Oberlin
Digital Commons at Oberlin

Honors Papers | Student Work

2005

The Mistakes of the Infallible: The Internal Conflict of Eastern European Communist Intellectuals

Monica M. Lee
Oberlin College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors

Part of the Sociology Commons

Repository Citation
Lee, Monica M., "The Mistakes of the Infallible: The Internal Conflict of Eastern European Communist Intellectuals" (2005). *Honors Papers*. 468.
https://digitalcommons.oberlin.edu/honors/468

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Digital Commons at Oberlin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Oberlin. For more information, please contact megan.mitchell@oberlin.edu.

The Mistakes of the Infallible:
The Internal Conflict of Eastern European Communist Intellectuals

Senior Honors Thesis
Department of Sociology
Advisor: Professor Veljko Vujacic

By Monica Lee

2004-2005

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Arthur Koestler 24

- Undetermined Socio-Economic Class 27
- Uncertain Homeland 33
- Lack of Social Relationships 37
- Comfort in Intellectual Circles 40
- The Spiritual and Social Need for Communism 42
- The "Closed System" of Communist Logic 44
- Koestler's Justification of the Party 48
- The "Closed System" Expressed in *Darkness at Noon* 52
- Rubashov's Use of the Logical System 57
- Rubashov's Dialogues with Ivanov 59
- The Power of Reason in the Mind of the Intellectual 64

Chapter 3: Czeslaw Milosz 68

- Confused Class Membership 70
- Uncertain Homeland and Culture 72
- The Instability of his Home Town 78
- Lack of Social Relationships 80
- Comfort in Intellectual Groups 83
- *The Captive Mind* 87
- The Pill of Murti-Bing 89
- *Ketman* 91
- Alpha, the Moralist 97
- Beta, the Disappointed Lover 101
- Gamma, the Slave of History 104
- Delta, the Troubadour 108
- Devotion to Party Logic and Practice of *Ketman* Among Polish Intellectuals 111

Chapter 4: Conclusion 121

Works Cited 128

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this thesis, I will explore the reasons why intellectuals, who are thought to be critical of all governmental regimes, historically espoused revolutionary politics and communism. I will also elucidate how the "closed system" of logic in communist theory compels "free-floating" intellectuals to adhere to a dogmatic belief in the historical mission of the proletariat and justify revolutionary violence and the violent means used by the Communist Party to transform society.

In order to answer these questions, I will examine the literature and autobiographies of two Central European authors—Arthur Koestler and Csezlaw Milosz. First I will show that both authors were in fact "free-floating" intellectuals, who were not firmly based in a socio-economic class or a single profession. Neither author came from or drew the influence of a single homeland. Each writer spent extensive time outside of his home country and was exposed to a variety of cultures. Finally, neither man had solid interpersonal relationships that inhibited his travels and adventures or anchored him firmly in a location or social circle. This unique social position provided them with no definite class or national interests. Thus, Koestler and Milosz depended on logic and the consensus of intellectual circles to develop their political positions. Theories of communism, which were rational and logical, became their political guide.

Using the same works of both authors, I will investigate the significance of the "closed system" of logic within communist theory that allowed intellectuals to justify revolutionary violence and the violent deeds of the Party. When witnessing and even practicing the violence required of revolution and a transition to communism, both men referred back to their belief in the historical mission of the proletariat. So long as the Party represented the interests of the

proletariat, it could be "formally" wrong but not "dialectically" wrong. Intellectuals, therefore, had a moral and intellectual obligation to support and obey the party, whether or not it made mistakes. For these intellectuals, the only true logical error or political mistake was to disobey the Party.

The intellectual role has been performed by thinkers, writers, and artists in all but the most primitive human societies, but the "intelligentsia" as a status group did not appear until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the late nineteenth century, the intelligentsia became an undeniably potent social and political force when theories of revolution, liberation, and communism offered ideological guidelines for social change. Sociologists have examined intellectuals from a variety of perspectives, yet these "enlightened" individuals have proven difficult to describe as a cohesive social group.

Most sociologists agree that the intellectual's task in society is to produce, evaluate, and distribute culture and advocate moral standards. They should view the world objectively, expose the lies and hidden motives of those in power and criticize the malevolent actions of the government. Intellectuals have often functioned as the "conscience" of society and have opposed established authority.

Analytically, however, the debate about intellectuals is much more fractious. Sociologists have offered a multitude of explanations of what type of social group intellectuals comprise and thus, *why* intellectuals take a critical stance toward authority. For instance, Lewis S. Feuer proposes in his article "What is an Intellectual?" that the intelligentsia is a section of the educated or professional class.[1] George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi argue that the Eastern

[1]Lewis S. Feuer, "What is an Intellectual?" in *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals*, ed. Aleksander Gella (London: SAGE, 1976), 49.

European intelligentsia formed its own "government-bureaucratic ruling class."[2] However, since intellectuals come from a variety of class backgrounds, do not practice a common religion, and do not participate in the process of production, these positions do not seem tenable.

Since the intelligentsia is difficult to define in terms of class, religion, profession, or other conventional criteria of social stratification, an understanding of the sociological condition of the intelligentsia requires a thorough examination. Lewis Coser's account of the historical development of intellectual society, Karl Mannheim's analysis of free-floating or "socially unattached" intellectuals, and Alvin Gouldner's examination of the discourse of intellectual circles, enables us to define intellectuals sociologically as a status group.

Intellectuals exemplify Max Weber's definition of a status group because they are united by high regard for their education and common ideas rather than a shared economic situation. According to Weber, "In contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation' we wish to designate as 'status situation' every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*. This honor may be connected with any quality shared by a plurality."[3] Both propertied and propertyless people can belong to the same status group. Although ascribed social position and occupation are often considered criteria for membership in status groups, they are not necessarily criteria for all status groups. What is important is that the individuals in the group share a specific style of life. Intellectuals demonstrate their cohesion as a status group specifically in the way they exhibit solidarity: they form a community around self-ascribed honor on the basis of their common educational and ideological heritage, and exclude outsiders in order to form a cohesive group:

---

[2] George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power,* trans. Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen (New York and London,: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 10.
[3] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 186-187.

Lewis Coser states that intellectuals occupy a unique place in society because of their detachment from the process of production and a world view dictated by their social situation. He argues that intellect, as distinguished from the intelligence required in the arts and sciences presumes a capacity to move beyond the pragmatic tasks of the moment and commit to comprehensive values transcending professional or occupational involvement. Whereas intelligent individuals seek to "grasp, manipulate, re-order, and adjust, the intellectual examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes, criticizes, and imagines."[4] Unlike men in the professions and elsewhere who concern themselves with finding concrete answers to concrete problems, intellectuals feel compelled to look beyond immediate tasks and penetrate the more general realm of meanings and values. They are more concerned with understanding the type of society that should exist than functioning within the boundaries and according to the standards set by any current regime.

According to Coser, the social position of the intellectual can be compared in some ways to that of the medieval court jester. The intellectual's position outside of the social hierarchy, like the court jester's, removes him of certain societal privileges, but grants him the freedom to criticize the established order. The role of the jester was to defy the limitations of the current social structure. He could express the most inconvenient truths without fear of retaliation; he could question what everybody accepted as fact as long as it was hidden under the guise of amusement. But his amusements upset the men of power who were committed to the serious business of government and reacted ambivalently to criticism.

The intellectual is akin to the jester not only because he claims the freedom of unfettered criticism, but also because he exhibits "playfulness." While others focus on the tasks at hand, the intellectual enjoys the play of the mind, sheer intellectual activity, and relishes it for his own

[4] Coser, Lewis A. 1965. *Men of Ideas*. New York: The Free Press., viii

sake. This play is disinterested and free. Since it is not part of "ordinary" life, it stands outside the routine satisfaction of immediate desires and appetites. Intellectual play is not meant to be a means to an end, but rather an end in itself.

According to Coser, intellectuals exhibit a pronounced concern for the core values of society and their goal is to provide society with meaningful moral standards. Because of this concern for values and their mission to guide society, Coser claims that modern intellectuals are the progeny of traditional religious leaders. As Coser writes, "modern intellectuals are descendants of the priestly upholders of sacred tradition, but they are also and at the same time descendants of the biblical prophets, of those inspired madmen who preached in the wilderness far removed from the institutionalized pieties of court and synagogue, castigating the men of power for the wickedness of their ways."[5] Intellectuals are never satisfied with things the way they are; they question the truth of the moment by speaking of a higher and broader truth; they counter appeals to factuality by calling upon what "ought" to be, no matter how impractical. Many intellectuals consider themselves the bearers of abstract ideas such as reason, justice, and truth and guardians of moral standards that are often ignored by the market and by government.

To the intellectual the clash of ideas has overriding importance, and the intellectuals' lack of concern for pragmatic tasks of the moment is a reflection of their deep commitment to a comprehensive set of values. Intellectuals take ideas more seriously than most other men, and this commitment to ideas allows them to articulate interests and desires that may be only dimly sensed by non-intellectuals, who are therefore excluded from the group. They transform conflicts of interests into conflicts of ideas, and "increase society's self-knowledge by making manifest its latent sources of discomfort and discontent."[6] Intellectuals are the gatekeepers of

---

[5] Lewis A. Coser, *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View* (New York: Free Press, 1965), viii.
[6] Coser, x.

ideas and ideologies, but unlike medieval churchmen or modern political propagandists, they take on a critical attitude.

According to Coser, intellectuals can play their role in society only if they encounter favorable institutional settings. Although there is no reason to believe that earlier centuries produced fewer individuals capable of playing intellectual roles, it is only during the last three centuries that intellectuals have achieved wider social importance.

Institutional settings make the role of the intellectual socially recognized and socially feasible if they fulfill two conditions: existing institutions must provide intellectuals with an audience to which they can address themselves and will bestow recognition upon them, and intellectuals must have a space in which they can develop and exchange their ideas and establish norms to guide their conduct. Coser writes that in order for the societal role of "intellectual" to exist, "first intellectuals need an audience, a circle of people to whom they can address themselves and who can bestow recognition...Second, intellectuals require regular contact with fellow intellectuals, for only through such communication can they evolve common standards of method and excellence, common norms to guide their conduct."[7] In short, institutional settings must act as both a mediator of contact among individual intellectuals and between the intellectuals and their public, and also as "protector," erecting boundaries between different groups of intellectuals and between intellectuals and the world of laymen. According to Coser, institutions must, "allow separation and differentiation and provide a shield from observation."[8] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the growth of particular institutions was instrumental in the formation of the intellectual role in society. The two most significant institutions were the French Rococo Salon and the Coffeehouses of eighteenth-century London.

---

[7] Coser, 3.
[8] Coser, 7.

The Rococo Salon developed in eighteenth-century France as a meeting ground for writers and dilettantes. In this intimate setting, writers and thinkers received criticism, support, and encouragement; the salon was as Coser puts it, "a major nursery of the 'philosophical spirit.'"[9] Women played a central role in the salons. In the seventeenth century, the French salon was dominated by ladies of the high aristocracy, and commoners were rarely allowed. These salons were less formal than official court society, but still exemplified the aristocratic way of life. During the next century, the salon changed dramatically, becoming a setting for intellectual activity. Those who attended the salons abandoned many class restrictions and espoused active thinking. According to Coser, "[the salon] had become more informal, and it had opened its doors widely to all who had *esprit*."[10] Slowly, the aristocratic ladies were replaced by those of the rising middle class. With the rising standard of living, decreased household burdens, and increased amenities, these middle-class women began to cultivate literary interests.

The French Rococo Salon was instrumental in creating the social role of the intellectual. In it, the writers of the time were no longer only accepted, but revered by members of society. Coser writes, "the salon was one of the great levelers in the age of bourgeois ascendance. The men of letters were received on an equal plane with the men of the world. No longer supernumeraries, whose presence was reluctantly tolerated because they contributed amusement, they were allowed at the very center of the stage."[11] The salons provided not only a place of literary appreciation, but also a place for literary creation. The salons aimed at exerting a creative influence on the literary world and assisting the birth of new ideas. As Coser states, "it

[9] Coser, 11.
[10] Coser, 12.
[11] Coser, 13.

was an informal academy for stimulating ideas by stimulating their authors."[12] However, despite its virtues, some writers felt restricted by salon life.

Although the Rococo Salon evolved significantly in the eighteenth century and helped the lowly born men of letters to communicate on equal footing with the noble-born, it was not entirely free of convention. Specifically, the salon setting constrained free-thinking. The leading ladies often restricted freedom of thought, preferring decorous behavior and the cultivation of graceful writing over seriousness and imagination. In addition, real differences of opinion and conflicts of ideas would have disturbed the courteous nature of salon life. As Coser explains, "the salons helped democratize the life of the mind, but also restricted it."[13] In this sense, the salons stood in contrast to the coffeehouses of the same period, which were almost completely free of tradition, courtesy, and class restraints.

The coffeehouse was the first truly free meeting place for intellectuals. There, social standing rested solely on wit and intelligence without any considerations of rank, manners, degrees, order, or morals. Any man could enter the coffeehouse, sit down, and join the conversation. According to Coser, "On entering, a man paid a penny at the bar, agreed to observe certain minimal standards of conduct, and was then free to participate as an equal in debate, discussion, and social intercourse. He was free to take any seat and to engage those around him in conversation."[14] In contrast to salon ladies, coffeehouse owners made a conscious effort to democratize functions of their establishments. As Coser states, large pieces of paper were hung on the walls stating, "first, gentry, tradesmen, all are welcome hither, and may without affront sit down together: Preeminence of place none here should mind, but take the next

[12] Coser, 14.
[13] Coser, 17.
[14] Coser, 19-20.

fit seat that he can find: nor need any, if finer persons come, rise up for to assign to them his room."[15]

The coffeehouses not only leveled rank, but led to new forms of social integration. Solidarity based on common lifestyle or common descent was replaced by one based on common opinion. A common opinion cannot be developed unless people have an occasion to discuss it with one another, unless they have been drawn from isolation into a world in which individual opinions can be sharpened and tested in discussion. The coffeehouse atmosphere helped facilitate the formation of a common opinion from a variety of individual opinions and gave them stability. According to Coser,

> Heteronomous standards of tradition were thus replaced by autonomously evolved standards of mutuality. Until the days of the coffeehouse, standards had been formed by a noble or religious elite. Outside elite society, men might give much thought to particular problems or issues, but, as there was little chance for ordinary men to gather, individual opinion could not cohere into group opinion. In the coffeehouses, individual opinion could be tested, discarded, changed, disseminated, so that, at the end of the filtering process, something like cohesive group opinion would emerge.[16]

In the coffeehouses, men developed an interest in the thoughts of others, enjoying intercourse with those of different social standings. They respected one another's opinions and learned how to listen. The coffeehouse was a place of diversity and tolerance, where eccentric or radical opinions were given attention and respect.

However, as the century progressed, tendencies of exclusion undermined the originally inclusive nature of the coffeehouses. Within many coffeehouses, frequent clients began to develop informal circles in which like-minded individuals united. True to the nature of intellectual society, the coffeehouse became a place of in-group solidarity and out-group exclusion. As Coser writes, "the coffeehouses started to draw men together; as they developed,

[15] Coser, 20.
[16] Coser, 20-21.

they again drew men apart. But the new divisions were on lines of achievement and interest rather than of rank."[17] Intellectuals no longer included professionals and laymen; they preferred only the company of their peers. Slowly, the writer and his audience grew apart. This was not only a social separation, but also a physical one. While the public would congregate in the main rooms of a tavern or coffeehouse, the intellectuals would gather in back rooms and close the door. Communication between the writer or intellectual and his public was no longer mediated by personal contact in the coffeehouse, but through magazines and reviews.

As intellectuals distanced themselves from the rest of the public, they began to occupy a unique social position characterized specifically by dissociation from the established social structure. This status allowed the intellectuals to view society from the outside and adopt a more objective and analytical world-view. According to Karl Mannheim, the intellectuals who met in the salons and coffeehouses, formed informal circles, and developed new radical ideas, were the socially unattached or *Freischwebende* intellectuals. In contrast to classes that develop world views which justify and elaborate the interests of a particular class, the intelligentsia is a group that embodies a synthesis of diverse political and social views in society. This total synthesis is not an arithmetic average of all the diverse aspirations and opinions of the existing groups in society. It is a separate, objective judgment about the existing society. As Mannheim writes, "a valid synthesis must be based on a political position which will constitute a progressive development in the sense that it will retain and utilize much of the accumulated cultural acquisitions and social energies of the previous epoch."[18] This judgment requires a unique understanding of the total situation of society at the present time and the ability to see from every

[17] Coser, 24.
[18] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia,* trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shills (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 137.

class perspective. Only then can one determine which political systems and decisions would best suit the whole society.

Thus, the intelligentsia is not just another social class. A reference to class may correctly describe certain determinants of this unattached social body, but can never capture its sociologically distinct qualities. Mannheim states that although it is historically true that a large portion of the intelligentsia were recruited from the rentier strata, whose income was derived from rents on property, many were also officials and professionals. A closer examination of the intelligentsia shows them to be less clearly identified with a socio-economic class than those who participate more directly in the economic process.

Although the social position of intellectuals is too heterogeneous for the intelligentsia to be regarded as a single class, they are sociologically bound by education, which unites them in a striking way. This common educational endowment replaces traditional forms of social stratification. As Mannheim states, "Participation in a common educational heritage progressively tends to suppress differences in birth, status, profession, and wealth, and to unite the individual educated people on the basis of the education they have received."[19]

This new basis of association does not completely dissolve the class ties of the individual, but creates a medium for conflict, within which individual intellectuals, each representing different class views, can discuss the conflicting tendencies in society at large. According to Mannheim, education subjects the intellectual to the influence of opposing points of view, or worldviews in social reality.[20] On the other hand, the individual who is not oriented to the whole of society through education and participates directly in the social process of production tends to simply absorb the *Weltanschauung* of his particular social-economic group and act exclusively

[19] Mannheim, 138.
[20] Mannheim, 138.

under the influence of the conditions imposed by his immediate social situation. Intellectual activity is not carried on exclusively by a rigidly defined social-economic class, but rather by a social stratum which is largely unattached to any particular social class and is recruited from an increasingly inclusive area of social life.

Although the intelligentsia cannot be fully understood in terms of class, it does have a specific social position. It is situated between social classes, but does not form a middle class, nor is it suspended in a vacuum into which social interests cannot penetrate. On the contrary, "it subsumes in itself all those interests with which social life is permeated."[21] The increase in the number and variety of classes and strata from which intellectuals originate gives rise to a greater heterogeneity and contrast in the views and tendencies which are brought into intellectual discussion. Thus, the intelligentsia can pursue an objective, "total" perspective of society.

This "unattachedness," however, contributed to the social instability of the intellectual. Politically extreme groups viewed the intelligentsia as "characterless," because it did not definitively declare its political sympathies. In order to give their group a "character," free-floating intellectuals either attached themselves to the interests of a certain class or presented themselves as advocates for the intellectual interests of the totality. As Mannheim writes,

> There are two courses of action which the unattached intellectuals have actually taken as ways out of this middle-of-the-road position: first, what amounts to a largely voluntary affiliation with one or the other of the various antagonistic classes; second, scrutiny of their own social moorings and the quest for the fulfillment of the mission as the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole.[22]

In regard to the first option, intellectuals have attached themselves to all types of social classes. They have thought on the behalf of conservatives, the proletariat, and the liberal bourgeoisie.

[21] Mannheim, 140.
[22] Mannheim, 140.

Intellectuals could attach themselves to classes to which they originally did not belong, precisely because they were not immediately bound by class affiliations.

When an intellectual joined the political struggles of a particular class, this did not mean they were completely assimilated into that class, or that they trusted the members of that class. They still stood outside and above the class structure. Becoming an intellectual meant changing one's social personality and status. Even a proletarian who became an intellectual and advocated for the proletariat was not regarded as a proletarian intellectual, but rather an intellectual who was once a proletarian.

The intellectual's rejection of social stratification by class membership replaced and compensated for his lack of a real, fundamental class affiliation with a feeling of intellectual and moral superiority. According to Mannheim, the fanaticism of the radicalized intellectual "bespeaks a psychic compensation for the lack of a more fundamental integration into a class and the necessity of overcoming their own distrust as well as that of others."[23] The first option of class affiliation demonstrates a tendency towards "dynamic synthesis." Intellectuals usually joined classes that were in need of intellectual development, and their intellectual involvement fused with practical politics. According to Mannheim, "their function is to penetrate into the ranks of the conflicting parties in order to compel them to accept their own demands. This activity, viewed historically, has amply shown wherein the sociological peculiarity and the mission of this unattached social stratum lie."[24]

The second option for intellectuals is to become aware of their social position and of their mission implicit in it. For these intellectuals, political affiliation or opposition is decided on the basis of their conscious orientation in society and in accordance with their social position as

[23] Mannheim, 141.
[24] Mannheim, 142.

intellectuals. This social awareness is not class consciousness, but rather awareness of a general social position and the problems and opportunities it involves. The realization of this unique position does not imply the emergence of a politics suited exclusively to intellectuals. Instead, it is the discovery of the position from which a total perspective would be possible. As Mannheim writes, "[intellectuals] might play the part of watchmen in what otherwise would be a pitch-black night."[25] Because of their unique societal position, intellectuals viewed society from a total perspective, which remained inaccessible to those whose class affiliations dictated their worldviews.

Unlike a group with a fixed class position, and therefore, a determined political viewpoint, intellectuals have a wider area of choice and a corresponding need for total orientation and synthesis. This wide area of choice is a specific condition of freedom, the freedom for intellectuals to choose their own political affiliation. This need for total synthesis comes about because only those who have this freedom become interested in understanding the whole of society. According to Mannheim, "only he who really has the choice has an interest in seeing the whole of the social and political structure. Only in that period of time and that stage of investigation which is dedicated to deliberation is the sociological and logical locus of the development of a synthetic perspective to be sought."[26] The inclination to achieve a total synthesis exists whether or not intellectuals form their own political party, and such a tendency constitutes the intellectuals' mission.

Because intellectual activity includes every perspective in society, intellectuals think that they are not only outside of, but above the social hierarchy. Unlike those who participate directly in the process of production, and are bound to a particular class and outlook determined

[25] Mannheim, 143.
[26] Mannheim, 143.

by their immediate social situation, the intellectuals' outlook is formed through incorporating all contradictory points of view. This social situation enables intellectuals to develop the sensibility that is required for becoming attuned to conflicting forces in society. Every point of view must be examined constantly in terms of its relevance for the present situation. Furthermore, the cultural attachments of this group allowed for the achievement of an intimate understanding of the total situation and enabled the constant reappearance of a dynamic synthesis of political ideas.

The intellectual community demonstrated its condition as a status group particularly in the way it exhibited solidarity. In order for groupings of intellectuals to be recognized as unified collectivities in the eyes of outsiders, each needed a common ideology. Therefore, as intellectuals formed cohesive groups, the field of accepted ideas within them narrowed. Mannheim writes:

> The more it makes itself the exponent of a thoroughly organized collectivity (e.g. the Church), the more its thinking tends towards "scholasticism." It must give a dogmatically binding force to modes of thought which formerly were valid only for a sect and thereby sanction the ontology and epistemology implicit in this mode of thought. The necessity of having to present a unified front to outsiders compels this transition.[27]

As members of the intelligentsia narrowed the field of accepted ideas in their groups, the intellectuals altered their language in order to better suit their "scholastic" topics of discussion.

Alvin Gouldner describes the language of intellectual circles and the culture it stimulated as the culture of critical discourse (CCD). For Gouldner, the shared ideology of intellectuals and intelligentsia is an ideology about discourse. This manner of speaking, which is accessible only to the educated, establishes solidarity among intellectuals and excludes outsiders. According to Gouldner,

> As a distinct speech community, the highly educated in general, and the intellectuals in particular, manifest distinctive speech patterns: their speech is more analytical and abstract, less concrete and specific; they employ more references to books and use more

[27] Mannheim, 9-10.

> book-derived words and ideas. The speech of intellectuals also insists on hewing to the properties of discourse rather than accommodating responsively to the reactions of those whom the speech is made. There is, therefore, less gathering up of group support during the discourse and less sensitivity to the ways the speech can offend and rupture the solidarity of the group.[28]

This culture of discourse allows any topic to become a topic of conversation or critical debate.

The culture of critical discourse rejects traditional systems of social stratification because it judges speech by its intellectual merits, uninfluenced by the speaker's social position. The grammar of critical discourse claims the right to sit in judgment over the actions and claims of any social class and all power elites. All claims of truth, however different in social origin, are to be judged in the same way. Truth is democratized and all claims are equally scrutinized by CCD. The claims of even the most powerful social group are judged no differently than those of the lowliest and most illiterate. Traditional authority is stripped of its power to define social reality and to authorize its own legitimacy. In fact, as Gouldner states, "the 'credit' normally given to the claims of the rich and powerful now becomes a form of deviant, illicit behavior that needs to be hidden if not withdrawn."[29]

The culture of critical discourse is characterized by speech that is relatively situation-free, or more independent than other forms of discourse. It is centered on a specific speech act: justification. This type of speech requires that the validity of claims be justified without reference to the speaker's societal position or authority. Good speech can make its own principles explicit and does not vary with context. CCD forbids reliance upon the speaker's person, authority, or status in society to justify his claims. As a result, CCD de-authorizes all speech grounded in traditional authority, while it authorizes itself as the standard for all "serious" speech.

---

[28]Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Continuum, 1979), 30.
[29] Gouldner, 59.

Because the culture of critical discourse is relatively situation-free, intellectuals who use it regard it as isolated from and superior to ordinary languages and conventional cultures associated with "laymen." The culture of critical discourse requires that all speakers must be treated as sociologically equal in evaluating their speech. Considerations of race, class, sex, creed, wealth, or power in society may not be taken into account in judging a speaker's statements and a special effort is made to guard against their intrusion on critical judgment. The CCD implies that all traditional social differentiations are of little importance in the face of reason and critical judgment and this facilitates the critical examination of established claims. CCD distances intellectuals from ordinary, everyday life and prevents elite views from becoming unchallenged, conventional wisdom.

In the intellectual community, CCD replaces the traditional forms of social stratification with an intellectual standard. It treats the relationship between those who speak it and others *about whom* they speak, as a relationship between judges and the judged.[30] The conventional social hierarchy is only a façade and the deeper, more important distinction is between those who speak and truly understand and those who do not. To participate in the culture of critical discourse is to be emancipated at once from low status in the traditional hierarchy. Insofar as that is true, CCD subverts that hierarchy as well.

Intellectuals see their culture as differing from the "laity" because their thought is not constrained by the immediacies of everyday life. They are more concerned with the more remote, with ultimate values and are disposed to going beyond first-hand experience with the concrete and to live in a "wider universe." They utilize an elaborated linguistic variant in order to discover various ways to understand and conceptualize society rather than common language, which can at best only augment one's ability to operate within the given society. Intellectuals came to

[30] Gouldner, 59.

define themselves as responsible for and "representative" of society as a *whole* rather than giving allegiance to particular class interests.

According to Coser, Mannheim, and Gouldner, intellectuals are educated individuals that have removed themselves from the conventional social hierarchy. Rather than being a class bound by a common economic situation, they are a status group bound by self-ascribed honor on the basis of their educational heritage and commitment to ideas. This group exhibits solidarity by unifying around their ideas and excluding outsiders, while seeking to provide society with a moral standard.

Georg Simmel's portrait of "the stranger" further elucidates the characteristics of Mannheim's free-floating intellectual. Although Simmel never explicitly uses the term "intellectual," his estranged outsider is similarly detached from society and therefore possesses the "total perspective" about which Mannheim writes. According to sociologist Dick Pels, "[Simmel's] stranger has often been defined as a 'displaced person': as someone estranged, uprooted, marginal to his culture of origin and its parochial customs, values and beliefs."[31] Simmel proposes that there is a long-standing connection between estrangement or distance from local cultures and beliefs and claims about a 'better vision' for society, cognitive innovation, and access to larger truths. This connection is forged by the more "objective" world-view to which these estranged individuals have access.

Due to his liberation from the social structure, the stranger, or "*potential* wanderer," is able to view the world objectively. Objectivity, as Simmel uses the word, may also be defined as freedom. The objective individual is bound by no commitments which could prejudice his perception, understanding, and evaluation of a particular situation. In contrast to those rooted in

[31] Dick Pels, "Privileged Nomads: On the Strangeness of Intellectuals and the Intellectuality of Strangers," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16 (1999): 67.

a society, the stranger is capable of observing even realities that are close to him from a bird's eye perspective. He is "freer, practically and theoretically; he surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them are more general and objective ideals; he is not tied down in his action by habit, piety and precedent."[32]

However, not all theorists agree with Mannheim's theory of the *Freischwebende Intelligenz*. For instance, Antonio Gramsci argues that intellectuals have not transcended the social structure and do not have the ability to evaluate society from a "total" perspective. Intellectuals do not constitute a class, nor do they float freely outside the social structure. Instead, Gramsci claims that intellectuals are subject to a network of social influences, and each intellectual's specific place within the network determines his ideas. Gramsci bases his analysis of intellectuals on his distinct definition of intellectual activity.

Gramsci argues that, despite common belief, there is no intrinsic distinction between "intellectual" and "non-intellectual" activity. Rather, what is commonly considered "intellectual" activity is only work performed under specific conditions and within specific social relations. There is no such thing as purely physical or purely mental work. Every individual performs actions that require reason and thought, but only work that occupies a certain position within the general complex of social relations is normally considered "intellectual" in society. As Gramsci writes, "All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals."[33] Any distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, then, is only a reference to the immediate social function of the professional

---

[32] Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe: Free Press, 1950), 405.
[33] Antonio Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* trans. and ed. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 9.

category of "intellectual;" in short, whether the professional activity is weighted towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort.

It is impossible, then, for Gramsci to see intellectuals as a distinct group in society. Intellectual activity exists in everyone to a certain degree. Those who are named "intellectuals" by virtue of their "intellectual function" in society are still subject to a complex network of social forces that determine their *Weltanschauungen* like all members of society. They do not constitute their own distinct class or social strata with its own specific interests, and they have not transcended the social structure and the social influences that shape an individual's ideas. However, Gramsci's definition of intellectuals is flawed because intellectuals cannot be defined simply by his notion of "intellectual work." Not every individual who does intellectual work is an intellectual, especially if he performs this work for a job within the process of production. Even a physicist, who works almost solely with his mind, is not necessarily an intellectual. "Intellectual" connotes a unique detachment from the societal structure that Gramsci does not acknowledge.

Despite his wider definition of "intellectual," Gramsci provides a sub-category of intellectual that is almost analogous to Mannheim's *Freischwebende Intelligenz*. As opposed to the "organic" intellectuals that provide each class in society with homogeneity and awareness of its social function, Gramsci also notes the existence of categories of "traditional" intellectuals. "Traditional" intellectuals, described as administrators, scholars, scientists, theorists, and non-ecclesiastic philosophers, "represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms."[34] According to Gramsci, the development of these various types of "traditional" intellectuals was favored and enabled by the

[34] Gramsci, 7.

growing strength of the central monarch, but the intellectuals themselves never acknowledged their fundamental connection to the dominant social class.

Like the free-floating intelligentsia, many "traditional" intellectuals view themselves as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. Because of this belief in autonomy, intellectuals are able to develop and espouse idealist philosophies. As Gramsci writes, "the whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as "independent," autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc."[35] Although Gramsci's work provides a category of intellectuals similar to Mannheim's *Freischwebende Intelligenz*, Gramsci insists that membership in the category of "traditional" intellectual is subjectively determined. For Gramsci, there are no objective characteristics of intellectuals that allow them to be defined as a cohesive social group. However, I argue that the characteristics that unite intellectuals and designate them as a free-floating intelligentsia are objectively evident. Therefore, in the following analysis I will refer back to Mannheim's definition of the free-floating intelligentsia as an empirically observable and distinct status group.

The next two chapters apply Mannheim's concept of the free-floating intelligentsia to Arthur Koestler and Czeslaw Milosz. As in Mannheim's definition of the *Freischwebende Intelligenz*, neither Koestler nor Milosz was firmly anchored in the social structure; neither had a real homeland, a discernible class status, or firm group affiliation that restricted their *Weltanschauungen*. While they participated in intellectual circles, they too became attracted to communism because Marxist theory provided them with a system of answers to the plaguing social dilemmas of the early twentieth century, and communist cells provided them with a sense

[35] Gramsci, 9.

of social belonging. Like many other free-floating intellectuals, Koestler and Milosz adopted a dogmatic belief in the historical mission of the proletariat and found themselves trapped within the closed logical system. They both write about their own experiences and those of their comrades extensively.

Both Koestler and Milosz are representative of Eastern European intellectuals of their generation. Since this generation's formative years coincided with the two world wars and the economically burdened interwar period, major political events collectively impacted their lives and perspectives on the world. These experiences, coupled with unstable personal histories are essentially what created the individuals who formed intellectual groups that Koestler and Milosz represent. Koestler grew up mainly in Hungary, experienced the First World War as a young child, witnessed the economic hardships of Europe during the 1930's and became a communist during the rise of fascism. In addition, Koestler was Jewish like many Hungarian Communist intellectuals, which predisposed him to the pursuit of a total perspective. In his book *Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism*[36] Lee Congdon explains that Koestler's experience and resulting world-view mirrors that of other Hungarian intellectuals. All the subjects of his study were not firmly anchored in the existing social structure and became trapped in the logical system of communism. Milosz grew up mainly in Lithuania and Poland, experienced the First World War as a young child, lived through the constant shifts of his nation's boundaries, and witnessed the extermination of his friends and the total destruction of his country during the Second World War. In her book *"Them" Stalin's Polish Puppets*[37], Teresa Toranska attests that Polish communist intellectuals under the People's government faced

[36] Lee Congdon, *Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).
[37] Teresa Toranska, *"Them" Stalin's Polish Puppets* trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

the same dilemmas as Milosz and the characters in his book *The Captive Mind*. All Toranska's interviewees joined the communist movement after Poland was destroyed by the Second World War and continued to outwardly conform to the Party-line despite their objections to certain aspects of it.

Chapter 2: Arthur Koestler

Arthur Koestler was a Hungarian born journalist, author, and critic. He is best known for his 1940 Novel *Darkness at Noon*, in which he reflects on his and other intellectuals' involvement and ideological break with the Communist Party. *Darkness at Noon* brought about great controversy because of the tense ideological division between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet intellectuals in Europe during the 1930's and 1940's. Koestler was a major figure in the group critical of Soviet totalitarianism, which set him in opposition to writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Bertolt Brecht. When *Darkness at Noon* was released, it sold over 400,000 copies, which displeased the Communist Party in France. In response, Party cells torched copies of the novel.[38] Even Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote his renowned analysis of communist theory, *Humanism and Terror*[39], as a response to Koestler's *Darkness at Noon.*

Koestler was the only child of Henrik Koestler, a businessman and inventor, and Adele Koestler. Although his family was Jewish, Koestler renounced his Jewish heritage later in his life. At seventeen, Koestler entered the University of Vienna, where he studied engineering and became attracted to the Zionist movement. Involvement in the Zionist movement inspired him to move to Palestine and drop out of university one semester before the completion of his studies. In Palestine, he started work as a farm laborer, tried several other occupations, and finally became a Jerusalem-based correspondent for a German newspaper.

Koestler's journalism career began to flourish and he was transferred to Paris and then Berlin, where he became the science editor of *Vossische Zeitung* and later the foreign editor of *B.Z. am Mittag*, one of the papers with the highest circulation in Germany. During the early

[38] Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 403.
[39] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, trans. John O'neill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

1930's Arthur Koestler became a devoted member of the German Communist Party. He wrote propaganda for the Party until the late 1930's when he left the Party during the Moscow trials. During the Spanish Civil War, Koestler went to Spain as a news correspondent. After the military had fled Malaga, Koestler was captured by Franco's forces. He was sentenced to death for being a communist and placed in a prison in Seville. Before could be executed, the British Foreign Office managed to arrange for Koestler's release. He chronicled his experience in Spain in his 1937 book *Dialogue with Death.*[40] He soon began work as a correspondent for the London-based *News Chronicle* and became a British citizen. In Britain, he wrote the bulk of his novels, including *The Yogi and the Commissar*[41], *The God that Failed*[42], *The Arrow in the Blue*[43], and *The Invisible Writing*[44]. Later in his life Koestler relocated again to the United States and then to India and Japan, where he searched the East for a "spiritual aid" for the West. Towards the end of his life, he moved back to Britain, where he died in 1983 after a truly unusual, erratic life.

By definition, free-floating intellectuals lead unstable lives. They have no solid class background which dictates their *Weltanschauungen*, they travel in many countries, often live as exiles, and speak many languages, and seldom maintain close interpersonal relationships that stabilize their lives and influence their world-views. Although the intellectuals' free-floating status allowed them to freely choose their political positions, the decision was never based on reason and logic alone. While the proletariat espoused communism because of material needs, the free-floating intellectual advocated the communist cause because of a spiritual void that the Party filled. As Borkenau writes in *The Communist International*, "whether [communist

[40] Arthur Koestler, *Dialogue with Death*, trans. Trevor and Phyllis Blewitt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942).
[41] Arthur Koestler, *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays (1941-45)*, (New York: Macmillan, 1946).
[42] Arthur Koestler, *The God that Failed* (New York: Harper Bros., 1949).
[43] Arthur Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue* (New York: Macmillan, 1952).
[44] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing.*

intellectuals] spoke of the necessity of political liberty, or the plight of the peasant or the socialist future society, it was always their own plight which really moved them. And their plight was not primarily due to material need: it was spiritual."[45] Free-floating intellectuals espoused the mission of the Communist Party because it provided a sense of stability, purpose, and community in their otherwise "unstable" lives. In his biography of Koestler, David Cesarani writes that with *Arrow in the Blue,* Koestler's autobiography, Koestler provides "incisive empirical explanations of what led thousands of young people into the ranks of the Communists."[46] Thus, the insight gained through a thorough examination of Koestler's life is applicable to a significant portion of the Central and Eastern European youth that espoused communism.

Arthur Koestler insisted that his life was "the typical case-history if a Central-European member of the intelligentsia in the totalitarian age."[47] Like all *Freischwebende Intelligenz,* he experienced a turbulent series of journeys, various jobs, and abandoned personal relationships. Upon self-examination, Koestler finds that a "'bridge-burning pattern,' with its morbid undertones and unexpected rewards, will gradually unfold, in successive episodes of throwing up jobs, breaking off personal relations and tearing up roots in a number of countries where [he] tried to settle."[48] Every time he became remotely settled in a location or in a certain lifestyle, he fled from the situation and pursued new projects. This pattern was the result of Koestler's "own personal problem, which is to discover some center within himself which is not shifting, to which he can attach his values and his faith."[49] He attached himself to two ideologies during his

---

[45] F. Borkenau, *The Communist International* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), 28.
[46] David Cesarani, *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 75.
[47] Mark Levene, *Arthur Koestler* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1984), 1.
[48] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue,* 129.
[49] Stephen Spender, "In Search of Penitence," in *Arthur Koestler* ed. Murray A. Sperber (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 102.

lifetime: Zionism and Communism, which temporarily provided him with a clear purpose and mission as well as a feeling of social belonging, but prevented true financial, cultural, and interpersonal stability.

Even during his childhood, Koestler's family was not of a particular socio-economic class. His father experienced frequent financial ups and downs, making the Koestlers at times fairly wealthy, and at other times, completely destitute. When Arthur Koestler became financially independent, he experienced the same highs and lows. At some times, he was stably employed and led a bourgeois lifestyle, but in other instances he barely escaped starvation.

Koestler also had no single homeland and drew on the influence of a variety of cultures. He moved and settled in several different countries and learned so many languages that he sometimes found himself speaking, writing, and dreaming in three different languages. Finally, because of his social awkwardness and tendency to constantly move about, Koestler never established close interpersonal relationships. He had acquaintances and contacts, but never any close family members or friends who traveled with him or could ground him in a particular location or social group.

Undetermined Socio-economic Class

Arthur Koestler never belonged to a definitive social class. First, the Koestler family oscillated between social classes. As Koestler got older, he dropped out of university because he refused to commit himself to a career that trapped him in the social structure. After he left the university, he sometimes had a stable job and was able to support himself comfortably and support his parents as well. However, there were also periods when he found himself sleeping on a table in a store, nearly starved to death, jobless or working inconsistently.

Koestler's father, Henrik Koestler, grew up in a lower-middle class or working class family, but through hard work was able to earn a good living as he got older. When Henrik Koestler was very young, he began to work as an errand boy for a draper. He slowly worked his way up and became a successful businessman. As Koestler writes, "[My father's] youth was a variant of the American success-story of the late nineteenth century, transplanted to the shores of the Danube. He rose within ten years from errand boy to salesman, to general manager, to junior partner."[50] However, Henrik's success soon waned because of his "curiously distorted mental pattern."[51] He frequently invented useless products hoping to become wealthy. First, Henrik invented an envelope-opening machine, which he was never able to market. Next, he opened up a factory to manufacture his radioactive soap. This soap was made from radium, fatty clay, and a foaming agent called Saponin and succeeded because of the wartime shortage of soap-making materials in Europe. However this was Henrik Koestler's only successful invention. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914/1915 ruined Koestler's father's business in Budapest, and the family moved to Vienna.

Koestler's father regained his financial footing after the move to Vienna and experienced a few years of prestige and wealth. The Koestlers became a stylish, privileged family while they lived in Vienna. Koestler writes that, "after we had moved to Vienna [my father] became president of some newly founded import company. He had an office car, which in the Vienna of 1919 was something of an extravaganza, and we lived in a suite at the Grand Hotel, which was the peak of Viennese *chic*."[52] This success, however, proved too good to last. Henrik Koestler's mental distortion led him to abandon his well-paying job in favor of personal independence and the family embarked on a gradual economic descent. As Koestler writes, "after a year or two my

[50] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 13.
[51] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 14.
[52] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 123.

father left the company to regain his independence, and the suite in the Grand Hotel was exchanged, first, for a furnished flat in the feudal Belvedere quarter, and later for rooms in a boarding-house in the shabbily respectable Alsergrund district."[53] From then on, each subsequent living space was more dilapidated.

Random business deals kept the family afloat for a few more years and allowed Koestler's father to continue paying for his son's schooling, but by the time Arthur Koestler came of age, his father was completely destitute. It was now his responsibility to support his parents. Koestler writes, "when I was eighteen or nineteen, my father went bankrupt. He never recovered; a short time after I left home I became my parents' sole financial support."[54] The Koestler family's financial hopes all rested on Arthur. He was in school to become an engineer, and after completing his studies, Arthur's parents hoped that he could find a secure, well-paying job and support the whole family. As Koestler writes, "my costly education now represented the only investment on which hopes for future returns could be based."[55]

However, Arthur Koestler refused to commit himself to a fixed position in the social order. He disagreed with the social and economic structure of his time and thought that a secure class position diminished one's freedom. Being trapped in a career and lifestyle eliminates one's ability to think freely and retain an unrestricted *Weltanschauung*. As Koestler explains,

> This metaphorical track I visualized very precisely as an endless stretch of steel rails on rotting sleepers. You were born onto a certain track, as a train is put on its run according to the timetable; and once on the track, you no longer had free will. Your life was determined, as Orochov maintained, by outside forces: the rail of steel, stations, shunting points. If you accepted that condition, running on rails became a habit which you could no longer break. The point was to jump off the track before the habit was formed, before you became encased in a rattling prison. To change the metaphor: reason and routine kept people in a straitjacket which made their living flesh rot beneath it.[56]

---

[53] Koestler *The Arrow in the Blue*, 123.
[54] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 122.
[55] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 125.
[56] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 128.

Koestler felt the need swerve off the path his life was supposed to take before he became so absorbed in his social position that he could no longer break free. His schooling, which trapped him in an engineering career, had to be forsaken.

One semester before completing his studies, Arthur Koestler dropped out of school. He burned his school records, and abandoned the path to become an engineer and respectable member of the bourgeoisie. As Koestler writes,

> I got home, and in a state of manic exaltation, lit a match and slowly burnt my Matriculation Book. This document, in Austria called *Index*, was the student's sacred passport; in it were entered the examinations he had passed, the courses he had attended and other relevant details concerning his studies. It was extremely difficult if not impossible to replace...The burning of my *Index* was a literal burning of my bridges, and the end of my prospective career as a respectable citizen and member of the engineering profession.[57]

Not knowing what to do next, Koestler spent the next weeks independently studying political and social issues in the university library. He was aware that his decision to discontinue his studies was irresponsible and he understood the consequences of his choice for himself and his family, but his unwillingness to commit himself to a mundane career remained steadfast. Instead of learning to be an engineer, Koestler became increasingly devoted to the Zionist movement and soon decided that he should dedicate his life to this cause.

Koestler experienced the greatest poverty of his life when he moved to Palestine to support the Zionist movement. He initially worked as a farm laborer but soon went on to become an architect and then a lemonade vendor in a bazaar. He held none of these jobs for more than a few weeks. Because of his lack of money, he slept in a paint shop and later in a Dentist's surgery. Although Koestler budgeted his meager earnings in order to have some food

[57] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 127.

every day, work was often unsteady and he found himself starving and craving cigarettes. Describing his economic nadir, Koestler writes,

> One day in July, my capital fell to absolute zero. I had spent my last piaster...I ate my last olive and stretched out on the table. There were plenty of cigarette stubs left around, and I still had some cigarette paper with which to put them to use. Lying flat on my back in the dark room, and chain-smoking on an empty stomach, a great exhilaration came over me. I knew I only had to think matters over calmly and Babo would come to my aid, showing me how to pull myself out of the bog...At night, I slept of dozed on the table, perfecting the technique of using newspapers for a mattress and pillow. This restful existence continues for four days, without a bite.[58]

Despite the stretches of economic prosperity and opportunity during his formative years, Koestler accepted this new economic situation. For months, he was completely destitute, but remained unconvinced that he would starve to death. He believed that he was not condemned to this class status and that his fortunes would soon change.

Koestler's fortunes improved dramatically when a friend of his informed him that an article he had written appeared on the front page of the *Neue Freie Presse*, the most prestigious newspaper in central Europe. Months before, in a moment of "reckless daring," Arthur Koestler had sent the *Neue Freie Presse* an article about his arrival in Palestine. Because he did not believe that it would ever be printed, he had completely forgotten about the article. But when it was printed, this article started Koestler's career as a journalist, which gradually pulled him out of poverty. As Koestler writes, "Young Reich's announcement meant more than a momentary triumph; it was indeed the starting point of my career as a journalist and writer; and at that moment on the sunbaked beach, I had a strangely intense awareness of this."[59] Although success in journalism would eventually come, Koestler experienced several setbacks during his ascent up the social hierarchy.

---

[58] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 157.
[59] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 159.

After the *Neue Freie Presse* rejected his second article, Koestler found himself destitute again and searching for employment. Because he was a free-lance journalist, Koestler could only get paid for writing when his articles were published; therefore, he could not support himself solely on writing. During this period, he held a variety of low-paying jobs. First, he worked at a tourist agency. Koestler writes, "For a while I had a job with a tourist agency; I was supposed to handle their English and French correspondence."[60] However, since he did not know French and English well enough to write letters that were idiomatic and salesman-like, the agency fired him quickly. He then became a land surveyor's assistant, which he actually enjoyed. Unfortunately, the surveyor could only employ him once a week, which meant he had to survive on a shilling per day. This period of destitution continued until Koestler was offered his first proper job as a journalist with the German-language weekly newspaper *Nil und Palestina Zeitung*.

When Koestler's friend offered him the job with the new newspaper, Koestler readied himself to become a member of the *petite bourgeoisie*. "I received a call from von Weisl in Jerusalem with a surprising offer," Koestler writes, "Would I go with him to Cairo and edit there a German-language weekly newspaper? Of course I would. At last, so it seemed, I was getting somewhere."[61] However, the new newspaper experienced difficulties with policy and financing and closed down within a few weeks. Fortunately a new opportunity for Koestler soon presented itself.

Next, Koestler experienced life as a *petite bourgeois* office worker in Berlin. The international Revisionist movement, a Zionist organization, offered Koestler the job of Executive Secretary. The organization was expanding and the headquarters had been transferred to Berlin.

---

[60] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 163.
[61] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 171.

He took the job, but even though he appreciated the political experience, he felt quite bored in his new environment. He did not earn much money nor did he feel any sense of excitement because "to be a penniless tramp in the Orient is adventure; to be an office worker in Berlin at a hundred marks a month, is not."[62] After a few months, Koestler was offered a new opportunity to start a stable professional career as a journalist.

Koestler became a fairly prosperous journalist when the Ullstein newspapers hired him as a new correspondent in Jerusalem. During the late 1920's the House of Ullstein was the largest newspaper trust in Europe. In Berlin alone, the company published the *Vossische Zeitung,* the *Berliner Morgenpost*, and the *B.Z. am Mittag*.[63] Upon securing the job, the Ullsteins promised Koestler a salary of two-hundred marks per month and bonuses when his articles were printed. For the next few years, Koestler was a stable, productive member of the *petite bourgeoisie*. As Koestler writes, "At this point ends the narrative of my apprenticeship; of confused wanderings, starvation and false starts. The next four years are more or less the banal success story of a European newspaperman in the Middle East, Paris, and Berlin; of dogged work, straining ambition and vain satisfaction."[64] This lifestyle lasted until Koestler reconstructed his life for the second time and began to work for the Communist Party.

Uncertain Homeland

Like Mannheim's proto-typical *Freischwebende Intelligenz,* Arthur Koestler had no definite homeland. Although he knew that his family originally came from Russia, he was raised and lived in a number of countries. Born into an uprooted family with mysterious origins, Koestler never completely understood the culture into which he was born. His family

[62] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 175.
[63] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 181.
[64] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 184.

experienced many changes of location and remained unattached to its Jewish faith. When Koestler started his independent life he constantly experienced changes of location and therefore, changes in culture and changes of language. As a result of his constant residential adjustments and lack of a stable cultural base, Koestler's *Weltanschauung* was not dictated by any particular national or religious culture, but rather represented an amalgam of the various influences that he had absorbed over time.

Arthur Koestler was born into an uprooted family and the circumstances around its frequent migration remained a mystery to him. He was aware that his family left Russia when his grandfather, Leopold X, decided to move to Hungary, but Koestler did not know why his grandfather moved to Hungary nor did he know why his grandfather changed his name to Koestler. All that he knew for certain was "that he arrived in the good town of Miskolcz, Hungary, some time in the eighteen-sixties, and that somehow he assumed there the name of Koestler, Köstler, Kestler or Keszler—all of which figure on various documents."[65] Like his grandfather, Koestler's father also resided in a variety of foreign countries. Henrik Koestler spent much of his time in England and Germany before oscillating between residence in Budapest and Vienna for the remainder of his life. As a child, Arthur was subjected to his parents' changes of residence.

Koestler's family also struggled with religious affiliation. Although the Koestlers were a Jewish family, Arthur was raised without any significant religious influence. Later in his life, after his involvement with the Zionist movement, Koestler pondered the significance of his family's rejection of religious affiliation. He never had the appropriate foundation to understand his roots. Koestler states, "I was brought up in an assimilated environment without roots in Judaic tradition. My mind had been fed on Hungarian, Russian, French, and English literature;

[65] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 10.

the only Jewish literature, as far as I knew, was the Old Testament, and that wasn't literature in the accepted sense."[66]

Though he was not a particularly devout or even practicing Jew, many theorists posit that even a nominal Jewish heritage contributes to an individual's detachment from the social order. This theory stems from an assessment of Jews as a historically migrant ethnic group rather than one of Judaism as a religion. For instance, Simmel posits that the European Jew is a classical example of an individual who is prone to the marginal position of "the stranger" because of his historical displacement. The European Jew is no "owner of soil" in the physical but also the figurative sense; his life is not fixed in a "point in space" or in an "ideal point of the social environment."[67] Thus, the Jew has developed the objective perspective of the stranger because "he is considered a stranger in the eyes of the other."[68] Aurel Kolnai, a fellow Jewish Hungarian intellectual and contemporary of Koestler agrees with Simmel. From his own experience, Kolnai concluded that "it was easier...for a Jew—no matter how assimilated, liberal and unequivocally Hungarian in his national consciousness—than for a Gentile to take a detached view of the foreign situation and to choose his side after the mode, of a disinterested arbiter."[69]

Arthur Koestler lived his early adulthood as a "vagabond." He experienced his first major independent change of environment when he went to boarding school in Vienna. Koestler's "fifteenth and sixteenth years...were spent in a small *pensionnat* for boys at Baden, near Vienna."[70] He made his next major move after he dropped out of university. Koestler went to Palestine in order to support the Zionist movement. Although it took him a few weeks to decide to move, he understood later in his life that he needed to start fresh in a new place in order

[66] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 110.
[67] Simmel, 403.
[68] Simmel, 403.
[69] Congdon, 54.
[70] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 78.

to completely leave his previous life behind. As Koestler writes, "the decision to go to Palestine and till the earth seems like a logical consequence of the burning of my bridges, yet it came to me only a few weeks later."[71] Next, he moved to Cairo to work for the German-language Zionist paper. Until he reinvented his life again and joined the Communist Party, he lived in Berlin and worked for the Revisionist movement. It is important to note that between Koestler's stays in Vienna and Berlin, he never remained in a single location for more than a few months.

Because of the places he had lived as a child and his own tendency to move as an adult, Koestler learned to speak Hungarian, German, English, and French, which he often confused later in his life. His use of different languages in different situations made him increasingly culturally disoriented. Koestler describes his use of use of German at home, but Hungarian in other settings. He writes, "until the age of fourteen, I spoke German at home and Hungarian at school. School and ethnic environment were the stronger influence: I thought in Hungarian, and my juvenile efforts at writing were also in Hungarian."[72] After he entered boarding school, however, German became his primary language. Koestler states, "when I was fourteen we moved to Vienna, and I was sent to an Austrian school; but for a while I still thought and wrote in Hungarian...German gradually gained the upper hand."[73] While he lived in England, English became his primary language, but unconsciously he started to use his three other languages at the same time. Koestler explains, "in 1940 I had to change languages a second time, from German to English, this time abruptly and without transition...When awake, I now think in English; when asleep, in Hungarian or German or French. As I am a chronic sleep-talker, my wife is often awakened by my polylingual gibberish."[74] Not only did Koestler's constant moves and exposure

[71] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 132.
[72] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 122.
[73] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 122.
[74] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 122.

to several different cultures provide him with a unique personal identity, they also had far-reaching effects on his social life.

Lack of Social Relationships

Throughout his life, Koestler was unable to establish close interpersonal relationships. From the time he was a young child, the peripatetic nature of Koestler's family prevented his stable socialization. Later, his social development was hindered by his embarrassment about being short. Because of these factors, he developed into a socially timid teenager and adult who could not establish close interpersonal relationships. Koestler had few friends and found a sense of belonging only when he was in the presence of his intellectual circles. Unfortunately, many of these relationships ended quickly and abruptly because of political persecution. The destruction of these relationships eventually drove him into political action. Koestler's inability to establish solid personal relationships was a significant component of his status as a free-floating intellectual because he had no relationships that grounded him in a particular location or interest group. Koestler could therefore form his mature political opinions primarily through logical reasoning, which he exercised in the company of other intellectuals.

Like his indefinable class status and cultural orientation, Koestler's social difficulty began with his family. As a young child, Koestler was rarely allowed to form friendships with other children because his mother disdained the children of Budapest. Koestler's mother felt most comfortable in the more cosmopolitan and developed city of Vienna, and when the family lived in Budapest, she felt too superior to Budapest residents to make friends. As a result, she also restricted Arthur's interaction with Budapest children. Arthur Koestler experienced much solitude during his childhood which set the standard for his solitary development through

adulthood. As Koestler writes, "the long periods of solitude [during childhood], and the hectic excitement which came over me when I was allowed to see other children, transmitted their tensions to my later friendships and social contacts."[75] His social awkwardness was worsened by his "undesirable" physical qualities.

Koestler understood that much of his social difficulty during his teenage years was due to the fact that he was very short. When recalling his embarrassment over his height, Koestler recalls an especially painful instance. When he was in his early teens, he overheard a conversation between the parents of two of his classmates. They were standing outside the bathing cabin wherein, unknown to them, Arthur was changing his clothes. As Koestler explains, "one said: 'isn't it terrible how quickly my boy is growing?' and the other answered: '*That's* no reason to worry. The terrible thing would be if he were as short as that Koestler boy."[76] This instance, combined with his own neurotic disposition, turned Koestler into a very anti-social individual.

Koestler explains that these early influences made him an "intermittently" timid individual, and as a result, he was never able to comfortably socialize. He states that there are three types of timid people. In the first group he places those whose timidity fades into a type of courteous restraint, which is valued in Anglo-Saxon society. In the second are those whose timidity transforms into a rigid, impenetrable veneer which scares everyone away. In the third, to which he belonged, are those who, after maturing, have the capacity to be social in some instances, but cannot function in many social environments. As Koestler clarifies, "there is a third type [of timid], the one to which I belong, which may be called the 'intermittent timid.' In the case of the intermittent timid, phases of tongue-tiedness and cramp alternate with others of

[75] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 73.
[76] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 74.

extreme garrulousness and uninhibited behaviour. Which of the two will come to the fore on a given occasion depends on circumstances beyond the subject's control."[77] This "intermittent" timidity resulted in erratic relationships throughout Koestler's life.

Because of his physical stature and shy behavior, Koestler was completely ostracized while he was in boarding school. He explains that there were only four boys in his class, and they divided themselves in two social groups. In the first group, there were three boys, and in the second was Arthur alone. As Koestler describes, "the seniors were divided into two camps: one was known as the "Triumvirate," consisting of the other three; the other was I. This situation lasted until the end of my stay; everybody who, in his youth, has gone through the purgatory of boarding-school can appreciate the nature of this experience."[78] This type of social ostracism was not limited to Koestler's boarding school experience.

When considering the contacts and friends he had made throughout his youth, Koestler recognized that his social relationships where either nonexistent or incredibly intense. He established the close ones rarely though, and spent most of his life in solitude. As Koestler writes, "my contacts with others were either nonexistent or headlong plunges into intimacy. But the latter were rare; and most of the time I felt that I was living in a portable prison of my own devising, surrounded by cold stares of bewilderment and rejection."[79] Unfortunately for Koestler, time and maturity did not eliminate his social struggles.

When Koestler became an adult his life-long "intermittent" timidity transformed into an entirely contrived personality. Because of this façade, he could never become close to anyone even though he strongly desired a sense of social belonging. As Koestler writes, he remained an anti-social individual, but "the façade became smoother and more urbane. I became what is

[77] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 76.
[78] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 78.
[79] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 77.

called a good mixer; from a hedgehog I gradually changed into a chameleon. I no longer displayed an artificial pose or mask, but a complete false personality, produced by outside conditioning and the inner need to find some *modus vivendi* with society."[80] However, Arthur was able to find one type of group where he felt comfortable.

Comfort in Intellectual Circles

Arthur found during his university years that he felt comfort in intellectual groups. He was a member of a *Burschenschaft*, or student fraternity, made up of what he describes as "budding Jewish intellectuals." In this fraternity, he lost his sense of inferiority and was able to honestly express himself. He compares these intellectual gatherings to a type of group therapy. Although he remained awkward in other social situations, he learned to build a particular type of intellectual relationship. As Koestler states, "I still suffered from shyness and cramp in the presence of people who, for one reason or another, provoked my sense of inferiority, but among my comrades I felt completely at ease; and as I spent most of my time with them, their influence was rather similar in its effects to occupational group therapy in psychiatric treatment."[81]

After Koestler left the university, he found again that only intellectuals understood him and supported his decision to move to Palestine. He describes the instance when he met "the first highbrow intellectuals he had come across"[82] in the dining room of a hotel. The first was Dr. Theodore Wiesengrund-Adorno, a music critic and pupil of Schoenberg. Thomas Mann was said to have drawn a caricature of him in one of his characters in *Dr. Faustus*. The second was the actress Anny Mewes, who Koestler identified as a friend and correspondent of Rainer Maria Rilke. The third was Regina Ullman, a Swiss poet who had won high critical acclaim, although

[80] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 81.
[81] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 101.
[82] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 131.

she remained practically unknown to the public at large. They invited Koestler over to their table and Regina Ullman asked whether it was true that he had discontinued his studies in his parents' absence and without their consent. Koestler noted that she spoke in "such a matter-of fact voice, free from pedagogical overtones and moral judgment that [his] shyness vanished."[83] In response, Koestler launched into his theories about the importance of unreason and the necessity of breaking out of the cage of reason and routine. Ullman then asked Koestler, "you seem so convinced of your ideas that you can no longer understand people who do not share them—is that so?"[84] He concurred eagerly and Ullman agreed that he might be right. Unfortunately for Koestler, intellectual relations, like intellectuals themselves are transient.

Koestler notes that vast majority of the contacts he had made during his young adulthood had disappeared. These individuals, who were primarily other free-floating intellectuals like himself, were either exiled or killed. As Koestler writes, "at a conservative estimate, three out of every four people whom I knew before I was thirty, were subsequently killed in Spain, or hounded to death at Dachau, or gassed at Belsen, or deported to Russia, or liquidated in Russia; some jumped from windows in Vienna or Budapest, others were wrecked by the misery and aimlessness of permanent exile"[85]

Koestler reacted to these shocks with "chronic indignation" and detachment. Such indignation made Koestler feel "the infusion of adrenalin into the bloodstream, the craving of the muscles, flooded with bloodsugar, for violent action."[86] Inspired to change the political reality and bring about justice, Koestler needed to channel his energies into a political ideology.

---

[83] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 132.
[84] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 132.
[85] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 107.
[86] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 104-105.

The Spiritual and Social need for Communism

In his article "Arthur Koestler," George Orwell asserted that "it is true in many cases, and it may be true in all cases, that revolutionary activity is the result of personal maladjustment."[87] Koestler exemplifies Orwell's observation. His ingrained detachment from society provoked his desire to destroy the existing social order. He was attracted to Communism because it provided him with a blueprint for the establishment of a more "just" society and also satisfied his desire for a sense of social belonging. During the 1930's he saw Europe as an economically and socially decaying society. After World War I, much of the continent faced a serious economic downturn. Koestler writes that "the inflation years which had followed the First World War were the beginning of Europe's decline; the depression years which came a decade later accelerated the process; the Second World War completed it."[88] Although as a journalist Koestler was personally less affected by the economic situation than most, the widespread poverty and desperation that he witnessed every day inspired him to search for a political ideology that offered hope for the future. He felt society's pains as his own and therefore the need to improve it. Not only did Communism seem to be a continuation of his previous political cause, Zionism, because of its opposition to Nazism,[89] but in Communist theory, Koestler found hope for *all* of future society. And in his Communist cell Koestler finally found a social group to which he felt he belonged.

During the 1940's, Koestler identified three types of people in society. First, there were the happy ones, who had a secure place in the social hierarchy and saw no reason to change it. Next, there are the unhappy ones, with a low or insecure place in the social hierarchy whose

---

[87] Orwell, George, "Arthur Koestler" in *Arthur Koestler* ed. Murray A. Sperber (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1077), 22.
[88] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 270.
[89] Cesarani, 63.

dissatisfaction with society did not result in action. Finally, in the third group to which Koestler belonged were those who are personally pained by problems of society. Soothing their own pain meant soothing the pains of society. As Koestler writes,

> The happy are rarely curious; those who are smugly tucked into the social hierarchy have no reason to destroy the conventional system of values, nor to build new ones. The contempt of the hale and healthy for the neurotic is justified so long as the latter's obsessions remain sterile and find no constructive outlet. But there is another type of neurotic who labours under the curse of experiencing a collective predicament in terms of personal pain, and has the simultaneous gift of transforming individual pain into social or artistic achievement.[90]

It is common for intellectuals to feel society's pains as their own. For instance, Hungarian poet and communist intellectual Béla Balázs felt the same empathy as Koestler. Congdon writes that in Balázs' poems is "the voice of a hopeful earnestness that believes in a new, bigger, brighter future, the voice of someone who not only understands the sufferings of his brother but takes them upon himself."[91] Since intellectuals believe they are the only individuals who have a total view of society from an objective standpoint, they are aware of and feel responsible for correcting society's flaws. Their response to what they see is empathetic because they often do not feel those pains themselves since they are not at the bottom of the social structure, but rather, outside of it.

Koestler's empathy and his "chronic indignation" for society made him a rebel who wanted to destroy the existing social order, and drove him to political action. Koestler states that the Party was an obvious answer to the spiritual void in his life. He had wanted to dismantle the existing regime in order to create a more just society and he had the empathy required to view social problems as personal problems. He not only wanted to act for the sake of others, but had to act for his own sake; he was responsible. As Koestler writes,

---

[90] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 275.
[91] Congdon, 91.

> It did not require much persuasion to make me into a rebel. Since my childhood I seem to have lived in a state of Chronic Indignation. When this state reached its peak, I joined the Communist Party...This type [of indignant rebel] seems to depend on a specific quality: the gift of projective imagination, or empathy, which compels one to regard an injustice inflicted on others as an indignity to oneself; and vice versa, to perceive an injustice to oneself as part and symbol of a general evil in society[92]

The Communist cause not only quenched his thirst for revolution and political progress, but provided him with the feeling of security and inclusion that he had lacked for most of his life.

Koestler found a close community within Communist cells. His comrades eventually became his family. They lived together, worked together, and thought together. Koestler compares his experience in the Communist cell with his experience in the fraternity during his university years in Vienna, when he felt like he belonged to a cohesive social group for the first time. Again, he found a sense of camaraderie only within a group of intellectuals like himself. As Koestler writes, "I threw myself into the activities of the cell with the same ardour and complete self-abandonment that I had experienced at seventeen on joining my dueling fraternity in Vienna. I lived in the cell, with the cell, for the cell. I was no longer alone; I had found the warm comradeship that I had been thirsting for; my desire to belong was satisfied."[93] Unfortunately, what Koestler initially viewed as a group that provided him with personal liberation became an "iron cage."

The "Closed System" of Communist logic

Once the thirst for political justice, revolution and social belonging compelled an intellectual to join the Communist Party, the Party's "closed system" of logical thought trapped him. Particularly in the face of massive violence, intellectuals who espoused Communism often despised the actions of the Party, but they could never claim that it was wrong. Through an

[92] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 271.
[93] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 25.

appeal to the dialectic of history, the Party's deeds could always be justified, and in the mind of an intellectual logical justification reigns supreme. Within the system of justification, the Party can make "formal" mistakes, but as long as it represents the interest of the proletariat, it can never be "dialectically" wrong. The proletarian revolution was the natural progression of history. Every intellectual, therefore, had a duty to stand by the Party and all its deeds. Political dissent was viewed as a logical error and a political mistake.

The theory of the "closed system" was best exemplified by the Hungarian Philosopher and devoted communist, György Lukács, and as the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski explains:

> In the nature of things, Bolshevism was the truth of the present age—a belief that Lukács never renounced. Even if it turned out in after days that the party or its leader had made mistakes, it was still true that the party was 'dialectically' right and that it was a moral and intellectual duty to stand by it, mistakes or no. Thus, when Lukács followed the new leaders in noticing Stalin's 'mistakes,' he still maintained that he had been right to defend those mistakes at the time. This was indeed the typical, classical standpoint of the Communist ideologists, backed up by Lukács's philosophy: the party might be 'formally' wrong but not 'dialectically' so. To oppose its politics and ideology was in all circumstances a political mistake and therefore a cognitive error, since the part embodied the historical consciousness in which the movement of history and awareness of that movement were merged into one.[94]

The Party's logical justification was a simplified form of dialectical reasoning that was so effective because it was personalized and internalized in the mind of each intellectual. These Party members used it most consistently to justify the use of propaganda and the glorification of Stalin, since these two realities so directly conflicted with their political beliefs.

The logical justification professed by Communist intellectuals was a vulgar form of dialectical reasoning. Unfortunately, few intellectuals in the Party realized at the time that their mentality was a caricature of the revolutionary spirit. These Party members were so adamant

---

[94] Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth and Dissolution, Volume III: The Breakdown* trans. P. S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 283.

about "historical necessity" that they found no reason to regulate their use of Communist logic, no matter how their exploits manifested themselves in reality. Although original Marxist doctrine which had a caustic tone, verbally abused the "class enemy" and denounced rivals and dissenters of the revolution as traitors and agents of the bourgeoisie allowed corruption from the very beginning, the Party reduced it to absurdity. Under the Communist regime, Marxist theory "worked ex post facto, fashioning reasons for previously made decisions; it neither changed the world nor enlightened it. Forced to justify the most divergent moves, it necessarily became fuzzy; and the dialectic—an incisive tool for analyzing social phenomena in their full dynamics of evolution and internal conflict—was equated with ambiguity and lack of precision."[95] The use of the dialectic had been so simplified that it was easy to prove scientifically that anyone who disagreed with the Party-line was an agent of the Fascist enemy.

Koestler explains the 3-step logical progression used to prove that any individual who deviated from the Party-line was an agent of Fascism: (*a*) by disagreeing with the line he endangered the unity of the Party; (*b*) by endangering the unity of the Party he improved the chances of a Fascist victory; hence (*c*) *objectively* he acted as an agent of Fascism even if *subjectively* he had his kidneys smashed in a Fascist concentration camp.[96] Even a donation to charity, whether public or private could be considered counter-revolutionary within this "closed system" of logic because it deceived the masses regarding the violent nature of the capitalist system and therefore contributed to its preservation.

The "closed system" was so potent because it is uniquely personalized and internalized in the mind of each intellectual. Every Communist intellectual had his own personal philosophy that he used not to explain and understand, but to theoretically justify the facts that confronted

[95] Leszek Kolakowski *Toward a Marxist Humanism: Essays on the Left Today* trans. Jane Zielonko Peel (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 163.
[96] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 27.

him. The Party-line tended to erratically fluctuate; therefore, the intellectual's system of justification became malleable in order to compensate for it. No matter what the specifics of each individual's justification process were, it always involved the resolution of two separate trains of thought. The intellectual will see the absurdity of the Party's exploits and then immediately contradict his initial reaction with the logic professed by the Party. As Koestler describes,

> Every single educated Communist, from the members of the Russian Politbureau down to the French literary côteries, has his own private and secret philosophy whose purpose is not to explain the facts, but to explain them away. It does not matter by what name one calls this mental process—double-think, controlled schizophrenia, myth addiction, or semantic perversion; what matters is the psychological pattern.[97]

Koestler writes that many intellectuals used this vulgarized logic to justify the use of propaganda and the commendation of Stalin in the Party.

One of the primary issues of contention in the Party was the use of propaganda. Particularly outside of Russia, the Party used propaganda to convince non-Communist countries that Communism had improved the lives of Russian citizens. Many intellectuals did not approve of the use of propaganda, and knew that the Russian standard of living was still considerably worse than that of the capitalist countries, but justified the use of propaganda by saying that it was the only way to convince the common people that Communism created an ideal society. In addition, they argued that the Russian standard of living would be worse if the Czar was still in power. As Koestler writes, "[non-Russian Communists] knew that official propaganda was a pack of lies, but justified this by referring to the 'backward masses.' They knew that the standard of living in the capitalist world was much higher than in Russia, but justified this by saying that the Russians had been even worse off under the Czar."[98] Not only did the

[97] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 31.
[98] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 53.

intellectuals need to justify the propaganda, but they needed to logically justify the Party leadership in their minds.

Many intellectuals needed to logically justify the commendation of Stalin during the 1930's and 1940's. They knew that under Stalin, the Party had perpetuated the simplification and adulteration of Marxist doctrine and that Stalinist policies murdered peasants on a daily basis. Many intellectuals justified Stalin's mass slaughter with an appeal to necessity and Progress. His decrees were inhumane, but perhaps required for the transition to communism. For instance, Hungarian intellectual Karl Polanyi reasoned that despite the widespread terror it caused, "the 'Second' or 'Stalin' revolution that began with the collectivization of agriculture helped...to herald the great transformation."[99] Intellectuals were also disgusted that Party members and the peasants deified Stalin, but because of the same "closed system" that forced them to justify the Party-line, intellectuals were also required to find a way to justify the apotheosis of Stalin. They argued that the peasants needed an idol to worship in order to trust and obey the Party. As Koestler states, "[Communist intellectuals] were nauseated by the adulation of Stalin, but justified it by explaining that the *mushik* needed a new idol to replace the ikon on the wall."[100] Koestler's own experience with the justification process mirrors that of the intellectuals that he broadly describes.

Koestler's Justification of the Party

Arthur Koestler was an example of an intellectual who was caught in this logical trap. He describes his experience in the "closed system" through his autobiographical works and his literature. The iron cage of logic kept Koestler working for the Party for eight years of his life.

---

[99] Congdon, 85.
[100] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 53.

He was not able to break free from it until he realized that a "just" politics could not be determined by logic alone. In his autobiographies, Koestler describes three instances in which he used the "closed system" to justify the exploits of the Party. The first time came when the Communist Party made a pact with the Nazis, the second when he initially saw the poverty and suffering in Soviet Russia, and the third, when a book he had written was banned by the Party. These instances made him realize that he, like all Communist intellectuals, was "trapped" in systemic logic and the community that developed around this method of reasoning.

Koestler used the Party's logical justification for the first time when the Party made a pact with the Nazi's to remove Prussia's socialist government in March of 1931. The German Communists worked in concert with the Nazis to initiate a referendum aimed at removing the Socialist government of Prussia from office. Koestler thought this move was nonsensical and self-destructive, but he accepted it because the "closed system" of Communist logic was able to justify it. As Koestler writes, "the dialectical arguments by which the Party leadership endeavoured to justify this absurd and suicidal move are too tedious to relate; the remarkable fact is that in spite of my critical faculties and my thorough training in practical politics, I accepted them. I had stepped inside the "closed system," and tasted of that new witches' brew, which made the absurd logical to you."[101] In the end, all that mattered was that the pact with the Nazis helped dismantle a government that opposed the Communist agenda and the "course of history."

Reflecting on this instance, Koestler began to scrutinize the mindset of a Communist intellectual. The intellectual becomes an expert in the use of this "closed system" of logic and this logic defeats all sound judgment. The intellectual caught in the Communist trap uses this systematic logic and only this systematic logic, which does not prevent him from committing acts that anybody outside the system would consider to be absurd. As Koestler states,

[101] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 285.

> In *fine*, the mentality of a person who lives inside a closed system of thought, Communist or other, can be summed up in a single formula: He can prove everything he believes, and he believes everything he can prove. The closed system sharpens the faculties of the mind, like an over-efficient grindstone, to a brittle edge; it produces a Talmudic, hair-splitting brand of cleverness which affords no protection against committing the crudest imbecilities. People with this mentality are found particularly often among the intelligentsia. I like to call them the "clever imbeciles"—an expression which I don't consider offensive, as I was one of them.[102]

The absurdity of the Party-line and Party propaganda, however, eventually made Koestler's devotion to the Party waver.

When Koestler personally witnessed the destitution of Soviet Russia, his allegiance to the Party and its logic began to falter. The living conditions in Russia came as an absolute shock to Koestler. The streets were drab and bleak, filled with shabby buildings and poverty-stricken people. Russia was cut off from the rest of the world. The newspapers contained nothing critical or controversial, no crime, no sensational stories, nothing scandalous, and nothing pertaining to human interest. Everything was uniform and everything was watched by Big Brother.

One way that many Hungarian intellectuals justified the depressed state of Soviet Russia was by judging the country as "a whole," including the direction in which it was heading. According to Congdon, they deflected criticism of communism by arguing that, "Soviet life had always to be viewed as a whole, which was far more important than any flawed part, and that the direction in which Soviet life was moving was more to the point than the station it had thus far reached. Their basic strategy was to sink objections in a sea of detail not only about welfare programs, but about Soviet history and government as well."[103] Koestler's own justification for the destitution in Soviet Russia differed slightly, but was equally popular among his generation of communist intellectuals.

---

[102] Koestler, *The Arrow in the Blue*, 288.
[103] Congdon, 26.

Koestler tried to logically justify what he saw in Russia by convincing himself that the living conditions were not due to any fault in the "perfect" Communist system, but rather due to the "backwardness" of the Russian masses. However, he found this explanation difficult to believe. His disbelief did not change his political ideology though because the threat of Fascism in Germany and the growing power of Hitler gave him new inspiration to work for the Communist utopia. As Koestler writes, "my years in Russia had made Utopia recede; but when my faith had begun to falter, Hitler gave it a new, immensely powerful impulse. Thus started my second honeymoon with the Party."[104] Koestler was to stay in the Communist Party for another five years, but his unspoken disputes and disagreements with the Party continued. He found that there was a second way the Party "trapped" intellectuals: they had been so deeply involved in the work, community, and mode of thought of the Party for so long, that they could function nowhere else. Even if they were to leave the Party, they no longer had anything in common with those who were outside of it.

Koestler recalls the feeling of being trapped in the community of vulgar dialecticians after his socialist realist children's book was rejected by the Party. During Koestler's tenure with the Party, he had spent some time cooking for and looking after a children's collective. Because the Party believed through the "operative principle" that writers should have the inside feel of their subjects, it asked him to write a children's book. He wrote a short novel called *Die Erlebnisse des Genossen Piepvogel und seiner Freunde in der Emigration*, or *The Adventures of Comrade Cheepy-bird and his Friends*. To Koestler's shock, the Party condemned his book, They claimed that although it portrayed documentary realism and socialist uplift, the novel reflected bourgeois, individualistic tendencies. At this point, Koestler was exasperated and seriously considered leaving the Party, but realized that if he left, he had nowhere to turn. He

[104] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 193.

had developed and perfected a way of thinking that separated him from everyone in the world except other Party dialecticians. He had ostracized everyone that he had known previous to joining the Party, and the Communist cell had become his home; his comrades were his family. As Koestler writes,

> I no longer had any friends outside the Party. It had become my family, my nest, my spiritual home. Inside it, one might quarrel, grumble, feel happy or unhappy; but to leave the nest, however cramping and smelly it seemed sometimes, had become unthinkable. All 'closed systems' create for those who live inside a progressive estrangement from the rest of the world. I disliked a number of people in the Party but they were my kin. I liked a number of people outside the Party, but I no longer had a common language with them.[105]

For the second time Koestler felt trapped in the Party. He did not decide to leave the Communist Party until 1936-1937 when the purges in Russia began. Soon after his departure, he began to write his most famous novel, *Darkness at Noon*, which describes the experience of a Party bureaucrat, Rubashov, who is arrested for being a Party *saboteur*. While Rubashov awaits his trial and eventual execution in jail, he thinks through the logic of the Communist Party and expresses his doubts about Communist logic. Rubashov's story elucidates the plight of many Communist intellectuals as they broke with the Party.

The "Closed System" Expressed in *Darkness at Noon*

In *Darkness at Noon*, Koestler grapples with the "closed system" of logic in Communist theory. Although *Darkness at Noon* was a work of fiction, Koestler wrote the novel as a historically accurate explanation of the dilemma of communist intellectuals. Under the communist regime, the public and therefore opinions on communism were split into two groups consisting of "'those who have suffered and those who have remained relatively untouched [by the revolutionary process].' [Koestler's] chief service is that he enables us to penetrate beyond

[105] Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, 234.

that line by observing what the experience of our time has done to a representative European intellectual."[106] Under Stalinism, the intellectual experienced a position of power and remained "relatively untouched" for most of his career and then suffered during the Purge trials.

Koestler decided "to model his protagonist, Nicolas Salmanovitch Rubashov, after [Nikolai] Bukharin. Or, to be more precise, he modeled Rubashov's manner of thinking after Bukharin's. The fictional Old Bolshevik's personality and physical appearance Koestler derived from those of Leon Trotsky and Karl Radek, the latter of whom he had also met in Moscow. Both men were Jews, and so was Rubashov."[107] All three men belonged to the old generation of Bolsheviks and opposed Stalin's policies. They were all purged and liquidated during the Purge trials for conspiring with the oppositional "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites."

Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin was a ranking member of Lenin's original revolutionary leadership.[108] He was known to be "a zestful man with boyish charm," an incredible intellect, and an unmatched knowledge of Marxist theory. According to Soviet and foreign contemporaries, Bukharin was the best-liked leader of the Bolshevik Revolution. In fact, Lenin often referred to him as the "golden boy of the revolution" and the "favorite of the entire Party."[109]

After Lenin's death in 1924, his heirs on the Politburo and the Central Committee split into factions warring over power and policy. Bukharin became the greatest interpreter and defender of Lenin's New Economic Policy, which stressed a slow, evolutionary transition to

---

[106] F. O. Matthiessen, "The Essays of Arthur Koestler" in *Arthur Koestler* ed. Murray A. Sperber (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 41.
[107] Congdon, 64.
[108] Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), xxv.
[109] Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow* trans. Gary Kern (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988), 12.

communism and made small concessions to the capitalist and free market instincts of peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Soon, Bukharin allied with Stalin in defending Lenin's NEP.[110]

When the question of who should assume the Party leadership arose, both Bukharin and Stalin were considered one of the five "Himalayas" or "authoritative" Leninist heirs who could possibly assume Lenin's position.[111] The others were Zinoviev and Kamenev (who were often referred to as a pair), and Trotsky. Bukharin was recognized as having excellent credentials for the post. His authority rested on his standing as Bolshevism's greatest living Marxist. In fact, he was officially heralded in 1926, as the man "now acknowledged as the most outstanding theorist of the Communist International."[112] Stalin, on the other hand, had the least impressive credentials of the five. However, because of their alliance, Stalin benefited from Bukharin's reputation and constant praise.

The Stalin-Bukharin duumvirate led the party for three years, roughly 1925-1928.[113] Shortly thereafter, the coalition fell apart. While Bukharin remained loyal to Lenin's New Economic Policy, Stalin, along with the majority of the Party leadership took a leftward turn in economic and Communist International policy. By 1929, Stalinists were the majority and the Party stripped Bukharin of all his leadership positions: member of the Politburo, editor of the Party's newspaper *Pravda*, and head of the Moscow-based Communist International. Those Stalinists started calling his ideas an instance of "anti-Leninist Right deviationism." Bukharin remained a nominal member of the Party Central Committee until his arrest on February 27, 1937[114]

---

[110] Larina, 15.
[111] Cohen, 225.
[112] Cohen, 227.
[113] Cohen, 277.
[114] Larina, 16.

Bukharin became the model for Rubashov because of his political opinions and the widespread misconception that during his trial "Bukharin willingly confessed to hideous, preposterous crimes in order to repudiate what he himself represented, to repent sincerely his opposition to Stalinism, and thereby perform a 'last service' to the party and its myth of infallibility."[115] However, biographer Stephen F. Cohen posits that Koestler's interpretation of Bukharin's trial was flawed in that Bukharin actually expressed the true convictions of the old Bolsheviks in his testimony and attempted to turn his "show trial" into a counter-trial of the Stalinist regime.[116] After he was arrested, Bukharin already knew that he was to be executed no matter how he behaved at the trial.[117] Thus, the question arose, as he explained in the courtroom "'if you must die, what are you dying for?'"—an absolute black vacuity suddenly rises before you with startling vividness."[118] Dying in silence made no sense. Bukharin realized that his trial would be his last opportunity to speak publicly and lend meaning to his death for both himself and others. His plan during the trial was to confess that he was "politically responsible" for everything, thereby underlining his symbolic role as the true spokesman for revolutionary ideals, and at the same to flatly deny or subtly disprove his involvement in any actual crime. Anyone who was "interested" would understand the real political meaning of the criminal charges brought against Bukharin.[119] However, while Bukharin's case might not correspond exactly to Koestler's fictional representation, *Darkness at Noon* did expose the inner logic of communist dogma with the utmost consistency. In doing so, Koestler provided us with a unique intellectual lens for studying the transformation of communist intellectuals from members of the free-floating intelligentsia to loyal adherents to the closed system of logic.

---

[115] Cohen, 372.
[116] Cohen, 372.
[117] Cohen, 375.
[118] *The Great Purge Trial* ed. Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), 666.
[119] Cohen 376.

During the novel, Rubashov attempts to break free from the logic of history. In the beginning, Nicolas Salmanovitch Rubashov, a Party member, is arrested and accused of participating in an opposition group. Although he was never a member of any opposition group, Rubashov knew that according to the Party, he was already guilty. He knew that he would be found guilty with or without a trial and would most likely be executed. The Party, however, prefers a confession. Gletkin, a "new" Party bureaucrat, and Ivanov, an "old" bureaucrat, are responsible for obtaining that confession from Rubashov. Gletkin suggests physical torture, but Ivanov knows that the most effective way to get Rubashov to capitulate is to remind him of the Party logic to which he has devoted his life.

While in prison, Rubashov considers the way Communist logic is used exclusively by members of the Party and how it blinds them to all other sense and reason. As N.S. Rubashov writes in his diary, "our sole guiding principle is that of consequent logic. We are under the terrible compulsion to follow our thought down to its final consequence and to act in accordance to it. We are sailing without ballast; therefore each touch on the helm is a matter of life or death."[120] In order to elucidate the way Communist intellectuals were trapped in the "closed system" of logic in the Communist Party, Koestler describes Rubashov's own use of logic to arrest and persecute other Party members. He then constructs a dialogue between Rubashov and Ivanov, the old comrade of Rubashov whose faith in the logic of history has not waned, which demonstrates the objections that intellectuals had to the Party-line and their corresponding justifications. Finally, Koestler demonstrates the power of the system of logic through Rubashov's capitulation.

[120] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 79.

Rubashov's Use of the Logical System

Like Bukharin, who "despite private misgivings and his belief in *cultural* tolerance...participated actively in the removal of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev,"[121] Rubashov often recalls instances when he used the Party logic to justify the torture and persecution of other Party members. Throughout the novel, these memories make it very difficult for Rubashov to criticize the way he is arrested without a warrant, accused of a ridiculous crime, and treated harshly in prison. After all, he is intimately familiar with the logical system that determines his fate. Rubashov specifically recalls two instances: when he persecuted Richard and Little Loewy. The actions that seem honest and dialectically correct to both Richard and Little Loewy are considered crimes because they contradict the Party's decree.

While in prison, Rubashov remembers using the "closed system" of logic to justify Richard's death sentence for endangering the Party's mission. Richard was a Communist cell leader in Germany. He was responsible for distributing the Party's pamphlets to the cells in Germany. During a time when the Party struggled in its fight against Fascism, the Central Committee filled the materials with phrases about the Party's "unbroken will to victory." Richard decided not to circulate the lies invented by the Central Committee, and circulated a truthful description of the humiliating defeat the Party had suffered. Rubashov notifies Richard that he will be punished for writing this "defeatism" that lames the Party's fighting spirit. Richard objects, but his protests are met with Rubashov's simple reiteration of the Party's logic: the Party cannot be wrong because it is the embodiment of the logic of history. As Koestler writes,

[121] Mark Levene, "The Mind on Trial: *Darkness at Noon*" in *Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon* ed. Harold Bloom (Philedelphia: Chelsea House, 2004), 78.

> "The Party can never be mistaken," said Rubashov. "You and I can make a mistake. Not the Party. The Party, comrade, is more than you and I and a thousand others like you and I. The Party is the embodiment of the revolutionary idea in history. History knows no scruples and no hesitation. Inert and unerring, she flows towards her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows her way. She makes no mistakes. He who has not absolute faith in History does not belong to the Party's ranks."[122]

Because of his crime, Richard was sentenced to death. Rubashov repeats the same mantra when he addresses Little Loewy, another Party member accused of deviating from the Party-line.

Rubashov used the Communist system of logic to justify his persecution of Little Loewy as an *agent provocateur*. Little Loewy was the head of the Communist dock workers in a Belgian port, where Rubashov had been sent to "explain" why the boycott against Mussolini's Italy would be breached by Communist workers on the dock who have resolutely refused to unload any ships either bound for or coming from this fascist country. It is Rubashov's task to explain that members of the Central Committee of the Party must know what they are doing. When Rubashov announces the orders of the Party, many of the dockworkers challenge this decree. Little Loewy expresses his agreement with one of the workers' statement that the Party talks of solidarity, sacrifice, and discipline, but uses its fleet for blacklegging goods for financial gain. Through telegrams, Rubashov notifies the Central Committee that Little Loewy was provoking opposition to the Party. Little Loewy is subsequently denounced in the Party organ as an *agent provocateur*, and as a result, hangs himself. Reflecting on the way he justified Little Loewy's denunciation, Rubashov thought back to the logic of history and how he had convinced himself that individuals were expendable along the path to Communist utopia. According to the logic of history, destroying an individual was not a crime; the only crime was to deviate from the course of history. As Koestler writes,

---

[122] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 34.

> [History] rolled towards her goal unconcernedly and deposed the corpses of the drowned in the winding of her course. Her course had many twists and windings; such was the law of her being. And whosoever could not follow her crooked course was washed on to the bank, for such was her law. The motives of the individual did not matter to her. His conscience did not matter to her, neither did she care what went on in his head and his heart. The Party knew only one crime: to swerve from the course laid out; and only one punishment: death. Death was no mystery in the movement; there was nothing exalted about it: it was the logical solution to political divergences.[123]

Despite his previous usage of the Party-line, Rubashov begins to doubt his allegiance to the logic of history. When he expresses his new opinion, Ivanov is the character who reasserts the Party logic.

Rubashov's Dialogues with Ivanov

Ivanov is Koestler's example of an unwavering Communist bureaucrat in *Darkness at Noon*. For many years, Rubashov and Ivanov worked together and used the Communist logic identically, but their views started to clash when Rubashov began to doubt the historical mission of the Party. After Rubashov is arrested, Ivanov tries to convince Rubashov to capitulate. Ivanov uses many of Rubashov's own phrases against him. He knows that "his appeal to Rubashov's past and his habitual logicality is bound to be effective because it evokes what is most deeply rooted in him. And Rubashov is not prepared to face the chaos and historical degradation that keeping silent would entail."[124] Ivanov promises that if Rubashov confessed to his political divergence, he would be spared his life, but Rubashov refuses to submit to the Party and its method of justification again. Through interactions between Rubashov and Ivanov, Koestler constructs a dialogue between objections to the logic of history, and the Party's rebuttals to those objections. Rubashov's first objection is that the logic does not erase the guilt that comes from harming those who the Party wishes to liquidate, and in response, Ivanov

[123] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 61.
[124] Levene, "The Mind on Trial: *Darkness at Noon*", 76.

condemns the adherence to one's conscience. Second, Rubashov argues that the simplified dialectic does not enable the Party to avoid irreversible mistakes, and in response, Ivanov claims that no political ideology can prevent mistakes, but the Communism at least tries. Finally, Rubashov attests that the Party's strict focus on ends and disregard for the means of political progress results in absolute chaos, but Ivanov posits that logically, one cannot achieve political ends without relentlessly pursuing them.

First, Rubashov questions the Communist logical system because of the guilt that he feels when he must commit violence on the Party's behalf. This question arises when Rubashov questions Ivanov about the execution of their old comrade, Bogrov. During Rubashov's confinement in the prison, he discovers that Bogrov is imprisoned in a cell nearby. When Bogrov is escorted to his execution, the guards discreetly announce it, expecting that Rubashov would hear about the execution from his neighbors. The guards also inform Bogrov right before he is executed that Rubashov is in the prison. They know he will shout out to Rubashov, and in fact, he does. Rubashov understands that the whole scenario was constructed in order to put him in a state of depression. And while he is depressed, Ivanov is sent to Rubashov's cell with a bottle of brandy in order to cheer him up and convince him to capitulate. Ivanov informs Rubashov that the plan was indeed deliberate, but he was not the one who formed it. Rubashov maintains that the plan did not have the intended effect on him, and that Bogrov's whimpering increased the guilt he felt for the murders to which he had contributed during his Communist career. Bogrov's cries filled Rubashov's ears and "smothered the thin voice of reason, covered it as the surf covers the gurgling of the drowning."[125] Rubashov knows that his guilty conscience does not work in concert with the logic of History or any type of logic. All he knows is that the

[125] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 117.

guilt was overpowering, and he doubted the logic now because of the violence that it brings about.

Ivanov contends with Rubashov's statements about his guilty conscience by telling Rubashov that a true revolutionary and champion of the proletariat does not listen to his conscience. In fact, one's own guilty conscience is the greatest temptation that can dismantle the revolutionary movement. Listening to that conscience betrays the cause and helps to perpetuate the chaos and violence of the pre-Communist world. As Ivanov states,

> The greatest temptation for the like of us is: to renounce violence, to repent, to make peace with oneself. Most great revolutionaries fell before this temptation, from Spartacus to Danton and Dostoevsky; they are the classical form of betrayal of the cause. The temptations of God were always more dangerous for mankind than those of Satan. As long as chaos dominates the world, God is an anachronism; and every compromise with one's own conscience is perfidy. When the accursed inner voice speaks to you, hold your hands over your ears...To sell oneself to one's own conscience is to abandon mankind.[126]

However, Ivanov's speech has little effect on Rubashov now, not after the guilt of hearing Bogrov call out his name. Ivanov cannot "silence Rubashov's conscience by logic alone, but he does defeat it. The arguments of the party are those of the future, whereas conscience belongs to the prehistoric past."[127] Logically, Rubashov's doubts concerning the Party's past actions are meaningless because they do not pertain to the Party's mission in the present and future.

Next Rubashov objects to the Party logic because of its inability to predict the future and avoid mistakes. Rubashov posits that the whole "Communist experiment" appears unsuccessful and that it should stop because of the lives lost that can never be recovered. In his view, the Party has made too many mistakes and killed too many innocent people to continue its crude navigation through history. The logic seemed right, but the consequences never laid out as predicted. Therefore, the logic is flawed.

---

[126] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 124-125.
[127] Sidney A. Pearson, *Arthur Koestler* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 65.

In response, Ivanov states that it should not matter that the results of the Party's actions cannot be foreseen. The Party at least thinks each act through before committing it, and its use of logical deduction already makes it more just than any regime that has ever existed. As Ivanov argues, "should we sit with idle hands because the consequences of an act are never quite to be foreseen, and hence all action is evil? We vouch for every act with our heads—more cannot be expected of us. In the opposite camp they are not so scrupulous. Any old idiot of a general can experiment with thousands of living bodies; and if he makes a mistake, he will at most be retired."[128] Rubashov knows how convincing Ivanov's argument had seemed to him when he still thought in terms of the "closed system," but still resists.

Finally, Rubashov objects to the Party's strict focus on the ends and disregard for the means it uses to reach its political goal. Rubashov admits that gentle means never bring about desired ends. "Respect for the individual and social progress, are incompatible," he states, and "Ghandi is a catastrophe for India; that chasteness in the choice of means leads to political impotence."[129] But then again, the alternative has led to "a mess"—suffering, torture, and unending violence. For Rubashov it is unreasonable to "whip the groaning masses of the country towards a theoretical future happiness, which only we can see. For the energies of this generation are exhausted; they were spent in the Revolution; for this generation is bled white and there is nothing left of it but a moaning, numbed, apathetic lump of sacrificial flesh....Those are the consequences of our consequentialness."[130] It is unethical for the Party to use any means necessary to achieve Communist utopia, especially when this utopia exists only in theory. Although Rubashov does not know how to solve the dilemma of means and ends, he understands that complete devotion to one or the other is incorrect.

---

[128] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 131.
[129] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 129.
[130] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 130.

However, Ivanov disagrees; to him, the Party's unscrupulous pursuit of ends is wonderful. "Has anything more wonderful ever happened in history?" he asks, "we are tearing the old skin off mankind and giving it a new one."[131] Ivanov argues that Rubashov has simply become weak in the face of suffering and has lost sight of the virtuous ends for which he used to work. The Party is right as it always has been; its servant, Rubashov, after a life of sin, "has turned to God—to a God with the double chin of industrial liberalism and the charity of Salvation Army soups."[132] Satan, on the other hand is "a fanatical devotee of logic. He reads Machiavelli, Ignatius of Loyola, Marx and Hegel."[133] Satan, the Party, is unmerciful to mankind, out of a mathematical mercifulness. He must commit the most repugnant acts: to be a slaughterer in order to abolish slaughter, to whip people so that they may learn not to let themselves be whipped, strip himself of every scruple in the name of a higher scrupulousness, and challenge the hatred of mankind because of his love for it. Logically, one cannot transform society to one's desired ends without working mercilessly for those ends.

Because of his many doubts about the promise of Communism, Rubashov finally breaks with the Party, but after so many years of being entrenched in the "closed system," he cannot logically justify this decision. Rubashov admits that logic is on the side of Ivanov and the Party, but he has had enough of this kind of logic. He is tired and he does not want to play the game anymore. Theory had changed into dogma and he would rather die than continue to live in this logical cage. As Rubashov states, "the time of philosophizing congresses was over; instead of the old portraits, a light patch shone from Ivanov's wallpaper; philosophical incendiarism had given place to a period of wholesome sterility. Revolutionary theory had frozen to a dogmatic cult, with a simplified, easily graspable catechism, and with No. 1 as the high priest celebrating

[131] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 130.
[132] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 121-122.
[133] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 122.

the Mass."[134] However, despite his new ideological stance Rubashov ultimately surrenders to the closed system of logic, decides to confess to his political deviations in his public trial as a "last service" to the Party, and is executed. Like so many others, he was a victim of the system of logic he once championed.

The Power of Reason in the Mind of the Intellectual

Darkness at Noon is a sociologically significant novel because through it, Koestler elucidated the control that logical reasoning has over the mind of an intellectual. A well-formulated argument and a system of perfect logic have more influence on the actions of an intellectual than any other force. Thus, Koestler explains at least in part how many political actors after the enlightenment justified and perpetuated egregious acts of mass violence. When Rubashov was initially imprisoned, Gletkin suggests that he and Ivanov should physically torture Rubashov until he confesses to his crimes against the Party. For Gletkin, physical pressure has produced consistent results. However, Ivanov knows that Rubashov, as an old Bolshevik and member of the intelligentsia, will not yield to physical torture; the most effective way to get Rubashov to capitulate is to force him to retrace the steps of communist logical justification. Ivanov is sure that if he reiterates the arguments in Rubashov's mind, he will agree to confess for the sake of the historical mission; it is the only decision that makes logical sense.

Gletkin attested that like all humans, Rubashov would capitulate if placed under enough physical torture. He solidly believed that "human beings able to resist any amount of physical pressure do not exist. I have never seen one. Experience shows me that the resistance of the human nervous system is limited by Nature."[135] Gletkin has discovered this theory through the

[134] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 142.
[135] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 82.

many instances in which he needed to obtain information from peasants. Gletkin tried many times to reason with peasants who buried crops that the state needed to feed the masses. He talked to them for long periods of time without exerting physical force. However, the peasants just remained quiet, "blinked at [him] with their sly-stupid eyes, took it all for a superb joke and picked their noses."[136] Gletkin learned that physical torture was more effective once he tried it. He found that the easiest way to obtain a confession was to deprive somebody of sleep until he or she admitted everything the Party needed to know.

However, Ivanov knew Rubashov well enough to understand that the "hard" method would never work on him. Rubashov was a weathered Party member whose skin had grown so thick over the years that physical torture would no longer have any effect on him. As an intellectual and devotee of logic Rubashov still had one true weakness: the system of reasoning ingrained in his own mind that could convince him that it was his responsibility to capitulate; his noncompliance threatened the historical mission to which he has devoted his life. Ivanov insists that when Rubashov capitulates, "it won't be out of cowardice, but by logic. It is no use trying the hard method with him. He is made out of a certain material which becomes tougher the more you hammer on it."[137] Unlike those with whom Gletkin tried to reason in the past, Rubashov understands the logic; he has adhered to and preached the logic, and when he is forced to think through the logic once more, he will understand that he must capitulate.

At first, when Ivanov tries his "reasoning" method, Rubashov refuses to respond to him, but Ivanov immediately knew how to provoke him. "Why don't you answer the question I asked?" he starts. Then he bent forward and looked at Rubashov mockingly in the face and continued, "*Because you are afraid of me*. Because my way of thinking and of arguing is your

[136] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 84.
[137] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 82.

own, and you are afraid of the echo in your own head."[138] And indeed, Rubashov felt helpless and incapable of a clear argument. His consciousness and guilt could not be expressed in a logical formula, and at the same time, every sentence that Ivanov spoke did evoke an echo in his mind.

Eventually, Ivanov's method proved fruitful. After much contemplation, Rubashov decided that he should capitulate. To inform Gletkin that he was capitulating, Rubashov said simply, "I will do everything which may serve the Party,"[139] and asks that his accusation be read in its entirety. His statement during the trial reiterates the way the Communist system of logic opposed and won out against all the "humanistic" objections brought up against it. As Rubashov states,

> I plead guilty to not having understood the fatal compulsion behind the policy of the Government, and to have therefore held oppositional views. I plead guilty to having followed sentimental impulses, and in so doing to have been led into contradiction with historical necessity. I have lent my ear to the laments of the sacrificed, and thus became deaf to the arguments which proved the necessity to sacrifice them. I plead guilty to having rated the question of guilt and innocence higher than that of utility and harmfulness. Finally, I plead guilty to having placed the idea of man above the idea of mankind."[140]

For an individual who has lived for Progress for many years and thought only within the system of dialectical materialism, there was no choice but to capitulate. Rubashov reasoned that in the Party "the only moral criterion which we recognize is that of social utility, the public disavowal of one's conviction in order to remain in the Party's ranks is obviously more honourable than the quixotism of carrying on a hopeless struggle."[141] Rubashov no longer had a life outside of the historical mission and according to logic, only capitulation seemed justified.

---

[138] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 121.
[139] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 150.
[140] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 153.
[141] Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, 137.

Through Ivanov's method of forcing Rubashov to capitulate, Koestler was able "to give to the trials a rational basis in the context of Marxist theory and practice that shocked and horrified its readers."[142] It is the very rationalism of revolutionary terror that remains the true horror of *Darkness at Noon.* If the terror was irrational it would not lack in raw power, but would perhaps leave the impression that it could be tamed by reason, when in fact, strict adherence to reason was what led to the violence.

[142] Pearson, 52.

Chapter 3: Czeslaw Milosz

Czeslaw Milosz was a Lithuanian poet and author. He wrote poetry nearly his entire life, but did not win acclaim until 1973 when his works were finally translated into English. In 1980, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for poetry. In addition to his poetry, his book, *The Captive Mind* is considered one of the greatest studies of the plight of intellectuals under repressive Communist regimes. In *The Captive Mind,* Milosz asserts that the intellectuals who dissented from the Communist regime were not necessarily the ones with the sharpest minds, but rather those who were emotionally sensitive. He professed that the mind can always reason and rationalize, but the stomach can only take so much. Because of his rejection of the Communist regime, Milosz's works were banned in Poland until after he won the Nobel Prize in 1980.

Czeslaw Milosz was born on June 30, 1911, in Szetejnie, Lithuania as the son of Weronika and Aleksander Milosz, two members of the intelligentsia. At the time of his birth, Lithuania was under the domination of the Russian tsarist government. After the outbreak of the First World War, Aleksander Milosz was drafted into the Tsar's army as a combat engineer and built bridges and roads throughout Soviet Russia. His wife and son accompanied him on his journey around the vast country. After his tour of duty, the family returned to Lithuania, settling in Wilno (or Vilnius in Lithuanian). After Milosz graduated from high school, his first poems were published in the university magazine, *Alma Mater Vilnenis.* He earned a law degree at the university in Vilnius, but traveled to Paris on a fellowship from the National Culture Fund and focused on his writing. Soon afterward, the Second World War broke out. Milosz spent most of World War II in Nazi-occupied Warsaw working for the underground presses. After the war, he resided in the United States as a diplomat for the communist People's Republic of Poland. He

broke with the government in 1951 and sought political asylum in France where he worked as a freelance writer. In 1961, Milosz became a professor of Slavic Languages at the University of California, Berkeley, where he remained until the Iron Curtain fell and he was allowed to return to Poland. He died at his home in Kraków in 2004 at the age of 93.

Czeslaw Milosz's major works include both books and collections of poetry. His most famous books include *The Captive Mind*[143], his autobiography *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*[144], and his novel *The Issa Valley*[145]. Major collections of poetry and essays include *Beginning with my Streets*[146], *To Begin Where I Am*[147], *The Land of Ulro*[148] and many others. While Milosz's earlier works primarily reflect his distaste for any form of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and ideological indoctrination, his later works focus on the personal expression of the poet, the redemptive power of art, and its function as a "moral discipline" for each artist.

Czeslaw Milosz possessed the characteristics of Mannheim's free-floating intellectual. His early life was plagued by the socio-economic disorientation characteristic of many intellectuals: although he and his family had obtained high levels of education, they never received the financial compensation that he felt they deserved. As a result, Milosz was never firmly rooted in a particular socio-economic class. Milosz also was not based in a particular homeland or culture. Whether with his parents as a child or on his own after he came of age, he traveled constantly, and the city of his youth, Wilno, Lithuania, was subject to so many political

---

[143] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage International, 1990).
[144] Czeslaw Milosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* trans. Catherine S. Leach (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968).
[145] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Issa Valley* trans. Louis Iribarne (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981).
[146] Czeslaw Milosz, *Beginning with My Streets* trans. Madeline G. Levine (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991).
[147] Czeslaw Milosz, *To Begin Where I Am* trans. Bogdana Carpenter and Madeline G. Levine (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).
[148] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Land of Ulro* trans. Louis Iribarne (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981).

conflicts that its cultural and national status uncertain. Finally, Milosz experienced great difficulty socializing throughout his life. In lower school, in his Boy Scout troop, in religious settings, and in university, Milosz was never able to build strong interpersonal relationships because he tended to scrutinize social organizations while his peers did not. As a result, he became a timid and solitary individual until he found camaraderie and friendship in an intellectual group.

Confused Class Membership

Unlike Koestler, Milosz's struggle with class affiliation did not come from continuous financial ups and downs, but from the fact that he and his parents obtained high levels of education, but never earned the amount of money that their educations warranted. Milosz was the only son of two self-ascribed members of the intelligentsia. Although the family had enough money to ensure Czeslaw's education, they had to live without material luxuries. As a result of his life-long material deprivation, Milosz developed an intense hatred and disdain for money and material goods in general. This animosity caused him to develop an early sympathy for communism.

Despite his humble class origin, Czeslaw Milosz's father, Aleksander Milosz, was able to obtain a high level of education. During Aleksander Milosz's youth, the Russian Empire ruled much of Eastern Europe, including his home country, Lithuania. Under tsarist rule, much of the gentry in Eastern Europe became impoverished and fled rural regions for the cities, but left their imprint on members of the lower classes. Specifically, many were inspired and able to acquire a privileged education. Milosz names his father as a prime example of these educated individuals. As Milosz writes, "my father did not have a single acre of ground, but he was sent to a Russian high school and the Polytechnical Institute in Riga (Department of Roads and Bridges). The old

Hanseatic city of Riga, which later became the capital of Latvia, was the chief center of learning in the Baltic region, and attracted students from both Poland and Russia."[149] Milosz's father was devoted to his studies and became a member of the intelligentsia. He wanted to ensure that his son had the same educational opportunities.

Despite the fact the Milosz's family was not particularly well-off, Milosz's parents made sure Czeslaw obtained a high level of education. Because capitalism was just taking shape during his youth, bureaucratic professions were the only occupations that ensured a decent standard of living. According to Milosz, "my parents, who belonged to the intelligentsia, took to prepare me for a profession. Private industry and trade had only just begun to develop. Thus education amounted, with very few exceptions, to a ticket of admission to the bureaucracy, which, thanks to the revolutionary upheavals, was to have an astonishing career."[150] Milosz attended high school, and then obtained a law degree at the University in Vilnius. However, despite high levels of education, Milosz and his parents never reached their "deserved" financial prosperity, which complicated Czeslaw's view of his own class status.

Milosz was conflicted over his own class orientation because his education made him feel he came from a higher class than his material possessions indicated. Milosz was educated and his father was an engineer, thus he felt he was a member of the bourgeoisie; however, the family stood on the brink of destitution. As Milosz writes, "my 'place' did not correspond in the least to what is generally known as the 'bourgeois way of life.' Along with my feeling that one should know who one is went a pinched pocketbook and an enforced curtailment of my personal needs."[151] Milosz knew he did not fit all the bourgeois characteristics, but he also knew he stood above the proletariat, and grew to believe that wage-labor was below a man's dignity. Believing

[149] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 31.
[150] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 31.
[151] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 32.

that he and his family were not properly rewarded for their knowledge and skill, Milosz developed a hatred for the existing economic and social order.

Rather than saving money to improve his financial situation, Milosz developed a hatred for money and wanted to destroy the emergent capitalist system. First, he repressed material temptations and stood passive in the face of material acquisition and expenditure. Then, like many members of the intelligentsia who were disoriented in the economic order, Milosz began to disgust usury and other practices that characterize private capitalism. Resolutely anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist, he enjoyed watching the obliteration of private property. As Milosz writes, "emotionally I did not condemn the destruction of private shops and farms (this does not mean that I have always approved of it intellectually); it even gave me a sadistic pleasure."[152] These hostile sentiments brought on by Milosz's confused class status explain his early sympathy for communism.

Uncertain Homeland and Culture

Czeslaw Milosz was also subjected to a wide variety of national and cultural influences that enabled him view the world from a "total" perspective. Milosz knew very little about his culture of origin except that he came from a line of easterly migrating people. Migration was also a dominant theme in his own life. Milosz spent many years of his childhood traveling around different countries and regions with his parents and continued to roam about Europe after he came of age. Although he moved often, Milosz identifies his "home town" as Wilno, Lithuania. Throughout his lifetime, political conflicts gave the town, the small country, and the region an unstable national identity. He understood that this "formlessness" manifested itself in his own life and *Weltanschauung.*

[152] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 33.

Czeslaw Milosz knew very little about the origin of his family except for the fact that he came from a long line of people who constantly moved eastward. This group of Europeans was known as the *Drang nach Osten.* Most of the conclusions that Milosz draws about his heritage are assumptions derived from his knowledge of European history. Because of his family's association with migrants, Milosz began to search for his roots in Berlin and Frankfurt-on-the-Oder. He found out nothing about his own family, but he learned that these originally Germanic people who pushed east found their path blocked by Wends (also called Lusatian Sorbs) and other Slavic communities. Some of these migrants remained in the Slavic communities while others moved on. There are, however, no records of any particular family's journey east. As Milosz writes, "all traces of their flight, however, have vanished; it is impossible to reconstruct the stages of their journey or to picture its wagons, horses, or riders. By the time dates and events can be seized upon, the wanderers have already settled into their new homes."[153] This motif of movement also manifested itself in Milosz's parents and Milosz himself.

Milosz spent much of his childhood on the road with his parents. His first major journey came when his father was drafted into the Tsar's army and sent to Russia just before the beginning of World War I. After Milosz's father completed his service, the family settled briefly in Estonia, but after a short stay, began to travel around Poland. They settled next in Wilno, which Milosz identifies as his home town, but still spent summers in Poland, where he was influenced by a different culture. When he reached university-age, Milosz continued traveling extensively with his friends, and after graduation, moved to Paris on a writing fellowship.

Czeslaw Milosz's moved abroad with his parents when the Tsarist regime sent his father to eastern Russia to build roads and bridges for the army. The family's ultimate destination was Krasnoyarsk, a city in Siberia, not far from the Chinese border. To get there, Milosz and his

[153] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 21.

parents spent many days and nights crossing the Russian Empire on the Trans-Siberian rail line. Once they reached the destination, the traveling did not stop. They continued to move about the country because of Aleksander Milosz's occupation. As Milosz writes:

> Throughout all my early childhood, rivers, towns and landscapes followed one another at great speed. My father was mobilized to build roads and bridges for the Russian Army, and we accompanied him, traveling just back of the battle zone, leading a nomadic life, never halting longer than a few months. Our home was often a covered wagon, sometimes an army railroad car with a samovar on the floor, which used to tip over when the train started up suddenly.[154]

This lengthy journey exposed Milosz to a variety of new experiences and influences. He remembered being wild with excitement when he saw an automobile for the first time in his life while he was in St. Petersburg. While in far eastern Russia, he witnessed the vast wilderness of untamed Siberia and recalled seeing the "Kirghiz in smocks that reached to the ground [and] Chinese with their pigtails."[155] And while Milosz lived in Rjev, a city on the Volga river, he became acquainted with political action for the first time when his Russian soldier friends got involved in the 1917 revolution.

Shortly after the revolution, the Milosz family moved to Estonia. Milosz speculated that this relocation was probably due to "the usual roving of my father's office, or perhaps for safety."[156] They settled in Dorpat, Estonia, which is on the western border of the Russian Empire. After the First World War, the Russian Empire formally renounced all territorial claims to Dorpat, but Russian forces continued to occupy the city. Here, Milosz experienced the terror of political instability for the first time. Talk about hunger never ceased, there was no way to obtain sugar or meat, and soldiers raided and searched the family's apartment. Milosz could never erase the terror-stricken faces of women and screaming babies from his mind. In the north,

---

[154] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 41.
[155] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 41.
[156] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 45.

Finland was consolidating; in the south, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The whole time period was marked by "two-day battles [and] two-day truces."[157] Due to the horrors in Estonia, the Milosz family went on the road once again. This time, the destination was another state that had just broken off from the Russian Empire, Lithuania.

Milosz spent the remainder of his youth as a citizen of Lithuania, but he was still conditioned by Polish culture. While he lived most of the year in Wilno, Lithuania (which was also occupied by Poland for two decades), Milosz spent the summers of his youth in Poland. Because of this dual-residency, "Wilno was not, therefore, the center of [Milosz's] world. Spending the summer months in a different country gave [him] the opportunity to make comparisons."[158] Milosz noticed that Lithuania was a much more old-fashioned in its habits. It was a peasant civilization with a "kulak" social structure and a minimum of economic prosperity. Within this society "kulaks," relatively wealthy peasants who owned larger farms and used hired labor, stood at the top of the social hierarchy. Despite Lithuania's adherence to old tradition, the peasants in the countryside knew how to read and write and were open to ideas. Poland, on the other hand, had just formed from sections of Austria, Germany, and Russia, and strived toward becoming a modern state with a unified administration and a unified school system. It was much more nationalist with a more complicated social structure, including an influential gentry. Milosz writes that his "own encounter with these embroilments [in Poland and Lithuania] was not theoretical, but real. Even if [he] was unable to define them at the time, the differences between particular national groups gave rise to at least some thoughts during [his] travels."[159] His tendency to reflect on various nations and cultures as a child contributed to Milosz's *Wanderlust* when he came of age.

---

[157] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 47.
[158] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 66.
[159] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 67.

Although Milosz's family eventually settled in Wilno, Milosz became a vagabond in his own right after he enrolled in the university. His first notable voyage with two companions from an intellectual club, Robespierre and Elephant, brought him to Prague, Bavaria, and throughout France, while his second took him alone to Paris.

In 1931 after his spring exams in the university had ended, Milosz embarked on a "journey to the west" with Robespierre and Elephant. The plan was to take a train from Wilno to Prague, purchase a Canadian canoe in Prague, transport the canoe to Bavaria on Lake Constance, and from there, paddle down the Rhine and its tributaries, and land as close to Paris as possible. As Robespierre and Elephant hiked over the Alps to Lindau, Bavaria, Milosz stayed behind in Prague to purchase the canoe and ensure its transport. After the transactions, he took a train from Prague to Bavaria. He decided to jump off in Pilsen and hike through Germany for a day to experience the German countryside. He hiked on the highway and stopped to help a country girl with work in the fields. After a day, Milosz boarded the train again and all around him people were speaking a language he did not understand, which made him "furious with [him]self."[160] Briefly after arriving in Lindau, Milosz reunited with Robespierre and Elephant, and the three began their journey down the Rhine. After a few days of "ecstasy" the friends crashed and capsized the canoe in Koblenz, Switzerland. After some bureaucratic difficulty with the German consulate, the three decided to cross on foot through the Black Forest to Basel.

When they reached Basel, Milosz, Robespierre, and Elephant began their acquaintance with Western Europe. Here, they were exposed to the side of Western Europe "of oaken beams hewn in the Middle Ages; of the Zum Wilde Mann inn, decorated on the outside with painted sculpture; of jutting eaves, of iron-smiths in leather aprons resembling gnomes in a fairy tale."[161]

---

[160] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 151.
[161] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 157.

And like the many other *Wandervögel*, Milosz and his friends were completely enchanted by this culture. Milosz's appreciation for Western Europe was further enhanced after reaching France.

Milosz was enthralled by France because he perceived it as the home of intellectuality and the birthplace of freedom and revolution. After leaving Basel, the three companions traveled on train through Alsace, along the Vosges mountains, and arrived at their first destination, Strasbourg. Early in the journey, they met the dark side of France, the face of "suffering humanity": unemployment, miles of cemeteries filled with victims of the First World War, and an overall sense of misery and brutality. Yet, Milosz felt that landscape of France had a beauty that evoked the greatest tenderness. He thought that in France, "freedom is possible as it is nowhere else because the pressure of social convention stops at the threshold of the private hearth and no one is compelled to live like his neighbor."[162] But he remained slightly conflicted with France because he knew such freedom could only exist because of capitalism, which made each Frenchman indifferent to the oppression and humiliation of others. Despite his concerns, Milosz fell in love with France, if not only because "an ambition to reach a heart that seems difficult to get at sometimes turns into love."[163] So when Milosz heard about an opportunity to win a scholarship to France, he committed himself to earning it.

After completing his university studies, Milosz moved to France for a year. Although his degree was in law, he had won a literature scholarship and planned to write poetry during his stay. With his expectations high, he made every attempt to immerse himself in art and literature. However, after gallery visits, theatre performances, lectures, and conversations with his distant relative, poet Oscar Miłosz, Czeslaw Milosz's infatuation with Paris began to fade. He

---

[162] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 160.
[163] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 161.

understood that his earlier enchantment was probably brought on by the fact that he came from a more primitive eastern region where Paris was regarded as a cultural Mecca. But after he arrived he did not find displays of artistic genius, but rather uninspiring art that was exalted for a reason unknown to him. As Milosz writes, the collision of eastern and western culture "within me deepened my inner split, but the injection I received was not such a bad thing: while learning the gestures and habits of Westerners I recognized that they were hollow, as if eaten by termites, and would soon collapse."[164] In the end, however, Milosz decided he preferred Paris to Wilno because even if the art was less brilliant than expected, it was in Paris, if no place else, that an intellectual could find allies.

Milosz's lifetime of travels gave him a *Weltanschauung* susceptible to communist ideology. His temporary stays in a variety of lands and exposure to so many cultures caused him believe that governments and political systems evolve continuously as history runs its course. In effect, the vagabond sees history as a vagabond. As Milosz writes, "such a lack of stability, the unconscious feeling that everything is temporary, cannot but affect, it seems to me, our mature judgments, and it can be the reason for taking governments and political systems lightly. History becomes fluid because it is equated with ceaseless wandering."[165] This view of historical movement is undeniably compatible with dialectical reasoning, and made Milosz increasingly sympathetic to communism.

The Instability of his Home Town

Though he traveled so often, Milosz identifies the city of his youth as Wilno, Lithuania. This home town, however, never provided him with a solid cultural base. Lithuania's identity,

---

[164] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 181.
[165] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 41.

like those of most Eastern European states in the early twentieth century, was in a state of flux. For centuries, it was an independent nation, but in the late eighteenth century, it was seized by the Russian Empire. It declared its independence again in 1918, but much of the once vast state was incorporated into Poland. Wilno, where Milosz resided, was in the region that Poland annexed. As a result of this unrest, Lithuanians had little understanding of their national culture and Wilno became a city whose ethnic identity was ambiguous.

Lithuanians were not confronted daily by their cultural identity. They were forced to search the past for their roots, but little information remained retrievable. Lithuanians, therefore, clung desperately to the minor bits of culture that they could rediscover even if they were inaccurate and culturally insignificant. Milosz provides the example of the societal reverence of his mother's maiden name, which called up a feeling of "Lithuanian-ness" but provided no insight into the traditions that Lithuania had lost over the centuries of occupation and shifting borders. As Milosz writes,

> For example, my mother's name: Kunat. Perhaps that name really belonged to a Lithuanian chieftan whose tribe was eradicated during the Middle Ages by the Poles and the Teutonic Knights. At any rate, that was a legend. And possibly not only the name but also the racial type had endured in her family—a certain shape of the nose, a special line of the cheekbones, a particular setting of the eyes. But even if this were so, what bearing could it have, if the family had long ago been Polonized and accepted into the clan of The Axe?[166]

No matter what cultural remnants Lithuanian's could recognize, a real understanding of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was long gone. The country had been taken over and erased from the map, only to re-emerge in subsequent adulterated forms. Although Lithuania in general was plagued by confusion over its traditions and identity, Wilno provides an especially acute example of cultural confusion.

---

[166] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 23.

Wilno was a particularly ethnically "ambiguous" city. Not only was its past identity obscured, but its residents never created a new one. The population consisted of Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Jews, and Byelorussians. These various groups did not merge and function as a cohesive society, but instead attempted to preserve their cultures of origin in a new place. They spoke different languages, which caused the various groups to disagree about the name of the city. As Milosz asks, "Are there many cities whose names people disagree about? Poles say Wilno; Lithuanians, Vilnius; Germans and Byelorussians, Wilna. Even the river running through it has two names: Wilia is one; the other is more musical and seems to be invoking the spirit of some Nereid: Neris."[167] Any individual who grew up in Wilno during Milosz's time was exposed to all these conflicting influences, which added together, yielded no unifying social norms or code of conduct. For Milosz, however, this was a positive characteristic. As Milosz writes, "modern civilization, it is said, creates uniform boredom and destroys individualist. If so, then this is one sickness I had been spared."[168]

Lack of Social Relationships

Czeslaw Milosz was able to detach himself from the social structure because he failed to establish close, interpersonal relationships during his youth. From the time he started school, he was already an outsider because he was the youngest pupil in his class. There he developed an early intellectuality that prevented him from socially integrating into a number of organizations that were supposed to provide youth with a sense of community and friendship. He had trouble integrating himself into his Boy Scout troop. Later on, he resisted religion and nationalism,

[167] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 55.
[168] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 68.

which further isolated him from his peers. All these difficulties that Milosz had assimilating into his social milieu turned him into a solitary and timid individual who thought himself superior to those who were better integrated into this loathsome society, and therefore, lacked an informed, objective perspective of the social order.

From the time he entered a proper school in Wilno, Czeslaw Milosz was socially ostracized. He was one of the youngest students in his class, and therefore, one of the smallest, which subjected him to severe bullying. Milosz, "stood at the very bottom of the tribal hierarchy, which was based on respect for the fist. At top reigned the fifteen-year-old bullies."[169] These older bullies had been held back in their studies because of the war, but their dominant size and age trumped any embarrassment over their mental faculties. Gym class was especially painful for Milosz. Not only was he subjected to tests of physical strength and army-like drills, but he also had to change his clothes in the presence of these older, more developed boys. Milosz, though, discovered early on that he could get his revenge by becoming the best student in the class and the teacher's favorite. Although this role gave him a feeling of superiority, it did not help him make any friends. Instead, he became more solitary and focused on his work. The development of his intellectual faculties increasingly stole his attention and prevented any future attempts to integrate into non-intellectual social groups.

Milosz failed to socially assimilate in his Boy Scout troop because of his tendency to scrutinize and criticize social conventions. He loved the idea of scouting—hiking, bonfires, camping out, following animal tracks, pocketknives, and tying rope knots, but he disagreed with the strict discipline and the ideology the organization promoted. He viscerally resisted orders such as "form ranks," "count off to the right," and "stand at ease."[170] Speeches and discussions

---

[169] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 62-63.
[170] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 63.

consisted mostly of repetitive slogans promoting honor and respect and reverence for authority, which made Milosz bored. He craved speech that was more thought-provoking. He simply could not commit himself to this organization that he did not take seriously, so he made no effort to become integrated in the group, thereby revealing his asocial tendencies once again. His propensity for skeptical analysis of social organizations and the feeling of superiority that it provided also contributed to his social isolation in religious settings.

Although Milosz was never a religiously devoted individual, the church where he practiced his nominal Catholicism pushed him even further away from faith. St. George's church was attended by "good society," doctors, lawyers, military officers, and others of the bourgeoisie. Milosz disdained bourgeois society and cringed when he witnessed the behavior of these "inferior creatures." Taking part in rituals with "apes" humiliated him. He would ask himself, "how could their God be mine at the same time? What right had they to adore him?"[171] Milosz's conviction that he knew more than anybody else drove him away from this outlet for social connection.

When Milosz entered the university, his liberal beliefs continued to prevent social assimilation. A wave of nationalism had consumed the vast majority of students at his Polish university. Milosz, however, had an "almost obsessive hatred for the apostles of nation."[172] His journeys and the instability of his homeland penetrated him with ideas advocating tolerance and he knew early on that his beliefs "were out of step with [his] century."[173] Milosz could not bring himself to associate with nationalists, which left him with few groups in which he could find friends. By the time he found a group of budding intellectuals to which he felt he could belong, his "homeless" socialization had already shaped his personality and world-view.

---

[171] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 81.
[172] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 96.
[173] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 96.

After Milosz's third year in university, he finally realized that being a life-long outsider had made him into a solitary and timid adult who longed to connect with the world. During his journey with Robespierre and Elephant, he wandered through a park in Prague alone. He walked through the foliage, saw couples kissing, heard music, and was suddenly overcome by a feeling of hunger. This hunger was not physical, but spiritual. As Milosz writes, "I was an outsider, yet at the same time so avid for their reality I was ready to devour them all, whole and entire. Had I been sitting on a bench with my own girl, I would have been part of them, but I would only have deceived my hunger. My timidity drove me into solitude, but it was not only that. My erotic desire went further than any object, my pansexuality included the whole world."[174] Not willing to settle for simple interpersonal relationships, Milosz wanted to embrace the entire world. He longed to understand it in its entirety in order to extinguish the forces within it that disgusted him: the oppressive social conventions of bourgeois society, nationalism and intolerance; and he had found a group of university students that felt the same way.

Comfort in Intellectual Groups

During Milosz's university years, he finally felt socially included when he entered a status group of liberal intellectuals who united to counteract social convention and the right-wing. The Student Vagabonds Club, to which Milosz belonged, loathed the "sword-carrying snobs, drunkards, and fools in the fraternities."[175] It was democratically run and scorned social formalities. This brotherhood of fanatics espousing action and youth went on kayaking, hiking, and skiing excursions and delightfully engaged in intellectual battles with fraternity members who were powerless in discussion because they only understood sword duels and matters of

[174] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 150.
[175] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 110.

honor. The group's original ideological framework was leftist, but only in the sense that they wished to defy the "boring world of solid citizenry."[176] Members viewed the Vagabonds as superior to all other clubs in the university. They were united by ideas, which in just three years went from rebellious and leftist to communist. As they became entrenched in the dogmatic system of communist theory, the group evolved from an exclusive social circle into a band of radicalized communist intellectuals committed to political action.

The Student Vagabonds Club was an elite status group from the outset. This student organization was established by liberal university professors who were dismayed by the extent of nationalist influence in the schools. They wanted to counteract it, but the existing fraternities and other societies hardly lent themselves to this purpose. Milosz writes that in the university, "the anxious concern of enlightenment circles (mainly university professors) was the maintenance of a liberal elite, so they took steps to set up at least a small nursery. Our cell, therefore, had nothing subversive about it; the secrecy added to its charm, but it concealed no more than free discussions and ties of friendship."[177] Brought together and cultivated by liberal professors, these students felt superior to "less-enlightened" outsiders. Their unifying ideology was as much about opposition to the existing social order as their own intellectual superiority.

The Vagabonds found solidarity in their common ideas. Although the group did not initially promote a specific political position, all its members were skeptics and liberals that rejected the established social order. This propensity to rebel and criticize led to a common social condition. The members were social outcasts because of their resistance to social conventions and solitary because they thought they understood more than anyone else. When they found each other, their longings for community were satisfied. As Milosz writes, "we were

[176] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 111.
[177] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 108.

a group of fledgling intellectuals united by a common awareness that we both opposed our environment and dominated it with our minds. Our inevitable sense of clannishness, which I found again later on in every group, coterie, or editor's board with which I happened to be associated, was far more important than our rather foggy ideas."[178] It was not until after the group had bonded over their initial political leanings that their discussions carved out a concrete political ideology. The more they debated, the more left and communist they became.

Milosz's and the Vagabonds Club's gradual "migration" towards the communist left was a product of reasoning. Marxism intellectually empowered Milosz and his companions by providing them with a system of answers at a time when they could not make sense of social reality. Before their exposure to Marxism, the immensity of the past, chronicled as one event after another, produced anxiety in them, a feeling of powerlessness in the face of chaos. The dialectic of development, on the other hand, could easily explain everything. These separate events and separate facts did not exist, "each was seen against a 'background,' the soil from which it sprang, while at the same time, as if someone had pressed a button, a signal flashed across the consciousness: 'Feudalism,' 'Capitalism,' and so on."[179] With this "enlightened" total perspective, Milosz and his companions could finally become intellectual leaders. In their minds, they were the few true "subjects" standing over the massive sea of unenlightened objects. Thus, it was their responsibility to lead the masses and commit themselves to the communist cause.

This group of young intellectuals who originally spent carefree days hiking, kayaking, and discussing their ideas evolved into a political alliance bound by dogma. The Vagabonds now referred to themselves as "the I.C.—the Intellectuals Club—which resembled a Jacobin

[178] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 110.
[179] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 114.

organization planning strategic moves in the war against the extreme Right."[180] They drew up plans to undermine their enemy's (the nationalists) dominance in the university's student union. Camping trips with the I.C. involved hiding in bushes to read and comment on the classics of Marxism and singing revolutionary songs. Once a circle of friends that espoused the uninhibited exchange of thoughts and impressions, the Intellectuals Club was now a hierarchical organization that only wished to discuss the certainties of Progress and Revolution. Since Milosz was still unsure about his devotion to Marxism, he began to feel left out, sad, and betrayed.

Although Milosz disagreed with the Intellectuals Club's dogmatic adherence to Marxism, he could not leave it for fear of being alone again. At first, Milosz tried to mediate the gap between the ideology expressed through his club membership and his own political ideas. He compared himself to his colleagues and decided that he simply was not as courageous or as pure-hearted as them. Instead, he saw himself as "completely incapable of action, unfit for organizing or leadership, or even blind obedience;" it was he who was inferior.[181] Despite this conclusion, he became increasingly disaffected with the group's move to the far left. But when he had to decide whether to stay in or leave the group, Milosz "reacted emotionally, and out of habits of friendship sought a place among those whom [he] looked upon as my intimates—only they were becoming less and less so."[182] He could not cut himself off from the I.C. because that would have left him isolated again and defenseless before the Fascist-leaning Right. Instead, Milosz quietly left the Intellectuals Club when he graduated from the university in 1934 and moved to Paris. However, he did not break completely with communism until 1951, when he resigned as a diplomat for the People's Government of Poland. Briefly thereafter, he wrote *The Captive Mind*,

[180] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 116.
[181] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 118.
[182] Milosz, *Native Realm*, 118.

which explores how intellectuals like himself and his colleagues in the Intellectuals Club justified their work for the oppressive communist government despite their disagreements with certain aspects of communism.

The Captive Mind

In *The Captive Mind*, Czeslaw Milosz describes the power that the communist system of logic had over the mind of the intellectual and how intellectuals were able to conceal their disagreements with the New Faith that they had conceived through experience. According to Edward Możejko in his analysis of Milosz's works, *The Captive Mind* adhered to "a description of the most general laws of the system of government which was born with the 'new faith' and thus could be applied to the situation in all 'peoples' democracies."[183] Although Milosz primarily explains his ideas through the experiences of his former comrades, much of his analysis also applies to his own life. He begins the book by telling a story—"The Pill of Murti-Bing,"—about a drug which transports a "philosophy" of life that solves all metaphysical and ontological difficulties for those who take it. Unfortunately, the pill does not completely destroy one's former personality, so that those who succumb to it turn into schizophrenics. Murti-Bing is a metaphor for the communist system of logic, and the story is actually that of Polish intellectuals during the 1940's and 1950's. The schizophrenia is an internal battle between the tempting logical clarity that communist theory provides, and emotions and humanity within each individual that resists its cold scientific approach to reality. Milosz then explains the various reasons why intellectuals took the Murti-Bing pill, and thus, why intellectuals accepted dialectical materialism.

---

[183] Czeslaw Milosz, *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Poetry and Writing of Czeslaw Milosz* ed. Edward Możejko (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988), 16.

Milosz works with the same themes as Koestler in *Darkness at Noon,* but expands the discussion by focusing less on the logical and more on the intellectual's emotional motivations for espousing communism. Milosz takes the power of a perfect logical system over the intellectual as a given, but seeks to examine the intellectual's human needs that led them to the New Faith. The next major theme in *The Captive Mind* is *Ketman*, a concept Milosz found in Islam. Those who practice *Ketman* insist that one who knows the truth should do everything in his power to conceal his true convictions from those who have not come to the same realizations. In effect, it is the suppression of an opinion that allows an individual to uphold a façade of faith and obedience. For Milosz communism itself is a faith, a religion that worships the great dialectic of History. The followers of this "New Faith" commonly practice various forms of *Ketman* because their logical reasoning ties them to dialectical materialism, but the violent terror that the mission of the "New Faith" bring about call it into question. The use of *Ketman* silences these "irrational" objections.

Milosz applies these two concepts to four "portraits" of communist intellectuals. Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta, the featured characters from the next four chapters, were all friends of Milosz who served the Communist Party for an extended period of time despite their objections to the Party-line. In *The Captive Mind* Milosz "did not waver in exposing [his characters'] 'games,' their two-edged, not to say two-faced attitude towards the communist rulers."[184] His sincerity throughout the book, however painful, kept the analysis true to life and was "indispensable for the revelation of the tragedies not only of Polish intellectuals, but of Eastern European intellectuals in general."[185] Through the four "portraits," Milosz illustrates the intellectual's struggle with "Murti-Bingism" and *Ketman*, ultimately concluding that their own

[184] Milosz, *Between Anxiety and Hope*, 15.
[185] Milosz, *Between Anxiety and Hope*, 15.

devotion to reason kept intellectuals trapped in communism, and the only escape was through conscience-driven objections cultivated by lived experience. For the intellectual though, it is nearly impossible to listen to visceral reactions over logical thought.

The Pill of Murti-Bing

"The Pill of Murti-Bing" is a story that Milosz found in Polish author Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz's book *Insatiability*. A "study of decay," the book described a time in Poland during which western civilization was threatened by an army from the East. In response to living in an atmosphere of decay and senselessness, an overall lack of faith, and extreme despondency, the heroes in Witkiewicz's book begin to take Murti-Bing pills. This new drug is a means of transporting a "philosophy" of life, and those who took them immediately became serene, happy, and unconcerned with metaphysical and ontological difficulties. The eastern army won the war, and a life of "Murti-Bingism" began in Poland. Under "Murti-Bingism," the heroes of the book, once tormented by philosophical "insatiety," started to write and create art in service of society. They composed marches and odes rather than dissonant music and painted socially useful pictures rather than abstractions. However, since they could not completely rid themselves of their former personalities, they became schizophrenics.

Milosz relates this story to the dilemma of Polish intellectuals during the 1940's and 1950's. They faced a difficult decision: one must either die (physically or spiritually) or be reborn through Murti-Bing—the Communist faith. Murti-Bing is much more tempting to the intellectual than to the peasant or worker. For the intellectual "the New Faith is a candle that he circles like a moth. In the end, he throws himself into the flame for the glory of mankind."[186]

[186] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 6.

This strict mental conditioning fostered "schizophrenia" in these communists. The intellectual logic-driven mind was imprisoned by a simple, seemingly perfect system of reasoning, but his "irrational," human conscience resisted the Soviet Method because of the reality it produced. In Milosz's view there are four emotional foundations for accepting communism.

The first foundation that Milosz discusses is "the Void," or the alienation of the intellectual. There is a lack of religion in modern society, and therefore, a lack of a common thought system uniting people from different social strata. Philosophy has replaced religion, excluding the layman from analytical thought and alienating the intellectual who longs to belong to the masses. However, this spiritual division has been destroyed by Dialectical Materialism, which has made the intellectual useful to the state and the masses again. The intellectual now belongs to society while businessmen, aristocrats, and tradesmen have been dispossessed.

The second foundation is "The Absurd," or love for humanity and concern for the state of society. Some intellectuals began to see the absurdity of physiological existence and the delusion that each individual exists as a self. They believed that one must accept that "man" is a product of historical formation and realize that he must join the revolution and transform the world, rather than submitting to it. Intellectuals joined the communist cause because they were committed to justice and a "greater humanity." Each considered himself a friend of mankind; "not mankind as it is, but as it *should* be."[187]

The third foundation is "Necessity," or fear that his work is meaningless. Milosz posits that the intellectual sometimes fears "sterility" and therefore thinks and writes only within the given social and political limits because he is concerned with the significance of his work. To him, any thinking is nonsense unless some external authority supports it. The state's authority, although strong in itself, is nothing compared to the authority of a convincing argument. Thus, a

[187] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 11.

communist regime in power and the system of perfect logic that it advocated placed simultaneous pressure on the intellectual to conform to the Party-line. Any writer who debated with it, would be demoralized in two ways; he "would invariably be crushed by superior reasoning plus practicable threats against [his] future career."[188] In the end, the pains inflicted on the intellectual by the severe restrictions placed on his work are soothed by the feeling that he belongs to the new and conquering world, even if it is not as comfortable and joyous as propaganda would have one believe.

The fourth foundation is "Success." Intellectuals must overcome the guilt of being disloyal to their forefathers and civilizations of origin after they choose the "new order" over the "old." Although the guilt is painful, they believe that there is no way to save the world other than the "New Faith." These intellectuals will do everything in their power to guarantee a successful transition to communism because the establishment of a more just society would ease their guilt and reassure them that they had no choice but to betray the "old order" to preserve mankind itself. Success requires that the masses have complete faith in the "new order" and accept history as determined by the Party. Thus, these Intellectuals will participate in the propaganda and socialist realism that the Party demands.

Ketman

Milosz discovered the concept of *Ketman* in a book called *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia. Ketman* is a word from Arabic which roughly translates as 'hypocrisy' or 'conformism.'[189] It is a Muslim practice that insists that one who knows the truth should do everything in his power to conceal his convictions from those whom "God is pleased to maintain

[188] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 13.
[189] Milosz, *Between Anxiety and Hope*, 15.

in error." One who practices *Ketman* does not simply hide his true opinions, but resorts to all the possible ruses to deceive others. As Milosz writes, "one makes all the protestations of faith that can please him, one performs all the rites one recognizes to be the most vain, one falsifies one's own books, one exhausts all possible means of deceit."[190] Regardless of social position, *Ketman* raises the person with the truth to a state of superiority over anyone who is not worthy of attaining the truth. The one who practices *Ketman* knows that he is more intelligent and knows the "true path" while others do not.

Milosz applies the concept of *Ketman* to communism. The practice of *Ketman* perpetuated the intellectual's imprisonment in the closed logical system of the Communist Party. Intellectuals used *Ketman* to control the "schizophrenia" caused by their logic-driven belief in the dialectical method and their conscience-driven contempt for the political and social reality that communism actually produced. *Ketman* silenced anti-communist or anti-Party beliefs so that intellectuals could continue to believe in progress towards communist utopia and externally comply with the Soviet Method. Persecuted "deviations" from the Party-line are actually cases of the accidental unmaskings of *Ketman*. And those who are most helpful in detecting deviations are those who practice a similar form of *Ketman* themselves. Although the varieties of *Ketman* that can be practiced by followers of the New Faith are unlimited, Milosz names seven of the most prevalent. Each describes a unique reason why an intellectual who logically believed in socialism affectively disagreed with the Soviet Method.

National Ketman was practiced by those who had an unbounded contempt for Russia as a barbaric country. They believed in socialism, but not *Russian* socialism. *National Ketman* was particularly common in the communist countries of Eastern Europe such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia because the living standard and education level of the masses was much

[190] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 58.

lower in Russia than in their home countries. Intellectuals had to conceal their hatred for Russia because they knew that opposing Soviet Russia meant coming out against the center of world communism, and therefore, of world revolution. To conceal their convictions, they manifested loudly their awe at Russia's achievements in every field. They "carry Russian books under one's arm...hum Russian songs...applaud Russian actors and musicians enthusiastically, etc."[191]

The Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity was practiced by those who hated Stalin and held his regime responsible for the suffering in Russia and the hatred the Russian people inspire in other nations. They believed that Stalin extinguished the fire of revolution ignited by Lenin. This form of *Ketman* was more popular in the large cities of Russia than in the people's democracies, and was incredibly widespread if not universal in Russia during the Second World War. Despite their convictions, these intellectuals reasoned that Stalin's acts seem effective, even justified, perhaps, by an exceptional historical situation. The might wonder, "if He had not instituted exceptional terror in the year 1937, wouldn't there have been more people willing to help Hitler than there actually were?"[192] Stalin is an infamous stain on the bright New Faith, but they must tolerate him for the moment. When the transition to communism is achieved, the damage Stalin has caused will fade away.

Aesthetic Ketman was used by intellectuals who did not approve of the way culture was oppressed by the Stalinist regime. They believed that the people in the countries of the New Faith had uncommonly limited aesthetic experiences. In communist countries, the liquidation of small privately owned enterprises gave the streets a stiff, institutional look. Fear of persecution suppressed individuality, so the people adjusted themselves to the average in their gestures, facial expressions, and clothing. There was no freedom or expression in art and literature, only

[191] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 61.
[192] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 64.

red flags, the repetition of communist slogans, and socialist realism. Although *Aesthetic Ketman* was not the most burdensome for most intellectuals, each individual harbored an "unconscious longing for strangeness."[193] As a result, intellectuals suppressed their aesthetic needs by making their private spaces aesthetically pleasing, dressing well, and reasoning that the regime could proceed to the planned satisfaction of the aesthetic needs of human beings. Perhaps this lack of aesthetic is only temporary. It is possible that "in the year 2000 they will officially introduce art forms that today are considered modern in the West."[194]

Professional Ketman is espoused by intellectuals who feared being functionaries entirely at the mercy of political fluctuations. They worked for the Party, reasoning that they were in circumstances over which they had no control, so they should strive to do their best in the in life under the regime. In return, loyal service to the Party financed their independent writing and research, which was much more important to them. For instance, a scientist will attend congresses and deliver reports strictly adhering to the Party-line, but then go to his laboratory where he can pursue his own research according to scientific method. As long as his service to the Party provides him with access to a laboratory and money to purchase equipment, he will do as it wishes. The writer will produce Marxist analyses of literature and translate poems into Russian, so long as he is rewarded by the Party, reasoning that a few odes and articles do not determine the significance of his life. Privately, he will write other pieces that are more expressive and thoughtful.

Sceptical Ketman was practiced by those who believed that humanity does not know how to handle its sociological knowledge or how to resolve the problem of the production and division of goods. The first attempts to solve social problems by applying theory to reality were

---

[193] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 67.
[194] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 68.

interesting, but not precise enough. Russia took the theories and turned them into dogma. Now, the country stood in a state of chaos—massive violence, censorship, terror, and starvation. *Sceptical Ketman* was widely disseminated throughout intellectual circles. Despite his convictions, the intellectual "writhe[d] and wriggle[d] so to adapt himself to forms constructed according to the books but obviously not to his size."[195] Although the Party was mistaken, it was still the only force capable of eliminating the adversaries of a more humane society. Thus, intellectuals who practiced *Sceptical Ketman* could justify their services for it. In fact, their total lack of belief in the dogmatic Soviet Method helped them conform externally to the Party by allowing for complete cynicism, and therefore elasticity when adjusting to variations in the Party-line.

Metaphysical Ketman was used by individuals who regarded their world as anti-metaphysical and one in which metaphysical faith could not emerge. Through the New Faith, society was learning to think only rationalistically and materialistically. It was burdened by immediate problems and entangled in a class war. Religion was crumbling in a period of crisis because many believed that it defended the obsolete "old" order. This form of *Ketman* was particularly prevalent in countries with a Catholic past such as Poland. There, formerly religious intellectuals reasoned that after true communism has been established, the world may return to a better, more purified religion. Perhaps it was actually God's plan to use the Soviet Center to awaken the masses from their lethargy. In any case, one must "commend the Center for breaking new ground and for demolishing externally splendid but internally rotten [religious] façades."[196] Some practicing Catholics suspended their Catholicism while executing tasks for the Party; others came out publicly as Catholics and often succeed in preserving Catholic institutions

[195] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 71.
[196] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 72.

because dialecticians are ready to accept so-called "progressive" or "patriotic" Catholics who comply in political matters.

Ethical Ketman was used by those who opposed the ethics of the New Faith because they were based on the principle that good and evil are defined only in terms of service or harm to the interests of the Revolution. Their objection was mainly focused on the idea that under the New Faith, individuals are stratified in terms of their productivity and obedience. In fact, if it was feasible for the Party to imprison all citizens in cells and release them only for work and political meetings, it would undoubtedly be most desirable. They thought it was incorrect to measure people by these standards because they are the same as those used under industrial capitalism and also yield the same effects: it pits all men against all others in a fight for survival. This form of *Ketman* was not rare among highly placed figures in the Party and was especially prevalent among the old Communists. These intellectuals tried to compensate for their professional severity by becoming more honorable and sympathetic in their personal relations. This very feeling of compassion pushed them into the revolutionary movement in their youth. Socialist utopia is still the cause most precious to them, so they will denounce other Party members only when completely convinced that they are actually hindering Progress.

The various concepts behind Murti-Bingism and forms of *Ketman* are analyzed in the next four chapters in *The Captive Mind*. Each chapter is the story of a communist intellectual who Milosz knew through his own involvement in the communist regime. In the book, he renames them Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. Milosz explains that he did not use the real names of the individuals he portrayed because his "intention [in *The Captive Mind*] was to depict a worldwide phenomenon, not a local, Polish one. Poland exemplifies it. Why should [he] have

mentioned those people by name?"[197] All four men were writers who sacrificed their own literary and intellectual pursuits to write socialist realism for the Party. Their tasks were particularly important because a successful revolution required a successful dissemination of the New Faith. In fact, "after the 1917 Revolution in Russia, writers were given the honorary title of 'Engineers of Souls.'"[198] Each of Milosz's characters was drawn to the New Faith by human, emotional urges and remained in the Party despite his true beliefs about the mistakes and shortcomings of the Revolution and the New Faith. Devotion to logical reason and a longing for utopia trapped them in the movement, and *Ketman* reinforced the cage because it was the means by which these intellectuals concealed their dissent

Alpha, the Moralist

Alpha, who was actually Polish novelist Jerzy Andrzejewski[199], was a young, right-wing writer and "Intellectual Catholic," although his Catholicism was only a "cover." His work, filled with the enigma of moral purity, made him a famous moral authority in Poland. When Hitler's army invaded Warsaw, he reacted violently against the mass slaughter of the Jews. After the Red Army defeated the Germans, Alpha was incredibly angry at the destruction he had seen. In addition, his beloved wife was killed during the war. Through these events, Alpha came to the understanding that his right-wing loyalty could not justify many acts committed during the war. Renouncing his previous political stance, Alpha decided to live and be active, rather than dwelling on the past. He decided to serve the new Poland, start writing dialectically, and

---

[197] Ewa Czarnecka and Aleksander Fiut, *Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz* trans. Richard Lourie (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 147.
[198] Czeslaw Milosz, "Introduction" in *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism* trans. George Dennis (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 135-136.
[199] Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz, *Striving Towards Being* ed. Robert Faggen (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 5.

perform the work of the Party. The people eagerly accepted his works, and he became a respected writer. His later works turned stories of torture and destruction into smooth, tragic theater, which, as Milosz states, did not portray the truth. This style was a result of his conformity to the wishes of the Party. Although Alpha always wanted to appeal to humanity and moral dignity, the compromises he made in his writing in order to be accepted by the Party may have actually degraded his own morality.

Milosz's portrait of Alpha specifically illustrates the concepts of "Success" and "*Professional Ketman*" that he describes in the first two chapters of *The Captive Mind.* Alpha was convinced that only the "new" order could reconstruct Poland after the Nazi attack. He took the Murti-Bing pill because he could not idly wait for the masses to catch on to the New Faith. He needed to take action and lead the masses to enlightenment in order to hasten the rebuilding of Poland. Once under the spell of Murti-Bing, he wrote as he was told because he had no other choice. If the New Faith was the only force that could save his country, he needed to work for it, do his best under these circumstances. In any event, the financial rewards he received for his writings provided him with a comfortable life.

Alpha started working for the Communist Party because he wanted to accelerate the transition to Communism in Poland. After the Second World War, the country was in ruins. All institutions had collapsed, thousands of corpses—including many of Alpha's friends—lay in shallow graves along the roads, and Alpha's beloved wife was killed in a concentration camp. Alpha was angry, but rather than idly brooding, he wanted to look forward and do everything in his power to rebuild Poland. .In this time of despair, Russia was the only country that came to help. Alpha knew that "given the post-war circumstances, the Party was the only power that could guarantee peace, reconstruct the country, enable people to earn their daily bread, and start

schools and universities, ships and railroads functioning."[200] The establishment of communism was inevitable, according to both the political forces at work in Poland and the dialectic of history.

For Alpha to commit himself to the communist cause, he needed to abandon his long-standing loyalty to "something called fatherland or honor, but something stronger than any name."[201] After witnessing so much death and destruction, though, this task was remarkably easy. Alpha knew that the Nazis executed many members of the Polish underground, the group that resisted German forces in the name of Polish honor; the ones who were not immediately slaughtered were sent to concentration camps and eventually liquidated. To explain the need for such human sacrifice solely on the basis of loyalty seemed absurd to Alpha. He began to believe that "loyalty can be the basis of individual action, but when decisions affecting the fate of hundreds of thousands of people are to be made, loyalty is not enough. One seeks logical justification."[202] Communist theory provided that logical justification.

Alpha wanted to guarantee the Revolution's success in order to minimize the suffering of the masses. As a writer, Alpha would have very specific responsibilities under the new order. The new government could not succeed in stabilizing Poland unless all its citizens accepted the New Faith, and the spread of the New Faith depended on the distribution of literature. If Alpha wrote according to the Party's decree, he could provide comfort, hope, and a just society to the "human anthill, shaken out of its torpor and stirred up by the big stick of war and of social reforms."[203] It is no surprise, then, that Alpha began to work for the new people's government

---

[200] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 103.
[201] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 91.
[202] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 92.
[203] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 99.

that promised a better future for the terrified Polish masses. Gradually, however, Alpha's began to write socialist realism that pleased the Party, but was shamefully dishonest.

Thousands in Poland were tortured and dying around him, and Alpha transformed their suffering into "tragic theatre" that praised the mission of the Party. To Alpha, his simplified depictions of reality were just a slight compromise that he had no choice but to make, but unfortunately, "one compromise leads to a second and a third until at last, though everything one says may be perfectly logical, it no longer has anything in common with the flesh and blood of living people."[204] His writings had become nothing more than vulgarized dialectical regurgitations that perpetuated Progress that did not produce the peace that the Party doctrine had promised.

Although Alpha knew he filled his writing with lies, he could conceal his self-disgust and continue to work for the Party by practicing *Professional Ketman*. Alpha reasoned that if he wanted Poland to be restored, he had no choice but to serve the Party. And if he must serve the Party, he may as well be the best socialist realist writer it had, and accept the benefits of that position. Alpha reaped great spiritual and financial rewards by serving the party. For the first time in his life, he was a popular and respected writer. His audience did not consist of a small intellectual clan, but of readers recruited from the masses, which meant he was successfully spreading the New Faith. Alpha now spent his days "living in his beautiful villa, signing numerous political declarations, serving on committees and traveling throughout the country lecturing on literature, factory auditoriums, clubs and 'houses of culture.'"[205] He acted to bring society closer to utopia. Thus, Alpha's desire to serve humanity was fulfilled by working for the

[204] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 110.
[205] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 106.

Party, and yet his work for the Party no longer served humanity. This contradiction could only be maintained through *Ketman.*

Beta, The Disappointed Lover

Beta, who represents Polish journalist and poet Tadeusz Borowski[206], was a young man who wrote poetry about the Second World War in the "language of slaves." He felt that Polish nationalism and the war against Germany were purely irrational reflexes in a time of fear and disorder. His work lacked faith, religious or otherwise, and was very dark. Beta was conflicted about the discrepancy between what the world is and what he wanted it to be. Rather than promoting loyalty, Christian values, or vague metaphysical theories, he wanted a rational basis for his work and actions. When the German army took Warsaw, Beta was sent to Auschwitz and then Dachau. Fortunately, he survived several years in these camps and moved to Munich after the war. He wrote a book called *We were in Auschwitz* that described the social hierarchy inside the "concentration universe." The strong and clever were treated better by the authorities, and Beta's book explained that he was proud to have succeeded while others, less clever than him, had perished. In his books, Beta appeared to be a nihilist, but this impression was only a result of his ethical passion, his disappointed love of the world and of humanity. He wanted to depict with complete accuracy, a world where there is no longer a place for indignation. Humans in his stories were stripped of their tendency towards good and are ruled by their primitive impulses because Beta believed that the only way to change man is to change social conditions.

The Soviet authorities originally thought that his book was in opposition to the Center, but eventually realized that Beta had a true hatred for fascism and the "old" social order. He wanted to break the shackles of old society and rise up against it. Beta became more absorbed

[206] Merton and Milosz, 5.

into the ideology of the Center and worked for it as a prominent journalist and propagandist. He started writing to please the Party rather than to express his opposition to the political and social reality that it created because he wanted to be as useful as possible. However, what he wrote no longer reflected his true beliefs about the failure of the Soviet Method, and this discrepancy inspired him to commit suicide.

Beta specifically portrays Milosz's concepts of "The Absurd" and "*Sceptical Ketman.*" Beta fell under the spell of Murti-Bing because he had great concern for society and thought that a more just and humane world was only possible through the establishment of a humane social order; logically, Revolution and the transition to the New Faith. However, Beta began to have doubts about the actions the Party was committing. The New Faith had not produced justice and humanity as it originally promised, but rather unending, horrifying violence. Through *Sceptical Ketman*, though, Beta was able to continue playing a role in the transition to the New Faith. He reasoned that the New Faith in itself was not at fault, but the Soviet Method was a mistaken, dogmatic interpretation of it. Beta, who loved the world, could still conform externally to the Method because in the least, it eliminated the opponents to a greater humanity

Beta committed himself to the Communist Party because he loved mankind, not as it is, but as it *should* be. He believed that each individual "is not governed by good intentions, but solely by the laws of the social order in which he is placed."[207] The masses were ruled by a few primitive impulses that under the "old" social order engendered war, death, destruction, and terror, and imprisoned Beta in the concentration camp. For Beta, who needed to aim for a more just society, the old regime was unbearable, and he could no longer remain in a state of undirected fury and revolt. He resolved that, "man should somehow break these shackles, and

[207] Milosz, *The Captive Mind* 124.

rise even if he had to hoist himself up by his own bootstraps."[208] Dialectical materialism attracted Beta's attention because he thought it treated man realistically and put a new and better order in his grasp. Thus, Beta decided he should join the Party's mission and transform the world, rather than submit to it.

Even though the violence and instability of his country did not subside, Beta wrote incessantly for the Party, strictly adhering to the New Faith. The movement to which he committed himself continued to accelerate, "faster and faster, greater and greater doses of hatred and of dizziness."[209] The Method was a dogmatized version of dialectical materialism, and because of it, "the shapes of the world became simpler and simpler, until at last an individual tree, an individual man, lost all importance and he found himself not among palpable things, but among political concepts."[210] When the transition to communism appeared unsuccessful, Beta chose to push Party slogans even harder. Milosz once asked one of Beta's comrades why the Party had forced Beta to write propaganda articles rather than the stories and novels he wrote previously. "'No one makes him write articles,' came the reply, 'that's the whole misfortune. The editor of the weekly can't drive him away. He himself insists on writing them. He thinks there is no time, today, for art, that you have to act on the masses more directly and elementally. He wants to be as useful as possible.'"[211]

Despite the conviction that the New Faith did not provide the better humanity that it had promised, Beta was able to silence his criticism and keep working for the Center through the use of *Sceptical Ketman*. He reasoned that Marxism was right, but the Soviet Method was a vulgar interpretation of the real doctrine. The Party had never considered "what a philosophy of historic

---

[208] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 127.
[209] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 132.
[210] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 132.
[211] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 130.

change becomes once it sets out to conquer the world by the might of armies."[212] The Party commits acts of terror and makes mistakes, but in the end it still eliminates the enemies of human happiness, such as "class enemies, traitors, [and] rabble."[213] Therefore, he should continue to work for the Party because destroying the adversary is still Progress. The current communist regime at least leaves the door open for real Communism to be established. Nobody knew of Beta's inner torment until the day they discovered his corpse in his apartment with the gas jet turned on. Those who had contact with him in his last months observed that the difference between what he said in public and what he actually perceived was increasing daily. Moreover, they said that in the weeks before his death, he constantly spoke of the "Mayakovski case," i.e. he had in mind the great Soviet revolutionary poet who had committed suicide because his devotion to the Method was ruining the quality of his work.

Gamma, the Slave of History

Gamma, who represents Polish poet, novelist, journalist, and editor Jerzy Putrament[214], was a young writer born in the Polish countryside to the lower nobility. He was raised Orthodox rather than Catholic and was violently anti-Semitic. He wanted action, and considered arguments against racism as obstacles to action. Milosz originally met Gamma at the university. During this time, young intellectuals were in revolt against their environment because of shame over their undefined social status. Poland was in an economic crisis during which society was divided into the "Intelligentsia" and the "people," creating a sense of alienation for the intellectual. Gamma was intensely nationalistic at this time when nationalism could be equated with totalitarianism; however, he parted with the nationalists quickly and joined the "government

[212] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 134.
[213] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 133.
[214] Merton and Milosz, 5.

left" or the "Catholic left" because it was the political party that the Intellectuals Club, to which Gamma and Milosz belonged, supported. At this juncture, Gamma was not particularly politically involved, and his poetry was neither artistically notable nor politically meaningful.

Due to the "left-migrating" ideology of the Intellectuals Club, Gamma became a Stalinist. Out of devotion to the New Faith, he started writing articles, speaking at meetings, and marching in May Day parades—he acted. He was eventually put on trial for being a communist, but was acquitted. After Hitler attacked Poland, Gamma moved to Lvov, the largest city in Poland under Soviet occupation. Emotionally primitive, Gamma knew anger, fear, hatred, and enthusiasm, but not reflective emotion, and he clung to Party doctrine in his writing. As Hitler attacked Russia, a group of young intellectuals founded the Union of Patriots, an organization that acted in the name of the logic of History. They believed that dialectical materialism was always right and that sympathy for humans should not influence political decisions. The Germans tried to wipe out the intelligentsia, but the Union of Patriots persevered. Gamma then helped organize a new Polish army in the Soviet Union. He acted on behalf of the Party, but was artificial in his communist beliefs and his adherence to Party standards was very calculated. Gamma received many material benefits for his loyal service, believing they were just rewards for his understanding of the logic of History and his resistance to sentimentality. Eventually, he started to serve the Party by writing socialist realist literature in order to reeducate the people.

During this time, intellectuals understood that all discussion and thought allowed was that which justified the Center's decisions, so they practiced mental opposition, but could not engage in public outrage. Gamma became deeply pessimistic about the future of mankind. He acted loyally to the Center, but started to believe that the logic of History was evil; he thought Stalinism was overly brutal and considered himself a servant who did not love his master.

Despite his true beliefs, Gamma continued to support the Party-line through his propaganda and socialist realist writings, realizing in the end that his words were not his own.

Gamma particularly illustrates Milosz's concepts of "Necessity" and the "*Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity*." Gamma thought his writing was insignificant unless it was supported by authority. Authority in his circumstances was the new People's Government in Poland, which according to the New Faith, would conquer and liberate the world. He took the Murti-Bing pill because he wanted to feel as though he belonged to this new, all-powerful regime. Gradually, Gamma became disappointed with the revolutionary movement because it was no longer powered by the dynamics of the class conflict, but rather by the decree of the Center. He concealed his objections to the New Faith and continued to serve the new order through the use of the *Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity*. He reasoned that the terror that the New Faith produced was specifically the fault of Stalin's policies, but those policies were justified and even effective within the historical situation. Thus, Stalin must be tolerated for the time being, and slowly, after the successful establishment of the Communist regime, the damage Stalin did will diminish.

Gamma committed his writing to the logic of History because he wanted the approval of the new Communist government, which, according to the laws of History, would transform the world into a utopian society. Because Communism recognized that rule over men's minds is the key to rule over an entire country, Gamma had an opportunity to play a leading role in the Revolutionary movement. Before he started writing for the Party, Gamma's work was mainly uninspired, passionless poetry. He felt none of the, "intense joys of a writer, either those of the creative process or those of work accomplished."[215] After he started writing for the Party, his work was appreciated and significant. Gamma became one of the Party's chief press organizers

[215] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 148.

in the city of Lublin, and even in his fiction, clung to doctrine. Gamma wrote socialist realism, which tends to strengthen weak talents and undermine great ones. Now, his emotional primitiveness became a great asset to him because it "lent the semblance of sincerity"[216] in socialist realist literature. He held a high position within the People's government and relished in being part of the movement that would abolish and convert the existing order to a world of greater humanity.

Despite Gamma's secret objections to Stalinism, he continued to write on behalf of the Revolution. After the War, nobody in Poland doubted the necessity of the reforms that were being instituted. But now, the peasants were afraid; the workers did not feel that the factories belonged to them; small contractors and merchants knew they were destined to be liquidated. The theories said one thing, but according to reality, "this was, indeed, a peculiar Revolution; there was not even a shadow of revolutionary dynamics in it; it was carried out entirely by official decree."[217] When Gamma traveled to western countries, he stormed against Stalin's brutal methods, but still conformed to the Party-line in his work. He "considered himself a servant of the devil that ruled History, but he did not love his master."[218]

Gamma was able to silence his anti-Stalinism and continue to serve the Party and the New Faith by practicing the *Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity*. He reasoned that most of Stalin's brutal policies, such as the dispossession of the peasants and collectivization, were necessary at the moment. Five and a half years of Nazi rule had obliterated all respect for private property among most Poles. Obviously, landowners were not content, but peasants despised the old manors, city-dwellers "felt no particular sympathy for that feudal group of landholders; in

[216] Milosz, *The Captive Mind* 161.
[217] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 166-167.
[218] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 171.

fact, no one was upset by their loss of power."[219] Intellectuals thought it just that factories and mines should become the property of the state. The radical agricultural reform also seemed justified by the historical situation to Gamma. Stalin was evil, but the movement had to tolerate him for the moment. Soon, the country would be in a different historical situation.

Delta, the Troubadour

Delta, who represents Polish poet Konstanti Gałczyński[220], was a young intellectual who was inspired to write by his love of money, which he used to support his drinking habit. He was a very outstanding, tragic poet who portrayed the world as oppressive, although his poetry itself was free of sadness and despair. Delta was never political, but he shifted to extreme nationalism in 1937. Although he did not actually support nationalist ideology, he started writing in a nationalist fashion in order to gain admirers and revolt against the isolation of the intellectual. Eventually, Delta was drafted into the war, captured by the Russians, and then turned over to the Germans. Fortunately, he survived and came back to Warsaw to join the nationalist underground and continue writing for his audience.

After living for a time in Paris and Brussels, Delta returned to Warsaw and started writing for the State so that he could be a useful writer once again; his works helped create patriotism in Poland. He wrote about Soviet heroism, adhering to the communist line. Although Delta was never serious about socialist realism, he had to write in this style because it was the only form of literature allowed in Red Poland, and Delta wanted to serve his "master." The authorities started to publish his poems that adhered to the Party-line, but the poems were no longer interesting

[219] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 164.
[220] Merton & Milosz, 5.

because socialist realism was pervasive. He stopped writing poetry, but since nothing can be wasted in a socialist economy, he started to translate works for a living.

Milosz's portrait of Delta particularly exemplifies his concepts of "The Void" and "*Aesthetic Ketman.*" Delta submitted to the Murti-Bing pill because as an intellectual, he felt isolated from the masses. Murti-Bingism had the opportunity to make him useful to and appreciated by the people. He rejected the artistic restrictions that the leaders of the New Faith placed on his writings, but was able to silence them by reasoning that those restrictions were only temporary and that after the transition to the New Faith has been completed, aesthetic needs would be satisfied once again.

Delta began to work for the Communist Party because he was an alienated intellectual who longed to be useful and respected by the masses. Delta cared more about the style of his poetry and the audience it attracted than the subject matter of his poems. He scorned literary schools that catered to a small cluster of connoisseurs and ridiculed poets whose words could be understood only by a smattering of intellectuals. Delta "longed for a lute and a throng of admirers."[221] Even Milosz admits that, "it would be hard to find a better example of a writer revolting against the isolation of the intellectual in the twentieth century."[222] Before the people's government in Poland was established, Delta was already a popular poet. After the government was in place, those who directed literature and propaganda immediately recruited him. Delta was excited that his work would be distributed widely and that it now rested on a solid foundation: the rebuilding of his country and its national honor.

Delta's work never strictly adhered to wishes of the Party, but when tighter restrictions were placed on his writing, he could no longer use his humorous, enthusiastic style that made his

[221] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 182.
[222] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 182.

work unique. Delta's poems were always jovial, no matter what he wrote about, but now that he filled them with an optimistic subject matter, pictures of reconstruction and a joyous future, he enjoyed writing even more. Thus, he went wild. He incessantly wrote odes, satiric verse, and humorous prose praising the New Faith. However, his work stirred up much controversy among Party "purists." They were indignant because they thought Delta did not take Marxism seriously enough in his poetry. Initially, the more experienced members of the Party quieted the purists' outrage by arguing that Delta's writing style was "needed and useful *at this stage.*"[223] When the regime passed through that initial stage, Delta, like all writers was required to write socialist realism. According to the Center, "it was no longer enough to write on prescribed subjects; one had to write in a prescribed manner."[224] Delta was now required to be "serious" in his poetry. Publishers were instructed to print only his poems that demonstrated that he had reformed. Delta tried to oblige by the new restrictions because he wanted to serve his lord and the historical mission, but "deprived of their former exuberance, his poems no longer differed from verse ground out by second-rate rhymesters."[225] Because Delta's poetry was no longer useful propaganda, the Party gave him a new assignment; he was to serve it as a translator. A state publishing house commissioned him to do a translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Two years or so later, he did have a chance to write for the Center again.

Delta could silence his objections to the repression of artistic expression and continuously attempt to write for the Party through *Aesthetic Ketman.* He hated the restrictions placed on his writing style, but reasoned that in the future, the new order would proceed to a planned satisfaction of the masses' aesthetic needs. This is why two years after he was relegated to translator, he willingly began to write for the Party again. It seemed to him that the Party finally

[223] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 187.
[224] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 189.
[225] Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 189.

realized that official literature needed to be more exuberant and interesting. But Milosz predicted that his second tenure as a Party writer would be temporary just like the first.

Devotion to Party Logic and Practice of *Ketman* Among Polish Intellectuals

Milosz's observations about communist intellectuals' imprisonment in the New Faith's closed system of logic and their use of *Ketman* did not only apply to the four friends he portrays in *The Captive Mind.* Amazingly, despite Poles' national opposition to Soviet Russia, many espoused the Communist cause and adhered to the Soviets' dogmatic interpretation of Marxist theory. In the aftermath of World War II, many Polish intellectuals were convinced that without the help of Soviet Russia, Poland "might, squeezed between the USSR and a revanchist Germany backed by 'American imperialism,' have been reduced to the miserable dimensions of the Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw, perhaps to become yet again a battlefield for East and West."[226] Only the Soviets could save Poland from this fate, produce a "measure of autonomy" for the country, and lay the foundations of a socialist state with an adequate territorial base for prosperity.[227] This historical situation, coupled with logically convincing Marxist doctrine compelled many Polish intellectuals to serve the Party.

In her book *Them: Stalin's Polish Puppets*, published some thirty years after Milosz's *The Captive Mind,* Teresa Toranska interviewed five prominent postwar leaders of the Polish Communist Party. All five interviews support the theories that Milosz elucidates in *The Captive Mind.* Toranska observed that the logic of the New Faith imprisoned the intellectual. The minds of Polish communist intellectuals were so saturated with the New Faith, that they lost their ability to think any other way. As Toranska writes, the "language which these people have learnt

[226] Toranska, 10.
[227] Toranska, 10.

to speak encloses them in a world of communist dogma which they cannot relinquish. Inevitably, a lifetime of this has permanently warped their ability to think for themselves."[228] Their speech consists almost entirely of lessons in communist logical justification. In addition, all Toranska's interviewees—Julia Minc, Edward Ochab, Roman Werfel, Stefan Staszewski, and Jakub Berman—disagreed with some aspects of the Soviet Method, but they silenced their objections through the practice of Ketman and continued to externally conform to the Party-line.

Julia Minc was the wife of Hilary Minc, who was third in command in Poland until 1956. As a teenager, she joined the Union of Communist youth and later became a member of the Polish Communist Party. Although Minc never wavered in her communist beliefs, she did not officially work for a communist regime until age forty-two when she and her husband were summoned to Moscow. In Soviet Russia, Minc worked at "Kosciuszko" Radio, but after only a year the Mincs moved back to Poland. Upon her return, Minc oversaw the production of propaganda as the editor-in-chief of the Polish Press Agency. She finished her career as deputy head of the State Commission for Employment.

Julia Minc was trapped in the New Faith's closed system of logic. Whenever Toranska questioned the deeds of the Party, Minc justified them by invoking the historical mission of the Party. For instance, Toranska confronted Minc with a list of former comrades who had been either condemned or liquidated by the party; Minc knew them all and was fond of some. When Toranska asked Minc how she felt about their executions, Minc replied,

> in banking you have assets and you have losses. We waged a victorious war against fascism, and there were some bad things. But the victorious war compensated for all the bad. And anyhow, if you have to choose between the party and an individual, you choose the party, because the party has a general aim…[you cannot rebel] against the party, because that would mean you were rebelling against socialism, which aims to better the living standards of the working class."[229]

[228] Toranska, 7
[229] Toranska, 23.

Every time Toranska confronted Minc with descriptions of the terror and destruction that the Communist regime perpetrated or claimed that the revolution failed in its mission, Minc either provided this same response or flatly argued that Toranska had been given false information. Only once was Toranska able to provoke Minc to admit she secretly disagreed with the Party-line during her tenure.

When Julia Minc disagreed with the Party's decision to execute her comrade, she used *Ethical Ketman* to silence her objection. Toranska asked Minc about her relationship with Rudolf Slansky, a Czech communist leader who was arrested, given a prominent show trial on the charge of espionage and treason, and executed.[230] Minc stated that Slansky was "a very decent sort. [They] worked together at Moscow Radio." Surprised at her response, Toranska protested, "But he was a spy!" "Rubbish!" Minc retorted. Toranska reminded Minc that Slansky was convicted and sentenced to death for espionage, but Minc denied that his conviction meant he was actually guilty. Toranska, however, recalls that the Polish Press Agency, "where [Minc was] chief editor, said he was a spy."[231] Despite Minc's true belief that Slansky was innocent, she publicly declared his guilt as a service to the Party. She reasoned that the fate of an individual is insignificant when compared to the fate of the revolution and all of mankind. She needed to do everything asked of her to transform Poland into a communist utopia. Throughout the interview Minc tried to conceal her objections to the Party's actions, but she accidentally unmasked her *Ketman* in this one instance.

Edward Ochab initially joined the Communist cause as a soldier in the Red Army during World War II. He quickly ascended in the ranks of the army and from the summer of 1944 onwards held a number of high positions in the Party. He was a representative of the War

[230] Toranska, 380.
[231] Toranska, 22.

Council of the First Army of Polish Forces, Minister of Public Administration in the Polish Committee of National Liberation, member of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party, first secretary of the Polish Workers' Party, head of the Central Union of Cooperatives, head of the Central Council of Trade Unions, first deputy defense minister and chief political commissar of the Polish forces, secretary and then first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, head of the Council of State, and finally the head of the National Committee of the Front of National Unity.[232] Ochab eventually retired from Party service at age sixty-two.

Whenever Toranska asks Ochab for his opinion about the "questionable" methods that the Communist Party employed during his service to it, Ochab immediately reiterates the Party-line. For instance, when Toranska asked for his opinion on the Party's treatment of Wladyslaw Gomulka, general secretary of the Polish Workers' Party from 1943-1948, who was dismissed from his post for allegedly espousing a right-wing deviation from the Party-line,[233] Ochab stated that he was in favor of the expulsion of Gomulka because any leaning towards nationalism opposed Communism as "the ideology and political stand of the international working class, which cannot liberate itself without at the same time liberating all working people from exploitation and from man's oppression of his fellow man. In this sense everything that serves communism, Leninist communism, serves all of progressive mankind and clears the way for a classless society."[234] To reach utopia, it was necessary for the Party to displace ideological deviants from positions of power. Therefore, Gomulka's removal was justified. Throughout the interview Ochab repeated these same phrases regardless of the question that Toranska actually

[232] Toranska, 33.
[233] Toranska, 368.
[234] Toranska, 41.

posed because in his mind all the acts of the Party were justified by that mantra. Ochab, however, did admit that the Party frequently erred.

When Ochab disagreed with Stalin's decrees, he concealed his dissent through the practice of the *Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity*. For example, Toranska brought up Gomulka again. This time she asked Ochab about the instance when the Party accused Gomulka of "conspiracy" and arrested him without any proof of guilt. Ochab revealed that like a number of Party members, he "had great doubts as to the existence of this 'conspiracy.'"[235] But Gomulka's imprisonment was ordered by Stalin and Ochab knew that nobody could "just go up to Stalin and [protest] outright, so they played for time and drew the [legal process] out."[236] Ochab remained silent about his true beliefs and did not speak out against the trial, reasoning that "even such bitter things as this have to be viewed from a broader perspective. You have to see the long-term consequences of the stand taken by the USSR, by Cominform, indeed by all the communist parties."[237] Stalin's persecution of Party members seemed brutal, but was necessary at that moment in the larger historical process.

Roman Werfel joined the communist movement at the age of fifteen. By the time he was sixteen, he was already a secretary of the municipal committee of the Union of Polish Youth. After serving as the editor of the communist newspapers *Red Flag* and then *New Horizons*, where he worked with Jerzy Putrament, or "Gamma," Werfel became a leading party ideologist. He was editor-in-chief of the *People's Voice* and then editor-in-chief of *Nowe Drogi*, the leading organ of the Central Committee. Later, he was appointed propaganda secretary of the Wroclaw Provincial Committee, and then director of the Institute for the History of Polish-Soviet Relations at the Polish Academy of Sciences, a position he held until he was expelled from the

[235] Toranska, 47.
[236] Toranska, 48.
[237] Torasnka, 48.

Party. Fifteen years later, he was accepted back into the Polish United Workers' Party, but held no position because he had already retired.[238]

Roman Werfel was imprisoned in the logic of the New Faith since he read Lenin's *What is to be Done?* in high school.[239] Werfel reiterates the logical system when Toranska asks him for his opinion on Stalin's method of spreading communism to the Baltic States. He admits that Stalin was brutal, but Stalin defeated Hitler and therefore protected the interests of international communism. In any case, Werfel did not believe that "the Soviet Union [was] always and everywhere right. [He] merely [thought] that historically, and for the moment, it [was] right, because it [supported] genuine people's revolutions throughout the world."[240] The Party could make errors, but could not be dialectically wrong.

During his tenure in the Party, Werfel obeyed the orders of the Party leadership and justified his objections through the use of *Professional Ketman*. Werfel asserts that he had "never been in a position of having to do something under the threat of arrest or of being shot," but he did not always act on his own initiative.[241] For instance, Werfel admits that he knowingly "accused completely innocent people of espionage, treason and other extremely serious crimes" when the Party ordered him to, and many of his victims were purged and executed.[242] However, he concealed his reluctance to perform these tasks and justified his actions by reasoning that he was "a professional revolutionary, and that means hat I could be ordered to carry out a particular task which accorded with a common goal."[243]

---

[238] Toranska, 87-88.
[239] Toranska, 88.
[240] Toranska, 105.
[241] Toranska, 112.
[242] Toranska, 113.
[243] Toranska, 113.

Stefan Staszewski joined the communist movement when he was fourteen. At sixteen he joined the Union of Polish Youth, and went on to study in the Soviet Union at the Comintern's international advanced school. He returned to Poland as first secretary of the Union of Polish Youth Central Committee and later the secretariat of the same organization. Staszewski was arrested and sentenced to eight years in the labor camps of Kolyma, Russia; he returned to Poland after his release and became the secretary in charge of propaganda and then the head of the press section of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party. He was then appointed deputy minister of agriculture, first secretary of the Warsaw Committee and finally editor-in-chief of the Polish Press Agency. During his service to the party he worked with two individuals portrayed in Milosz's *The Captive Mind,* Jerzy Andrzejewski, or "Alpha," and Jerzy Putrament, or "Gamma."[244] Staszewski was expelled from the Party in 1968.

Staszewski spends much of his interview explaining the communist imprisonment in the logic of the New Faith. He states that a communist

> has absolute faith in the party, which means that his faith in it is uncritical at every stage, no matter what the party is saying. it is a person with the ability to adapt his mentality and his conscience in such a way that he can unreservedly accept the dogma that the party is never wrong, even though it is wrong all the time...whoever is able to reconcile that contradiction or, to put it in Marxist terms, that dialectical process—the party's infallibility and its fallibility—is a communist."[245]

Staszewski then admits that he was a communist in this sense: the party made formal mistakes, but was infallible because its mission was dictated by the dialectic of history.

Staszewski opposed the Party's strict adherence to a dogmatic interpretation of Marxism. He practiced *Sceptical Ketman* in order to silence his true opinions and continue working for communist utopia. During his service, the "party apparatus" was "conservative and dogmatic,

---

[244] Toranska, 130.
[245] Toranska, 128.

and unwilling to renounce the position it had attained in party life."[246] Staszewski cites that the party apparatus's "monopolistic and hegemonistic role in the life of the party…was what [his] dissent, [his] apostasy, consisted of."[247] He admitted that he was a product of that apparatus. However, Staszewski did not only tolerate the Party-line, but as a chief press editor and propagandist, he was responsible for spreading this dogmatic version of Marxist theory and converting the masses to the New Faith. He loyally pursued this mission for several years. He reasoned that the communist forces had defeated the Nazis and protected Poland from the western capitalist powers; the Party eliminated all opposition to communist utopia. Thus, its strict adherence to a vulgar form of the dialectic was justified.

Jakub Berman became involved with the communist movement when he joined the Union of Polish Youth during his university study. He was transferred to the Polish Communist Party and was appointed director of the department dealing with the intelligentsia at the Union of Polish Youth's Central Professional Section. He served as a member of this section and director of its editors. After more than a decade at this post, Berman was sent to Minsk, Byelorussia, to work on the paper *Standard of Freedom*, an organ for the Byelorussian Communist Party. After he returned to Poland, he was appointed secretary of the Union of Polish Patriots, and later appointed to the union's central council. Berman took part in the foundation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, but did not join it. Then he became a member of the Politburo of the Polish Workers' Party. After working on the Polish Workers' Party's plan to collectivize the countryside, Berman became an editor of the organization's ideological and programmatic declaration. He then joined the Politburo, member of the secretariat of the Central Committee, and member of the Central Committee's Organizational Bureau; which meant

[246] Toranska, 162.
[247] Toranska, 162.

Berman was now officially responsible for ideology, education, culture, and propaganda. He was a member of the Party's highest leadership. Berman was also a member of the Government Presidium, Deputy Premier, and Member of Parliament. He was expelled from the Central Committee in 1956.

Berman was so imprisoned in the communist closed system of logical justification that nearly thirty years after leaving the Party, he still justified the disastrous communist movement by appealing to the logic of history. During the interview, Toranska refers to the communist movement as "yet another disaster [brought] upon this nation."[248] Berman denies her assertion and contends that the Party brought Poland's liberation. Toranska asks him to explain, and Berman states:

> after all the disasters that had befallen this country, we brought it its ultimate liberation...We wanted to get this country moving, to breathe life into it; all our hopes were tied up with the new model of Poland...And we succeeded. In any case we were bound to succeed, because we were right; not in some irrational, dreamed-up way we'd plucked out of the air, but historically—history was on our side.[249]

Berman was so entrenched in the New Faith, that he could not even acknowledge the thousands of "Poles in prisons and camps," or any other form of violence and terror that the revolutionary movement brought about. He judged the state of his country only in terms of the theoretical historical process—the only perspective that reveals "truth."

Although Berman agreed entirely with the historical mission, he did not always agree with the methods that the Party used to pursue its mission. When Toranska asks Berman how he felt about the Great Purge trials, he admits that he questioned the validity of Stalin's absurd accusations and "thought that these [accused] people, if there were any doubts or reservations about them, ought to be dismissed from their posts or transferred to some other kind of work, not

---

[248] Toranska, 256.
[249] Toranska, 257.

sentenced."[250] Berman silenced his objections through practicing the *Ketman of the Revolutionary Purity.* During the Purges, he was responsible for explaining the situation in Soviet Russia to his Polish comrades. At the meetings of the Party intelligentsia Berman justified the horrors of the Purge by citing the Soviet Union's "extremely difficult" historical situation. He tried "to clarify the background, the situations full of conflict and internal contradictions in which Stalin had probably found himself and which forced him to act as he did; and to exaggerate the mistakes of the opposition, which assumed grotesque proportions in the subsequent charges against them and were further blown up by Soviet propaganda."[251] Berman reasoned that Stalin had no choice but to persecute Party members at this point in the revolutionary movement. Perhaps when the historical situation changed, his terror could cease.

All five of Toranska's interviewees exhibit the logic of *Ketman*, as well-described by Czeslaw Milosz. Almost thirty years after the publication of *The Captive Mind*, Polish Stalinist intellectuals were as unrepentant as when they joined the communist movement. Their testimonies demonstrate that Milosz's analysis of *Ketman* was representative of the Polish communist movement and, indeed, of Eastern European Soviet communism more broadly.

[250] Toranska, 207.
[251] Toranska, 207.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Karl Mannheim's theory of the *Freischwebende Intelligenz* and Alvin Gouldner's theory of the Culture of Critical discourse define the intelligentsia as a Weberian status group bound by self-ascribed honor on the basis of intellectual superiority to all others in society. In Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, we found that intellectuals are educated individuals who reject traditional systems of class stratification and form groups around their common educational heritage. They detach themselves from the social structure in order to expose themselves to every *Weltanschauung* in society. The intellectuals' disdain for the established social structure compensated for their lack of a real fundamental class affiliation with a feeling of moral and intellectual superiority. Unlike a group with a fixed class position and therefore a determined political viewpoint, intellectuals are free to choose their political beliefs and have a corresponding need to achieve a "total synthesis" or objective view of society. Intellectuals demonstrate their belonging to a status group through the way in which they exhibit solidarity. Intellectual circles synthesize a variety of *Weltanschauungen* to determine a common ideology that becomes the basis of the group's solidarity. Strict adherence to this ideology excludes outsiders who are not "worthy" of accessing the "total" perspective that characterizes an intellectual group's viewpoint.

In examining Alvin Gouldner's theory of the Culture of Critical Discourse, we found that the social detachment, devotion to rationality and objectivity, and the feeling of superiority that define Mannheim's free-floating intellectual intensify when intellectuals form groups. According to Gouldner, the analytical, abstract language practiced in intellectual circles creates solidarity among intellectuals and excludes outsiders. Thus, in a group setting intellectuals'

propensity towards the "total" perspective and an objective world-view is strengthened. The CCD rejects traditional systems of social stratification because it judges speech strictly on its intellectual merits and ignores the speaker's social position. Discussion is centered on one specific speech act: logical justification. Because the Culture of Critical Discourse is "situation-free," intellectuals regard it as isolated from and superior to ordinary languages and conventional cultures associated with the "laity." The laity's thought is constrained by the immediacies of everyday life; the intellectuals' thought is superior because it is unrestricted. Thus, under the CCD traditional forms of social stratification are replaced by an intellectual standard. Intellectuals believe they stand above the social hierarchy. Therefore, they are responsible and representative of the "whole" of society because they are the only ones who have access to the "total" perspective. This status group attributes honor to itself because of its educational heritage, mastery of justification, and commitment to common ideas.

The intellectual's characteristic detachment from the existing social order produced early sympathies for communism and other revolutionary ideologies. For an individual who withdraws from "society" and places himself above the current regime, the complete destruction and recreation of society appears to be a viable option as long as the revolutionary plan is logically sound. In addition, the intellectual's lack of social integration created a "spiritual void" that communism filled. Spiritual desires took a variety of forms: social belonging, concern for mankind, overcoming the alienation of the intellectual, and many others. In the end, many intellectuals joined the communist movement for "irrational," "illogical," or "emotional" reasons. However, once involved in the movement, the intellectuals' commitment to logical justification dominated their thought processes.

In other words, once intellectuals committed themselves to the communist movement, they became trapped in the communist closed system of logic. In the communist system of logic, all acts committed by the Party were justifiable by reference to a simplified version of Marxist theory. Intellectuals reasoned that according to the dialectic of history, the Party could make "formal" mistakes, but those mistakes were negligible because the ultimate goal of the Party was in accord with the movement of history. As long as the Party was the force that led the way towards communist utopia, it was infallible. The only logical error the intellectual could make was to desert or impede its historical mission. Despite the intellectual's personal "irrational" or "reactionary" objections to the terror and violence committed by the communist movement, he could not stop serving the Party because it was impossible to defeat communist ideology through reason. For many intellectuals, the discrepancy between belief and outcome created an agonizing internal conflict.

In order to elucidate the relationship between free-floating intellectuals and revolutionary ideology, I examined two case studies: Arthur Koestler and Czeslaw Milosz. Examining Koestler's autobiographies, *The Arrow in the Blue* and *The Invisible Writing*, and Milosz's autobiography *Native Realm*, I found that each author's uncertain class affiliation, lack of a single national or cultural influence, and inability to established close interpersonal relationships resulted in detachment from and disdain for the established social order. Their condition as detached, free-floating intellectuals predisposed them to espouse revolutionary ideology because they held no value in the existing order. Both authors found a feeling of social belonging only among other *Freischwebende Intelligenz,* i.e. in intellectual circles. Their involvement in intellectual groups led them to sympathize with and get involved in the communist movement. Like so many others, both disagreed with aspects of the Communist Party-line, but found

themselves trapped in the communist system of justification. Due to their access to and involvement in intellectual groups, Koestler and Milosz's autobiographies and literature reflect not only their own experiences, but the experiences of many intellectuals of their generation. While Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon* focuses on the way rationality and logic dominate the mind of the intellectual, Milosz's book *The Captive Mind* explains the process by which intellectuals silenced their objections to the decrees of the Communist Party and justified their continued service to it.

Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon* explored the intellectual's inability to break free from the closed system of logic instilled in communist ideology. His main character, Rubashov, modeled after former communist leader and prominent Party intellectual Nikolai Bukharin, disagreed with some aspects of the Party-line and was arrested for joining an oppositional organization. Although he was innocent of the accused crime, he knew that his conviction and execution were inevitable. His only choice was whether to confess to the crime as a "last service" to the Party or to die in silence. Rubashov knew that his decision to confess or to remain silent was his last chance to solve the internal conflict that had plagued him for years. Confession would have perpetuated the Party's terror, but would have assisted the historical mission; silence would have signified Rubashov's abandonment of the historical mission, but would have finally cleared his conscience and would have represented his repentance for his involvement in communist terror. Initially, Rubashov refused to confess because he had many objections to the violent and destructive Soviet Method, and no longer wanted to play a role in perpetuating the terror.

However, two individuals, Gletkin and Ivanov, were responsible for forcing a confession from Rubashov. Gletkin, a new generation Bolshevik and non-intellectual, believed that the best

way to obtain a confession was through physical torture, but Ivanov, an old generation Bolshevik and an intellectual, knew that physical torture would be ineffective. After so many years in the Party, Rubashov would have been able to withstand any amount of physical torture; the only way to make him capitulate was through the pressure of the logic to which he had devoted his life. Ivanov's theory proved correct. After Ivanov forced Rubashov to reiterate the justifications for the Party's deeds that he had used over his years of service, Rubashov capitulated. Koestler's novel illustrated the power that a logical system has over the mind of the intellectual. For intellectuals, logic is always supreme; thus, they are always at the mercy of a system that professes perfect reason and which, therefore, cannot be defeated by reason.

Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind* expanded Koestler's ideas by focusing on the way Eastern European communist intellectuals managed the internal conflict between their often emotionally-based criticisms of the Party-line and the theoretical infallibility of the Party. First, in "The Pill of Murti-Bing" Milosz described in detail the emotional reasons that compelled intellectuals to join the communist movement. The four emotional foundations that Milosz described in detail were the alienation of the intellectual, a commitment to justice or "greater humanity," the intellectual's fear that his work is meaningless without the approval of authority, and the need to ensure a successful transition to communism, in order to ease the guilt from abandoning the "old order" for the "new." Then Milosz introduces the concept of *Ketman*, a Muslim practice that enabled intellectuals to conceal their objections to the Party's decrees, justify those decrees, and externally conform to them. Through *Ketman,* intellectuals could maintain a set of conflicting beliefs: their true beliefs, and the beliefs they were expected to have under the New Faith. Milosz illustrates the intellectual's emotional foundations for faith in communist theory and practice of *Ketman* through portraits of four communist intellectuals.

Although their names are obscured, these four characters were all writers and friends of Milosz who served the Communist Party for many years despite their disagreements with it.

By applying Milosz's ideas to five interviews with Polish communist leaders, I found that the imprisonment of the intellectual in the communist closed system of logic and the practice of *Ketman* were sociologically representative. Each of Teresa Toranska's five interviewees exhibited a dogmatic adherence to communist logic, and each, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, admitted that he or she disagreed with some actions taken by the Party or some aspects of the Party-line. All of them silenced their dissent, justified the actions of the Party, and continued to externally conform to it.

The concepts I explored in this thesis also relate to Nazism. Nazism is often viewed as the prime example of an ideological cause or a utopian dream that convinced groups of people to justify massive violence and ignore humanity. Communism is an equally appropriate example of the systematic justification of violence. However, the longevity of many communist regimes complicates detailed analysis. Unlike Nazism which lasted only about a decade and was therefore representative only of a specific generation in Germany, Communism lasted for several decades in many countries.

My analysis focused on the unique experience of communist intellectuals in Stalin's time. Because the subject of my research was specifically these intellectuals, my examination became largely one about the internal conflict fostered by the intellectual's dissenting thoughts and impressions and the logical system that trapped them. We must not forget that one of the qualities that defines the intellectual is his inclination to critical thought. The internal conflict existed in intellectuals' minds because even after they committed themselves to the communist regime, they could not stifle their critical tendencies. My subjects' condition as intellectuals

enabled them to espouse a revolutionary ideology and consistently logically justify a violent regime, but at the same time, it produced the internal tension that caused at least some to relinquish the historical mission, leave the Party, and discontinue their participation in revolutionary terror, even if the departure was through suicide.

This examination of intellectuals poses broader sociological questions about the role of non-intellectuals, the uncritical "laity" above which intellectuals raised themselves, in the communist movement. Just as intellectuals were drawn into the communist movement through "emotional" factors, the laity surely was as well; or else, they were persuaded by their proletarian class status. Once committed to the utopian goal of history, the closed system of justification and the vulgarized dialectic can be learned by rote. In the uncritical mind, such justification may effectively defeat any reaction to mass violence after one voluntarily commits oneself to an ideology or has been conditioned with an ideology, as many later generations of communists were. Without an inclination to critical thinking a ruling regime that supports a violent ideology can exist largely unopposed and produce an unprecedented level of violence. Perhaps such an examination could explain the mindset of the "Gletkins" from *Darkness at Noon*, the new Party leadership that assumed power after the Purges, or even after Stalin's own death.

Works Cited

Borkenau, F. *The Communist International.* London: Faber and Faber, 1938.

Cesarani, David. *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind.* New York: Free Press, 1998.

Cohen, Stephen F. *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Congdon, Lee. *Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism.* DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001.

Coser, Lewis, A. *Men of Ideas: A Sociologist's View.* New York: Free Press, 1965.

Czarnecka, Ewa and Fiut, Aleksander. *Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz.* trans. Richard Lourie. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.

Feuer, Lewis S., "What is an Intellectual?" in *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals.* ed. Aleksander Gella. London: SAGE, 1976.

Gouldner, Alvin W. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class.* New York: Continuum, 1979.

Gramsci, Antonio. "The Intellectuals." in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* trans. and ed. Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

The Great Purge Trial. ed. Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965.

Koestler, Arthur. *Arrow in the Blue.* New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon.* New York: Macmillan, 1941.

Koestler, Arthur. *Dialogue with Death.* trans. Trevor and Phyllis Blewitt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942.

Koestler, Arthur. *The God that Failed.* New York: Harper Bros., 1949.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Invisible Writing.* New York: Macmillan, 1954.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Yogi and the Commissar and Other Essays (1941-45).* New York: Macmillan, 1946.

Kolakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth and Dissolution, Volume III: The Breakdown.* trans. P. S. Falla. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

Kolakowski, Leszek. *Toward a Marxist Humanism: Essays on the Left Today.* trans. Jane Zielonko Peel. New York: Grove Press, 1968.

Konrád, George and Szelényi, Ivan. *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power: A Sociological Study of the Role of the Intelligentsia in Socialism.* trans. Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.

Larina, Anna. *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow.* trans. Gary Kern. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1988.

Levene, Mark. *Arthur Koestler.* New York: Frederick Ungar, 1984.

Levene, Mark. "The Mind on Trial: *Darkness at Noon.*" in *Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon.* ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.

Matthiessen, F. O. "The Essays of Arthur Koestler." in *Arthur Koestler.* ed. Murray A. Sperber. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Humanism and Terror.* trans. John O'neill. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Merton, Thomas and Milosz,Czeslaw. *Striving Towards Being.* ed. Robert Faggen. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *Beginning with My Streets.* trans. Madeline G. Levine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.

Milosz, Czeslaw, *Between Anxiety and Hope: The Poetry and Writing of Czeslaw Milosz.* ed. Edward Możejko. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Captive Mind.* trans. Jane Zielonko. New York: Vintage International, 1990.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Issa Valley.* trans. Louis Iribarne. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Land of Ulro.* trans. Louis Iribarne. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981.

Milosz, Czeslaw. "Introduction." in *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism.* trans. George Dennis. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition.* trans. Catherine S. Leach.

New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.

Milosz, Czeslaw. *To Begin Where I Am.* trans. Bogdana Carpenter and Madeline G. Levine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.

Orwell, George. "Arthur Koestler." in *Arthur Koestler.* ed. Murray A. Sperber. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Pearson, Sidney A. *Arthur Koestler.* Boston: Twayne, 1978.

Pels, Dick. "Privileged Nomads: On the Strangeness of Intellectuals and the Intellectuality of Strangers." *Theory, Culture & Society.* 16 (1999): 63-86.

Simmel, Georg. "The Stranger," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel.* trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe: Free Press, 1950.

Spender, Stephen. "In Search of Penitence." in *Arthur Koestler.* ed. Murray A. Sperber. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz, ed. Robert Faggen. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

Toranska, Teresa. *"Them" Stalin's Polish Puppets.* trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.