Russian books printed abroad were smuggled in by sailors who would then sell these books on the black market. The black market was not the only source of such books. One might also occasionally find people who would lend such

> books to trusted friends for ideological reasons. Since the mid-1970's, however, such books became very difficult to obtain because of greater risk of arrest and prison sentence. Among books I read in the 1970's were Solzhenitsyn's Gulag, David Shub's biography of Lenin, Avtorkhanov's Technology of Power, and Orwell's 1984 and Animal Farm. [All were published in Russian in the West---MF]

A married couple (he, an engineer; she, a history teacher and a museum employee) provided some details on mildly dissident activities at the university:

> Notwithstanding the high number of professional Party functionaries among the student body of Odessa University's history department, there were some political problems. Thus, the students published a satirical journal with political overtones which was displayed on the wall. The ringleaders of that project were dealt with rather harshly in the 1970's. A few were expelled from the Young Communist League. Others recanted and were forgiven, while at least one became known in Odessa as a dissident Marxist.
>
> There was some illegal literary activity as well. A student named Olga Kopeyeva wrote poetry that imitated Garcia Lorca and Akhenatova. She was subsequently accused of writing for samizdat.

> Illegal books and typewritten materials were quite widely available in Odessa. We read quite a few forbidden novels, including Bulgakov's The Heart of a Dog, Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago, Solzhenitsyn's The First Circle and Cancer Ward; some poetry by Tsvetayeva, Pasternak and Gumilev; and [the émigré classic of Sovietology] Avtorkhanov's Technology of Power. As a rule, such books were borrowed overnight and returned the following day. Still, some forbidden books were more dangerous than others. Neither of us read Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago or the samizdat journal The Chronicle of Current Events because one could be sentenced to three years of prison for possession of either of these. A man we knew, Vyacheslav Igrunov, was sentenced to three to five years of prison for having owned a library of such forbidden books.

Many people, however, were ready to take risks; several have been referred to earlier. Thus, a physician recalled having read Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago, a bulky enough volume, overnight, a no mean feat even if only the first part was meant, as well as Tupelevskaya sharaga, an account of post-Stalin prison research institutes similar to those described in Solzhenitsyn's The First Circle.

The same informant also read Ehrenburg's early picaresque novel, Lazik Roitshvants, never reprinted in the USSR because of its disrespectful

attitude toward Soviet authority. The doctor also listened to much of magnitizdat, the illegal tape recordings of irreverent, often satirical, songs about sad and absurd aspects of Soviet existence. All four of the then celebrated "bards," as the guitar singers were called, were mentioned: Vysotsky, Okudzhava, Galich and Kim.

Apparently, Odessa had several libraries of samizdat. One was described by a teacher at the English Language Boarding School:

> I was a voracious reader of memoirs, general non-fiction, and I also read much samizdat. A man I knew brought samizdat materials from Moscow. He ran a lending library of sorts. The "library" charged a fee, but the money was simply for the man's travel expenses. He was not making any profit on the operation, that much I know for sure. For two rubles a week, "library" patrons were free to read all they wanted. Naturally, only people whom that man knew and trusted completely were accepted as "library" patrons. After all, running this operation was extremely dangerous.
>
> One had to be very careful. A friend of mine was once offered some samizdat publications by a man she did not know well. She thanked him and said that she was not interested in such reading matter. I believe she did the right thing.

> Among the "subversive" books I read there were quite a few Russian and English volumes printed abroad and smuggled into the USSR. These included Leonard Schapiro's Lenin, most of Solzhenitsyn's writings, Doctor Zhivago, books by Roy and Jaurès Medvedev, and memoirs of Marina Tsvetayeva's sister. I would get these books one day, read them overnight, and return them on the following day. Yes, I knew that reading tamizdat, materials printed abroad, was risky business, but I never heard of anybody actually getting caught.

The single most important testimony on dissident activity in Odessa came from a physicist who was for a time the custodian of a samizdat "library."

> I shall not describe in any great detail the samizdat library in Odessa. You can find that information in Ludmila Alekseyeva's book. But here are the most important facts.
>
> The man most closely identified with the samizdat library was Pyotr Butov, a poet. He was subsequently arrested with Irina Ratushinskaya, another poet, who is currently in jail [she has since been released and now lives in the United States---MF]. Ratushinskaya's book of verse was recently published in America. Until his arrest in 1979, Vyachik [Vyacheslav] Igrunov brought samizdat from Moscow and operated a lending library of samizdat materials. While Igrunov was

in jail, that is from 1973 to 1976, I stored in my apartment all of the subversive books. Most of them were in typewritten form. I was not supposed to lend out any of them, but on occasion I would disregard these instructions.

The collection of subversive materials in my apartment included the writings of Andrei Siniavsky, Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky, as well as Doctor Zhivago, some writings of Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung. I also had many issues of The Chronicle of Current Events. As I already said, all of these were typewritten, and Igrunov was accordingly arrested for the possession of illegal printing facilities.

Other typewritten texts in the collection included the complete text of Solzhenitsyn's two-volume Gulag Archipelago, Avtorkhanov's Technology of Power, and several issues of the Parisian Russian journal Kontinent. From 1976 to 1979 there existed in Odessa a black market in books. One could purchase there occult and religious texts, including the Bible, but not political books because that was far too dangerous.

As I said, I kept the samizdat library in my apartment until 1976, lending out some of the books overnight.

> Some of the books were in English. I had, for example, an English-language copy of Solzhenitsyn's The First Circle. I also had an English copy of a book by Henry Miller. Speaking of Miller, pornography was readily available in Odessa because sailors would smuggle it from abroad to make money. The samizdat library included a copy of Nabokov's Gift, the censored émigré edition, without the Chernyshevsky chapter. On the whole, however, we had little émigré literature, nor was much of it to be found on the second-hand Starokonny book market.

The physicist continued:

> There was an underground "colony" of poets and prose writers in Odessa. Probably the most important among them was Pyotr Butov, a physics gradaute of the University of Odessa. He was a very short and frail young man, an ethnic Russian, son of a petty Party functionary. He lived in abject poverty and wrote lyric verse. Butov, and people like him, would have nothing to do with "official" writers, by which they meant authors who were actually published by State publishers. The unofficial writers developed a theory, which was rooted in the theory of Japanese martial arts, which emphasized the ability to influence an opponent without a head-on collision with him. The theory was known as psychology of defenselessness (psikhologiya nezashchishchennosti).

While in Odessa, I wrote poetry myself. At the age of twenty-two, I joined the poets' circle at the Students' House. The leader of the group was Mikhailik. Some of the unofficial poets wrote on Biblical subjects. None of them ever tried to get published. That was a matter of principle. I knew five of these poets personally, and I knew of three others. To these unofficial poets publication in an official Soviet journal constituted collaboration with Soviet philistines. At that time, these people were in their twenties and thirties, which means that they are now in their forties and fifties.

IX. The Party

In the approximately one hundred interviews, there were no attempts to address the problem of the Party's function in shaping the city's cultural activities and institutions. That is not to say that my informants or myself were not conscious of the Party's paramount role in that side of Odessa's life. My informants--roughly a hundred of them--took it for granted that I am aware of that fact, and, for my part, I made no effort to draw them out. The modest amount of data I collected represents, therefore, information volunteered by my informants, without any prompting on my part, and certainly without any effort to have them enlarge on the subject. Much of the material was already cited elsewhere in this study. Nevertheless, the approximately dozen informants who made mostly fleeting references to Party's intervention in matters cultural, and the few whose testimony was more substantial, provide some sense of ubiquitous and near-omnipotent nature of the Party's presence. The Province Committee of the Party (obkom) was unanimously referred to as Odessa's real repository of power that could easily overrule any decision by civilian or even military and police authority, and the Province Secretary Yepishev was, in the 1970s, Odessa's supreme ruler, far more feared and powerful than any of the despotic tsarist Russian governors and heads of cities immortalized in Saltykov-Shchedrin's satires. Some of Yepishev's power trickled down to even lowly Party functionaries. Thus, the administrator of the Odessa opera related the following:

> The Secretary of the Party organization of the opera was far more powerful than the director of the opera. It was the Secretary, in fact, who "recommended" the opera's repertory. The Secretary made no secret of his belief that his superior was the Odessa obkom, and not anyone in the operatic or theatrical hierarchy. The Secretary's immediate superior, to be exact, was the obkom's Third Secretary, the one normally responsible for ideological problems. It is worth noting, that the only people among the artists, musicians and technical personnel of the opera's staff to join the Party were those who aspired to rapid advancement or were planning their careers in an administrative capacity, or dream of the coveted title of a People's Artist.

The Communist Party's upper echelons lived in isolation from the rank-and-file citizenry, much as Odessa's prerevolutionary haute bourgeoisie and aristocracy did, and their privileges were the subject of envy and gossip. Thus, a physician reported, "Not far from Odessa there existed also special nomenklaturnye rest homes for Party and government big shots. The existence of these rest homes was a secret. People were not supposed to know about them, but everybody did anyway"---hardly a surprise, since these rest and recreation institutions employed local maids, cooks and doctors. In Odessa proper, a refrigeration engineer related, "The KGB and the Party organization each had cafes and stores that served only their personnel. In fact, within each of these organizations there were two such cafes and

stores, one for the rank and file, and one for the KGB and Party's elite."

Odessa's obkom occasionally behaved like a feudal lord whose whim was the peasants' command. Thus, a professional magician recalled that from time to time he would simply be told that he is to entertain the obkom without pay. Many others were also sent to provide such, literally, unpaid command performances. Our informant explained:

> The artists did not mind these unpaid performances because they provided an opportunity to make useful contacts. These contacts, they figured, might come in handy in obtaining an apartment, or in getting bailed out from some trouble. For the very same reason artists were downright eager to perform for free for the KGB. Following an unpaid concert, the KGB would treat the actors to a very fancy banquet, and after that all the actors were delivered home in style in KGB cars. The obkom and the KGB were very generous with us actors.

Communist Party's representatives performed all kinds of functions, not all of them glamorous. Thus, an engineer recalled, "Party organizers at the factory would force people to attend political meetings after work, that is on their own time. They simply wouldn't allow anybody to leave."

It was the Party and not the college, a professor of engineering recalled, that decided such, it would seem, housekeeping details as college

admission policies. The Party instructed the rector of the Institute in minute detail on the manner in which entrance examinations were to be administered, and the desired composition of the new entering class. The rector was normally chairman of the committee on admissions. The other members were appointed by the Institute's Party organization, subject to approval of the District Party Committee (raikom) and the Province Committee (obkom). Not unexpectedly, the Party acted as political police, even outside the USSR. A musician on a Soviet cruise ship remembered that upon finding out that a Soviet musician was romantically involved with a passenger from New Zealand, the ship's political officer saw to it that the musician could not even say goodbye to her. Moreover, the Party's representative told the musician that he would never be allowed to sail abroad again---and kept his word.

The Party, and not the political police, acted as guardian of ideological purity charged with shielding the populace from harmful alien influences. Thus, a novelist recalled, "A man I knew had to obtain permission both from the university rector and from the university's Party organization to obtain [from the library] a volume of Sigmund Freud, even though he needed that volume for research in his field of specialty." In fact, "Odessa's obkom had a bookstore of its own which sold rare books that were otherwise very difficult to obtain." That these were not only ordinary non-political books for which the demand exceeded the supply--

a common enough situation in conditions of Soviet book hunger--but also reading matter of politically dubious character is corroborated by testimony of an instrument engineer.

America Illustrated is an official Russian-language journal of the United States Information Agency distributed in the USSR under the terms of an official Soviet-American agreement. Its counterpart in this country is Soviet Life. For reasons that need not be discussed here, demand for America Illustrated is much greater than for the Soviet periodical, and it is often sold in the USSR on the black market; at the same time, Soviet distributors return to the American Embassy thousands of "unsold" copies of the glossy journal. Soviet readers of the American periodical are informed on the inside cover that subscriptions to it are accepted by Soyuzpechat', the Soviet agency that handles subscriptions to Soviet periodicals. It appears, however, that in Odessa the Party authorities want to keep tabs on citizens attracted to the American journal. As the instrument engineer put it, "America Illustrated may be purchased in Odessa only through the obkom, and not through the normal news vendors or organizations that accept subscriptions to Soviet periodicals."

Not surprisingly, the Odessa Province Committee of the Communist Party, in addition to its activities behind the scenes, so to speak, actively and openly intervenes in virtually every kind of cultural activity. A journalist volunteered the information that "All publishing activity in

Odessa was administered by the obkom. Editors of the publishing house Mayak received their orders directly from the obkom. Censorship [in Odessa] was particularly strict. The censors themselves reported to the obkom." According to a television producer, while television in Odessa was formally supervised by the Province Committee for Broadcasting, "the work of the studio was also closely monitored by the obkom's department of propaganda and agitation." The informant's documentary films were reviewed by two inspectors, the director of the television studio and the chief of obkom's propaganda and agitation department. The first evaluated the film's overall quality, while the latter was concerned with its political purity.

A musician and an impresario declared that "In the theater, final decisions were made at dress rehearsals in the presence of Party representatives and spokesmen for cultural organizations." A somewhat comical account of censorship in the cinema was provided by a theater director: "During previews of foreign films to Party dignitaries, censors would quite literally use scissors and tape to cut out erotic sequences. Subsequently, these slides were sold as pornographic postcards, with the Party big shot and the technician splitting the profits."

As befits the city that gave Soviet Russia in the 1920's Ilf and Petrov, creators of Ostap Bender, the picaresque hero of The Twelve Chairs and Little Golden Calf, in the 1960's and 1970's Odessa was still arguably the country's center of humor and satire. In addition to such established

institutions as the operetta (one of only three in all of the USSR), Odessa was also the home of student ensembles of song, dance and home of Parnas (Parnassus) and Klub vesyolykh i nakhodchivykh (The Club of the Merry and the Resourceful), known by its acronym KVN. For a while Odessa also observed an annual Day of Laughter (Den' smekha), which brought to the city aspiring comedians from all ends of the country. Ultimately, all of these disappeared because their laughter, modified again and again to appease the authorities, ceased to be funny. (Those interested in specifics of the process are referred to Ilf and Petrov's How Soviet Robinson Crusoe Was Created. Though more than half a century old, the story accurately portrays the manner in which ideologically dubious literature was made acceptable to the authorities in Odessa of the 1970's. The text of the story appears as an appendix to Maurice Friedberg, A Decade of Euphoria: Western Literature in Post-Stalin Russia, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977). The Day of Laughter, by the way, "left" Odessa and ultimately found asylum in--of all places--Bulgaria.

A small variety theater existed in Odessa in the 1960's and early 1970's when it was disbanded because the authorities distrusted any laughter on the stage---a logical enough posture considereing the fate of such classics of Soviet comedy as Nikolai Erdman's The Mandate and The Suicide, Mikhail Bulgakov's Zoika's Apartment and even Vladimir Mayakovsky's The Bedbug. The Party's close supervision of the variety theater was described by its onetime director:

> The text of all materials presented in a variety show on the stage [i.e., comedy routines, skits, songs] was to be submitted in writing to the obkom. The obkom would then return it to the theater with mandatory cuts indicated in red pencil, and with instructions to show it to the obkom again after revisions. As a rule, tickets to a performance were sold out before the program was approved. Control procedures were as follows. First, the chief of Odessa's Administration of Culture sent his instructors to observe a rehearsal. Then the chief came to see the show for himself. The final and decisive opinion was that of obkom's Third Secretary. It is he who is normally in charge of ideological problems, and it is he who is normally authorized to approve the show.

One informant had an unusual occupation: he was an impresario specializing in mass entertainment spectacles. These included elements of parades, songs, dances, acrobatics, marching bands, and even routines associated in America with college football games---spectators rising to form the outlines of a patriotic figure, letters of a slogan, etc. The impresario remembered: "The program for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Soviet State [in 1972] was considered very important. I therefore had to secure the approval of the Party's city committee [gorkom], district committee [raikom] and province committee [obkom] for the tentative program of the parade, songs, dances, etc. Ultimately, the program was submitted

by the Department of Culture and the producers [postanovochnaya gruppa].

The Party intervened even in architecture and in city planning. That is how a sculptor described it:

> A rigid pecking order was normally observed in building specifications, but the Party felt free to disregard it. Let me give you an example. One day an architect and city planners were discussing plans for an obkom building. The plan was then submitted to Yepishev, Odessa's Party boss. Disregarding all the factual reasons presented to him, he decided on the spur of the moment how the building should look, and what is the proper obkom building for a city the size of Odessa. (Any monument in Odessa, for instance, had to be smaller than an analogous monument in Kiev [the republic's capital]).

The most detailed account of the Party's meddling--indeed, the Party's dictatorship--in Odessa's cultural life was given by a violinist who was also the deputy chairman of the city's "Znanie" Society, the organization that provided lectures and concerts for factories and other enterprises. Here is his story:

> It was the district committee (raikom) of the Party that promulgated the overall plan for lectures and concerts that were given once or twice a month in the approximately thirty sanatoriums and rest homes of Odessa and vicinity. It was raikom that decided

what the general theme of each presentation should be, for example "The Blossoming of Soviet Ukraine" or "Lenin's Legacy." The lecture-concerts were very heavily politicized....

Everybody tried to outdo everybody else in proving how militantly a Communist he was. The result of that was that lectures became increasingly political. This process was known as zasiranie mozgov (stuffing people's minds with shit). The Communist Party boss in charge of musical activity of Znanie Society knew nothing about music. He did not, for instance, know the difference between popular, light classical and folk music, and he could not read music scores. The name of this official was Barabanov. He decreed (probably on instructions from his superiors) that up to sixty percent of all music to be performed under Znanie auspices should be prerevolutionary and Soviet Ukrainian, up to forty percent should be pre-Soviet and Soviet Russian music, and Western music should account for no more than ten percent.

Whenever the Central Committee of the Party in Moscow came out with criticism of a specific Soviet composer, his work was immediately banned from performance. At different times that has happened with Shostakovich, Prokofiev and others. On the other hand, acting on hints from above, even music by émigré composers could be performed. Thus, after many years, Sergei Rachmaninov

> was performed in Odessa, and Alexander Glazunov, and the voice of Fedor Chaliapin could be heard again. On the other hand, some émigrés were never readmitted into the canon of Soviet music, such as Grechaninov, the composer of liturgical music.
>
> My political boss Barabanov got into very serious trouble because he failed to notice that following the Sino-Soviet break, the radio station of Odessa continued to use as its musical theme the song that mentioned Comrade Mao as a great friend of the USSR.

Not all of the comments about such Party officials were derogatory. A film director spoke with respect and a tinge of nostalgia about Lidia Gladkaya, onetime professor of Marxism-Leninism, who was for a time director of the Odessa Film Studio. He remembered her as a pragmatic and reasonable person, always willing to listen to people who differed with her. Unfortunately, she was kicked upstairs to become obkom's secretary of culture.

Most informants, however, reported no direct dealings with Party representatives. The Party, to them, was an invisible and often sinister force that was responsible for innumerable unofficial instructions (often relayed by telephone) that resulted in such unseemly features of life in Odessa in the 1970's as anti-Semitic discrimination in hiring and in admissions to universities. It also symbolized social inequality in the USSR, with the Party nomenklatura often enjoying privileges as glaring as those of the prerevolutionary exploiting social classes.

Conclusions

The 1970's are now disparaged in the USSR as the "years of stagnation." Stagnation there was, to be sure, and worse. Odessans also had to contend with difficulties ranging from scarce housing to shortages of books. The Jews among them faced the additional hurdle of official discrimination in employment and in admission to universities. Above all, there was near-universal corruption. Bribes and doctored records were ubiquitous, though the latter, as often as not, were a reasonable response to unrealistic demands of the authorities. In conditions of mindless authoritarianism, corruption is often a moderating and humanizing influence.

As if to compensate for the shortage of bread, Odessans were offered circuses. At the height of Brezhnev's moderately repressive rule, scores of cultural undertakings and a wide variety of entertainments--all subsidized by the State--were available to Odessans of all ages, particularly to the young. Not surprisingly, the Party exercised rigid controls over all of these, and the thoroughness of the censorship was matched by its pettiness and unpredictability. Also, the authorities missed no opportunity to exploit culture and entertainment for purposes of political indoctrination, though often with questionable results. Odessa was no cultural or intellectual desert. For a city its size, it offered an impressive array of theaters, concerts, museums, libraries and educational institutions. To be sure, ideological strictures and bureaucratic obstacles were serious handicaps.

Yet they could not quite destroy the resilience of the city's musicians and artists, the professional pride of its physicians and engineers, or the curiosity and daring of its young. Writers and teachers, painters and journalists, librarians and actors stubbornly persisted in their efforts to preserve against all odds a degree of professional integrity. That this entailed many painful compromises goes without saying. It is, paradoxically, the experience of Odessa's émigrés abroad that attests to the success of their resistance. In conditions of free societies, an astonishingly high percentage of these men and women were rapidly integrated into their respective professions. Emigré Odessans can now be found on the faculties of America's leading colleges and universities and on the staffs of famous engineering firms and leading hospitals. They are now recognized among America's best chess players and successful lawyers. Several of them were quoted in this study. Because of the Soviet Interview Project's regulations, they must, alas, remain anonymous. Two who were not among our informants may be named. Bella Davidovich is now one of this country's leading musicians, and Yakov Smirnov, once a provincial comedian in Odessa, now delights millions of Americans with his thickly accented jokes.

The advent of glasnost' and perestroika begot two varieties of travel that were totally unknown earlier. Soviet citizens can now visit friends and relatives in the West, and émigrés are permitted to visit their ancestral

homes. I have spoken with a dozen or so travellers from both groups, and the consensus appears to be that things have not changed much in Odessa in the last fifteen years or so. There is much less fear and more outspokenness not only in private conversations, but also in the pages of the city's newspapers, on the radio and television, and in the variety shows seen on the stage. Housing and clothing remain in short supply--temporarily, of course. There is less state-sponsored anti-Semitism, but much more or its "spontaneous" popular variety associated with the extreme Russian nationalism of the Pamiat' society. There is somewhat more friction between Russians and Ukrainians, and an upsurge of religious observance. Much dissatisfaction was engendered by the anti-alcoholic campaign, now quite moderated, and, especially, by the food shortages. Odessans, however, remain optimistic. As one visitor from Odessa put it, "We have survived Brezhnev's stagnation, and we'll survive glasnost'."