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THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN EASTERN EUROPE

by Steven Sampson

No society works exactly like its constitution, and no organization functions exactly according to its official administrative guidelines. In the life of all societies and all bureaucratic organizations-East and West-there exist a whole variety of "informal structures" by which people accomplish their delegated tasks or through which they achieve their own personal goals. In the West, we speak of such informal structures in terms of "networks" or "connections." Those who "know somebody" can go around the bureaucratic queue or obtain free goods and services which others have to pay for. When the use of such connections becomes too blatant, we call it "nepotism" or "corruption." When they take on an openly acknowledged market value we call it "bribery." For most of us, corruption and bribery constitute the legal and moral limits of informal organization.

These limits seem more flexible when we examine informal organization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, however. These societies (it would only create confusion to call them "socialist" or "real socialist") are dominated by the presence of large scale bureaucracies in every sector of economic, political and social life. One would think that their bureaucratized character would tend to restrict or progressively inhibit informal organization. Nevertheless, evidence of daily life in Eastern Europe-evidence furnished by Western researchers and journalists, by East European emigre writers, and by the official press itself—all point to quite the opposite: an informal sector which not only exists but actually thrives within the interstices of bureaucratic organization. In the sphere of interpersonal relations, informal structures manifest themselves via the numerous "favors," neighborly exchanges of goods and services, and by the constant use of friends and connections to obtain scarce resources. Within each of the bureaucratic institutions of Eastern Europe, informal structures make themselves felt. In the planning system it takes the form of underfulfillment, unexpected overfulfillment, "distortions" of the plan and the constant improvisation by which the planning system operates. In the

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bureaucracy it appears in the form of "formalism," "poor organization" (as used in the media), as apathy, nepotism, outright corruption and chaos. In the economic institutions the informal sector is expressed as the underground, quasi-criminal or other "second economy" activities. In the sphere of information distribution, informal structures operate in the official sector of sanizdat, tamizdat, rumor, and gossip. Within the sphere of folk categories, official designations as "peasant," "worker" or "functionary" pale in importance with the unofficial social categorizations known simply as "us" and "them." And finally, in the sphere of social values, the official ethos of equality of opportunity and enlightened "socialist man" competes with a "second consciousness" stressing friends, connections, conspicuous consumption, status hierarchies and utter contempt for any activities in the public sphere.

9. For example, in Poland, "everything that exists in the gap between family and nation, the whole range of institutions operating there...is...the sphere of 'them.'" Cf. M. Vale, Poland: The State of the Republic—Two Reports by the Experience and Future Discussion Group (DIP), (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 15. Whether these make a new class, or strata, or particular oligarchic group is subsidiary to the fact that a category of "them" clearly exists. Deliberate is about who belongs to "them" and how one keeps from falling back into the category of "us." Cf. M. Mathews, Privilege in the Soviet Union (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978). A. Zinoviev, The Reality of Communism (London: Victor Gollins, Ltd., 1984); M. Volskiy, Nomenklatura (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984); D. Willis, Class: How Russians Really Live (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).
How do we account for the presence of so much non-bureaucratic behavior in societies which appear to be so bureaucratized? One explanation could be that informal structures "fill gaps" in the inefficient running of the bureaucracy. In this sense, informal structures are seen as "secondary," as minor dysfunctions of the system which help it to "muddle through." Another explanation would be to see informal organization — especially ties of kinship, nepotism and suspicion of the state — as an inheritance from the peasant past, destined to be eliminated. This is the official view. Both explanations are obviously true. Yet, they simply beg the question of why, after 40 years of "perfecting" (not to mention the USSR's 63 years), the East European bureaucrats cannot fulfill their ostensible tasks; i.e., why such "survivals" seem not only to persist, but are by most accounts consolidating themselves. It seems that in Eastern Europe, informal organization has itself become institutionalized. Along with the official polity there is what Gitelman calls a "second polity." Instead of creeping bureaucratization ("increasing role of the party") there is a creeping "Georgianization" of Soviet-type societies in which friends, networks, patrons and payments are facts of life for both the ordinary citizen and the elites.10 Here lies the paradox of these seemingly bureaucratized societies: What appears to be "secondary" for some observers seems "backward" for others and for still others "the very essence" of these systems.11 The object of this paper is to offer a more systematic analysis of Eastern Europe's informal sector. It first discusses the components of informal social networks and then goes on to describe three types of linkages between informal structures and formal institutions. The final section of the paper compares informal structures across Eastern Europe; it is via such comparisons that we can decipher the potential for stability, crisis or social transformation in these societies.

The data for this paper stems originally from my own anthropological fieldwork on the informal sector in Romania.12 However, it also incorporates

The research and data furnished by other social scientists, journalists and emigres, such that the informal sector can be understood from a more comparative perspective.13


Anthropologists such as Clyde Kluckhohn, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Geoffrey Gorer were instrumental in the beginning of Soviet Studies in the United States, Kluckhohn, a Navaho expert, headed the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, and coauthored "Inside the Soviet System: Work, the structure was co-director of Columbia University's Research on Contemporary USSR Project, from which emerged Mead's Soviet Attitudes toward Authority, Benedict's "Child Rearing in Eastern Europe," and Gorer and Rickman's The People of Great Russia, source of the famous "Swaddling Hypothesis." "Journalistic sources are particularly important for the Soviet Union, where long-term participant-observation is largely impossible for anthropologists. Helen Popper, Russia's New Socialists (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1976) occupies a singular place in Soviet Studies as a source on daily life in the USSR. See also R. Kaiser, Russias: The People and the Power (New York: Athenaeum, 1976); B. Shipka, Russia: Broken Idols, Sotem Dreams (New York: Time Life Books, 1983), and D. Willis, Class, op. cit. East European dissidents, emigres and exiles have also produced excellent "native ethnographies" of their own systems, focusing naturally on the gap between official ideology and everyday reality. While less ambitious than the work of Bairo, Konrad and Szelenyi, Feher, Hiler and Markus, "Casals" (pseud.) or Djijas, the data from these native ethnographies is quite useful. Previously cited are the works of Znaniecky, Glasov, Kenedi, Simis, Szelenyi, Znaniecky, Schlapentohl, Hirszowicz, and the Polish DiR Research Center (USA). One can add here D. Bonavia, Fat Sauna and the Urban Guerrillas: Protest and Conformity in the Soviet Union (London: Hamilton, 1975); V. Broklin, Hustling on Gypsy Street (London: W.H. Allen, 1976); M. Harasztis, A Worker in a Workers' State (New York: Universe Books, 1978); V. Zaslavsky, The Starving (New York: Telos Press, 1985).

The Soviet and East European official press contains numerous case material on informal structures, mostly under the guise of exposés of corruption or nepotism. These are frequently analyzed in the Research Reports of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. E. Lampert's Whistleblowing in the Soviet Union (op. cit.) has attempted a more systematic study using the press and other sources.

One final source for the study of the informal sector, unused in this paper, remain fictional works: Konrad's Case Worker and City Builder, Solzhenitsyn's Cancer Ward and First Circle, and Znaniecky's Taunting Heights, Radiant Future and Home Sweet Home, below's New Life, etc. Soviet trivial literature from the post-war period is explicitly analyzed from the viewpoint of human relations in V. Dunham's In Stalin's Time, Middle-Class Values in Soviet Fiction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) while R. Hingley's The Russian Mind (London: The Bodley Head, 1977) uses literature in understanding the Russian and Soviet personality. I wish to emphasize again that this list of sources is in no way meant to be exhaustive but instead provides clues as to what kind of sources could be employed to elucidate the informal sector.
one having direct access to or ownership of scarce resources. This may be a powerful landlord in a feudal system or a party secretary in a socialist system. His "clients" seek to gain access to these resources by offering the patron gifts, services, or loyalty. It is characteristic of patron-client relations that they are individual centered, that the resources exchanged are of unequal values (e.g., bureaucratic access in return for accorded prestige), and that they rely on moral rather than simple utilitarian exchange. In many East European villages, peasants send their first batch of strawberries to the local schoolteacher, or ask the doctor to be godmother to their child in the hope they or their children will receive special attention. Between the patrons and clients are people who may not own the scarce resources, but who can obtain access to them via their own networks. These are the "brokers." The village party secretary is a patron to other villagers. However, when villagers have a problem with the regional bureaucracy, he functions as a broker. Typically he may have a friend in the county capital who can help them, etc. Depending on the situation, most East Europeans variously function as brokers, clients and patrons in different contexts.

Informal structures, be they horizontal or vertical, serve as alternative means of allocating resources. They thus compete with traditional bureaucratic means of re-distribution. Hence, under normal conditions, the organization's manager has the right to the chauffeured car, his assistant to representation money, and the office chief unrestricted phone calls. In the informal hierarchy, however, these resources may be reallocated along lines of kinship, friendship, ethnicity or patronage: the manager's son-in-law uses the car, his friend gets the company credit card for a free lunch, his fellow hometown chum gets a cut-rate deal on spare parts, etc.

The Significance of Informal Organization

Now most of what has been described above can be found in any society — in the West, the Third World and in Eastern Europe. It is a truism to say that there is no bureaucracy without corruption, and no corruption without bureaucracy. But is there a genuine difference between the way informal organization functions in the West and in socialist Eastern Europe? The answer is yes. In the West, informal networks function largely as supplements to the formal system of market relations and welfare bureaucracy (at least for the middle and working classes). They are important, to be sure, but not vital. All of us need these networks some of the time (and a few of us need them all the time).
Informal structures, however, may also lead to the achievement of goals quite contrary to those officially mandated by the organization or society. Here it operates corruptly, typical examples of such corruption being the petty bribe or more spectacular cases of nepotism or embezzlement. The corrupting aspects of informal organization may also begin to generate their own alternative social hierarchies and value systems. That is, they may generate a "second policy," "second society," "second culture" instead of "second consciousness."

The organization may itself malfunction, but the system as a whole muddles through. There is perpetual crisis - crisis is the normal state of affairs, whether it is a factory trying to make its plan at the end of the month or a peasant trying to board a bus which is already full. Yet the crisis does not lead to any sort of social or institutional reform (instead of revising the plan the manager inflates the figures; instead of demanding extra buses the peasant bribes the driver to get on).

In certain cases - particularly when political legitimacy declines and access to material resources (food, fuel) becomes so inadequate that not even corruption will suffice - the informal organization takes on a system-threatening character. People formerly content to ignore or evade official goals and pursue their private interests now begin to articulate these interests in the public sphere. From being a nuisance, informal organization becomes a genuine destabilizing force in the system.

The "problem" of informal organization is precisely this triple potential: that the same kinds of alternative channels or informal structures can serve benign, corrupting and system-threatening functions simultaneously. And that in Eastern Europe there seems to be no way to break out of this circle. The state is constantly seeking to restore a balance, so that the benign functions will predominate, the corruptive elements are kept in check, and the system-threatening elements repressed.

**Getting Things Done (by any means necessary).**

Most East European organizations - from the planning bureaucracy to a small village collective farm - are subject to overambitious plans, over-centralized control, and inadequate resources. Monetary incentives are lacking or are deemed ideologically improper, while crude coercion is seen as impractical in building an advanced industrial society. The mobilizing ability of intermediate institutions is similarly inadequate: these institutions are discredited or illegitimate in comparison with the sphere of primary group loyalties such as family, neighborhood, church or ethnic group (hence the view of Poland as a "federation of families"). Moral incentives or appeals to commonly recognized goals such as "development," "achieving socialism," "self-reliance" or "overcoming a temporary crisis" have not proven effective.
in the long run. Hence, other supplementary means have to be found to help fulfill the plan and achieve social objectives. A typical strategy for Soviet enterprises is to employ a “fixer” (tolkach), who functions as a broker between various organizations, using connections and bribes to obtain scarce supplies. Though formally illegal, such transactions are usually overlooked as long as the plan is fulfilled. In these “societies with a plan” (rather than “planned societies”), the end justifies the means, and the means used are often “informal.”

Attaching a broker to a formal institution is just one strategy. Another is to create artificial families who out of moral commitment will accomplish tasks which bureaucratic directives or standard salaries could not. In the USSR and other East European countries, brigades of youth are sent to outlying zones in a kind of frontier atmosphere to build railroads or waterworks.

Still another strategy used by the state to achieve the goals of formal organization is to appeal to existing family loyalties and integrate them into the operation of the enterprise. In Romania, the collective farm system now operates by allocating a piece of land to individual farmers who must weed, harvest, and deliver the final crop. Payment is made according to the amount delivered rather than the actual labor time. How the collective farmer works the land—whether he actually labors on it—is no longer the concern of the collective farm organization. In fact, many collective farmers cultivate the land with the help of their families: the husband comes home from the factory and the children help out on weekends or during vacations. The collective farm gets the benefit of this family labor without having to pay for it.

In similar fashion, many village mobilization campaigns are often linked to ties of kinship and neighborhood. A local mayor will mobilize his kinsmen to help out during a voluntary work brigade. The kinsmen will come not because of the abstract appeal to “socialist voluntary work,” but because they are “family” with the mayor. The creation of such sentimental ties is often a conscious intention of local and middle level bureaucrats in Romania. They often make villagers or clients feel that they are getting a special favor even when they are simply carrying out their normal duties. In this way, the villagers or clients are made to feel “in debt.” When the mayor comes around to ask the villager to sign a contract to raise a pig for the state, or to work on a Sunday brigade, the villager feels obliged to go, but this is a personal obligation to the mayor rather than a social obligation as citizen of a socialist state. This


to a "naive credulity in reverse. People who trust no one and believe nothing will tomorrow accept the most improbable rumors and trust the first clever demagogue who comes along."

The Polish "informational psychosis" is amplified in Romania. Here the legitimacy of informal channels is so great that not only is the official press not trusted, but whatever is not in the papers must be true. This makes plausible the most fantastic rumors: e.g., that President Ceausescu’s wife is really a double, or that Romanian King Michael landed in a remote area in his helicopter, or that a Bucharest restaurant is serving human meat, etc.31

In Romania, the use of rumor is particularly instrumental as a public relations tactic by newly assigned regional (county) party secretaries. Secretary-General and President Nicolae Ceausescu has made himself (and his wife) the only real "personalities" in Romanian political life. The photograph, speeches or visits of a country party secretary, someone responsible for 600,000 people, are normally not publicized in the mass media or local newspaper. Limited in their ability to use formal channels of information and communication (aside from the bureaucratic "directive"), the county party secretaries thus campaign using informal’s channels, and especially, via rumor. In one district, a few weeks after a new party secretary had been named, rumors spread that he had dressed himself as a factory worker and wandered into a large plant. Here, it is said, he saw workers coming and going from their jobs, foremen playing cards and managers drinking in the office. The angered party secretary finally walks into the director’s office and reveals himself, thus forcing the director to take disciplinary measures against subordinates.

In another story, the party secretary wanders into a clinic needing treatment, but is not aided until he bribes a nurse. He thereupon reveals himself and dismisses the staff. A similar rumor arises when he stands in line for meat. The butcher in the state-run shop insists that he has no meat left, but the party secretary forces him to reveal his stocks and finds plenty of meat; the butcher has saved it for his personal contacts. The party secretary forces the butcher to give the meat to the customers and to pay the costs himself.

Via informal channels, the party secretary creates a new image. He becomes a benevolent despot: the Good King going among his people disguised as a simple man, finding chaos, restoring justice, instilling fear into those who violate “norms of socialist legality.”

The point here is not that party secretaries actually go out and do these things. Perhaps they do, but it certainly cannot be verified. The point is that everyone believes they do precisely because they are spread as rumors, i.e., by informal channels. Had the secretary conducted a newspaper or TV campaign against inefficient factories or corrupt services it would have been ignored as just another “campaign.” Informal channels — with their aura of truth — served as a more effective means of getting the message across.

A final example of the benign functions of informal structures lies in the economic sector. Planners seem to have so much faith in the population’s ability to provision themselves via informal channels that they can with impunity reduce the availability of food, consumer goods and services. For, despite shortages of even basic items, most Romanians believe that “nothing is ever totally unavailable” either. Those who have “friends” or cash, or who are “clever,” will locate them. And sure enough most Romanians do manage to “find solutions.” For example, the country’s 1983 campaign to conserve fuel led to a reduction in the number of taxis by 50%. For a short period there was chaos. However, private car owners soon began hanging around train stations soliciting customers, and it became custom to flag down private car owners and pay them a fee equal to or greater than the taxi fee to the same destination. The results of this “campaign” and of the informal response to it made everyone happy. The planners were happy to show a reduction in fuel consumption in the public sector. Private car owners, suffering from high gasoline prices, were happy to make extra money, often twice the fare. Customers were satisfied that they could at least get a ride; a hundred taxi drivers had been laid off, but every private car now became a potential taxi. The regime’s unbounded faith in the population’s “cleverness” enables it to continually reduce consumption or manipulate with shortages.32

There are hidden costs with such policies, however. The population “finds a solution” but they must pay more for it. Confidence in state institutions declines, sometimes irrevocably. Informal networks are pushed harder and may themselves prove inadequate. And since certain individuals, occupational or ethnic groups are better able to use informal channels than others, new kinds of social tensions can result. Hence, societies like Romania which appear infinitely patient can be pushed so far before their frustrations break out into a Polish or Hungarian opposition. The task for each of the East European regimes is to hold informal channels to their benign functions. If not, informal organization will become “corruptive” or even “system-threatening.”

The Alternative System

Informal structures operate corruptly (dysfunctionally) when they directly impede the operation of formal state bureaucracies or policies. Instead of channeling their energies in such a way that state goals are fulfilled (either directly or indirectly), people use their energies to maximize their own private or household strategies. In this process they not only compete with the state, but with the informal networks of others as well. Every organization becomes a bureaucratic resource bank, a common forest to be exploited by networks of kin, friends and patron-client groups. In this situation the “federation of families” analogy must be revised: better to speak of “competing hands.” In this competition between “us” and “them,” where “them” is both the state and one’s own competitors in society, there also arise competing codes of morality. There are values applied to oneself (and to “us”) and values applied to

31. For a more extended discussion of rumor transmission in Romania, see my “Rumors in Socialist Romania,” op. cit.

32. I discuss this further in “Rich Families and Poor Collectives,” “Muddling through in Romania,” and “Is Romania the Next Poland?”, all op. cit.
others ("them"). This "dimorphism of values" as the Polish sociologist Wnuk-Lipinski has termed it has its counterpart in the Romanian concept of dedublarea ("duplicity"), the Czech, "Living The Lie," and Glasov's concept of "behavioral bilingualism." The long-term persistence of such dimorphism produces "social schizophrenia" in society, the result of which can be either apathy or social eruption. Regardless of the terms used, its manifestations are well known: the state and its formal institutions are placed beyond the sphere of moral obligations. They become part of nature, to be used and exploited when needed. A peasant does not work for the collective farm but on the collective farm for his own household objectives.

In similar fashion, interpersonal relations outside the immediate private sphere are subject to a different moral code. Lying at a Party meeting or to one's boss is not lying, but "an action of self-defense," as Simecka writes. Whereas traditional values of truth and authenticity apply to private relations of friends and family, in the public sphere "untruth is not only unpunished but even rewarded. . . . After all, [citizens] were taught to lie at school and to conceal their convictions. They learned to lie at their place of work. . . . They lie in forms, they lie to bureaucrats, they lie to the courts, they lie to their superiors. Quite simply, they lie when they get a chance."55

However, this behavior is supposed to be restricted to encounters outside the private sphere. The same people to whom lying comes naturally are thus "horror struck and aggrieved by their children's first lie to them at home, and they are filled with disgust if friends lie or conceal something from them."56 To reveal in the public sphere one's inner self, one's real thoughts, is not a sign of authenticity but of stupidity. The public sphere is a forum for demonstrating one's ability to misrepresent oneself, one's "Ketman."57

In Eastern Europe, where so many resources are owned or allocated by the state, this social schizophrenia consolidates itself. Whereas stealing from a Western farm is stealing from somebody — Farmer Jones — stealing from a Romanian, Hungarian or Bulgarian collective farm is stealing from "them." It is not "stealing" at all, but simply "taking one's share," a notion also found in many Western workplaces or among poachers in the European countryside. Like nature herself, the state and its organizational resources are simply there, for the taking. Hence, the Hungarian sociologist Janos Kenedi warns: "We must not do away with the state. It's the only one we have. And if there were no state, it would have to be invented."58 An anonymous Czech put the problem of competing moral spheres more bluntly: "He who does not rob the state robs his family."

Kenedi describes how he went about building a house using materials, labor, expertise and even cash unofficially supplied or simply stolen from state enterprises and offices. He provides an incisive description of the different forms of exchange in the second economy. Most obvious is the cash payment, bribe or tip, which is usually given when "buyer" and "seller" (of merchandise, service or information) do not really know each other. Exchange may also take on a non-cash form, as in the mutual favors done between two acquaintances. The repairman may fix the house of his son's schoolteacher, or a factory director may "lend" some laborers to his counterpart across town, who needs them to build his summer house. Finally, the second economy can be based on personal networks of friends and relatives who fulfill obligations. In these cases the parties expect no immediate or equal payment; they turn to each other when needed, and no accounting is kept.

The precise use of cash, favors or personal obligations will depend on specific circumstances. Cash bribes will frequently be used when only a one-time relation is expected. However, someone who begins by paying a cash bribe may end up establishing more long-term relations of friendship. What was a "connection" may become a "friend." For example, a customer in a shoe store may bribe the sales clerk so that she holds a good pair of shoes under the counter. Prices of shoes are controlled by the state. Instead, there is competition in obtaining the privilege to buy. The price of obtaining access may be as much as the actual price of the shoes. Yet, the sales clerk herself may not need money as much as she needs connections. Perhaps she discovers that the person paying the bribe is a teacher. Perhaps she has a son who needs extra tutoring to pass his examinations. The sales clerk holds the high quality shoes as they come in, and the teacher offers the tutoring. A cash transaction has now become a relation of mutual favors, and favors can develop into a more stable system based on "friendship." For both parties, a more stable "friendship" relation is a less risky transaction. There is no cash passed around, and friends are more dependable than any illicit business partner.

The connection between the teacher and the salesclerk may extend itself. Perhaps the teacher knows a butcher. The salesclerk tells the teacher to send the butcher's wife whenever she needs shoes. In this way the saleslady can assure herself of a stable supply of meat, perhaps free. It is in this way that

57. Ibid., p. 123.
goods and services are distributed throughout Eastern Europe. It is a system that brings together widely disparate social categories: the teacher and the shoecleaner, the butcher and the doctor, etc. Status hierarchies are turned upside down. 40

Two points should be brought out here: first, that this "unplanned" economy is not as separate from the formal economy as it may seem on first sight. Any of the resources used in the "unplanned" economy are borrowed, stolen or otherwise appropriated from the state: the shoecleaner does not sell her shoes, she sells the privilege to buy the state's shoes. The "black" worker steals "time" from the state if he is using his day to make extra money; the truckdriver who helps the private peasant take a load of potatoes into town is stealing time and cargo space from the state and giving away state gasoline, while pocketing money from the peasant woman.

The second point to be emphasized here is that money plays only a minor role in this unplanned economy. Resources are exchanged and re-distributed, but not necessarily bought and sold. Marx's communist prophecy has come true in a kind of left-handed way: people are more important than money. Whom you know is more important than the money you have.

Friendship, "Friendship," and Prestige

The informal economy which has emerged in Eastern Europe also transforms the character of social relations within these societies. Friendships evolve as much out of economic necessity as from the need for emotional satisfaction. To use the terms put forward by Eric Wolf, friendship in these societies is "instrumental" rather than "sentimental." 41 Friends are "people who can do things for you." A real friend can mobilize his own resources or those of his friends to help you procure whatever you need. Moreover, it follows that if a friend cannot do anything for you, he is not a true friend. Unlike exchanges in a market place, the exchanges between friends are always out of balance. One always owes the other something, since the value of the exchange can never be calculated exactly. For example, "A" may help "B" obtain a spare part of B's car, but B knows of a good heart specialist who can treat A's mother. The vague boundary between instrumental and sentimental ties puts pressure on many relations in Eastern Europe. Jealousy and suspicion coexist with intimacy and trust. A friend who demands too much suddenly becomes a burden. A friend who gives too much makes oneself embarrassed. The promotion of a friend into a high position turns an equal into a superior, a horizontal line into a vertical tie.

Now these problems are of course not peculiar to East European societies alone. However, because friends are needed to obtain more of life's bare necessities, these problems become more serious. In periods of economic crisis, everyone demands more of their friends; someone undergoing police investigation for dissident opinions may suddenly lose some friends or gain others. 42 Schlapentokh, in his study of Soviet friendship, points out that much of the activity of friends consists of collusion against the formal system. 43 Friendships are thus a repository of secrets against the state. Conversely, the KGB "informer" is someone who, masquerading as a friend, betrays these secrets.

Friendships are also repositories of secrets against family units. Here again is another source of tension, in that one network within the informal system may be pitted against another. Friends help arrange the love affair at the empty apartment, cover for you when you are drinking, etc. 44

The functions of friendship, i.e., the balance between the instrumental and the sentimental relations, will vary from one society to another or from one historical period to another. The harsh repression of the Stalinist period in the USSR destroyed many friendships, whereas today they have achieved a more stable and relatively sentimental character (according to Glasov). Conversely, the economic scarcity and political tensions in Romania have served to transform many sentimental friendships into more instrumental ones. As a result, people have closed their circle to immediate kin and very close friends where demands on time, money and energy are not held in account, and where bonds of trust are more secure. 45

Using alternative means to procure scarce resources also helps generate alternative scales of prestige and values. In the West, money can usually buy...
anything. In the East, a lot of people have enough money to pay the price of a given item or service, but cannot locate it. To “stand in line” for coffee, meat, theatre tickets, resident permits or a new apartment means that you have the cash, but are without the necessary social connections. Those who bypass the line have wide circles of friends, clients with reliable information or strategically placed patrons. They can “find” that package of imported coffee, “hold” that kilo of fresh beef, “arrange” to get your son into the Law Faculty, or move you to the top of the list for the new apartment. Many East European (and Western) intellectuals routinely conder-in the “consumerism” of East Europeans as a kind of false consciousness which takes them away from more important social or political tasks. Such views — besides being elitist and ethnocentric — also misunderstand the function of consumer goods and services in East European societies. Procuring scarce resources is itself a means of demonstrating “social wealth,” and East Europeans themselves have understood that it is social wealth rather than possession of cash that is important in these societies. It is not having a video that is important; rather it is the fact that you have a video. For people do not ask, “where did he get the cash,” but “who does he know” in order to locate it.

The prestige of social connections in Eastern Europe has led to a situation where people often use them even when they do not have to. For example, many Romanians insist on getting a personal reference to buy a train or plane ticket even when there are plenty of tickets available. Having more trust in powerful persons than bureaucratic institutions, they will ask a person with influence (or perceived influence) to “intervene” for them with the bureaucracy even when it is unnecessary. Those in powerful positions go along; their clients believe they have received special treatment when they have in fact done nothing special at all. This only enhances the myth of the effectiveness of the personal connection vis à vis the formal system.

Social connections, then, are not just a utilitarian “last resort” when the formal system does not work. They are normative, the proper way to do things, even when the bureaucracy does work. For it is via one’s personal connections that one demonstrates to oneself and others one’s social position. In this sense, the informal sector truly becomes institutionalized, not only in terms of behavior but also in terms of values and perceived needs. These are the wider ramifications of Schlappenstock’s remark on the gradual “georgianization of Soviet society.”

When does a System “Work”?
The existence of a normative informal sector does not mean that the formal system “does not work.” It only means that the formal system works differently because of the particular character of informal social structures in these societies. Certainly, it would be an exaggeration to see the corruptive aspects of informal structures as a threat to the formal organization in Eastern Europe. Such a view would overlook the mutual interdependence between the two sectors. For example, much of the informal economy is effective precisely because it can steal or borrow from formal resources without incurring costs (except for bribes to police, etc.)

One might wonder as to the degree to which citizens or the regimes themselves might want to restrict the informal systems in order to make formal organizations run more effectively. Soviet campaigns against corruption and the Chinese impetus to transform particularistic friendship into a more organized “comradeship” both seem to demonstrate regime desire to do away with the support mechanisms underlying informal structures. Nevertheless, such efforts would meet opposition not only among the citizenry, but even among the elites themselves.

As far as the citizens are concerned, many of the informal sector’s patrons and brokers obtain clear financial benefits and social prestige from the continually scarce resources. If a well-functioning economic, planning, social, information or bureaucratic system existed, these people would lose their clients. They would become superfluous. Hence, they have a vested interest in keeping these systems running inefficiently, in restricting access to goods, services, social networks or information.

From the regime’s perspective, not cracking down on informal networks helps channel the population’s social discontent into a prestige competition or rumor mongering, both of which are clearly less dangerous than direct political activities. “It is no accident” (as Radio Moscow would say), that widespread economic corruption is tolerated throughout Eastern Europe, while the smallest political dissident group is subjected to harsh police repression. The second economy and other informal channels thus perform a safety-valve function. While they may corrupt parts of the system, they keep the system as a whole muddling through (a point also stressed by Schöpflin in his analysis of informalism and corruption in Eastern Europe). Moreover, information channels and other resources can be manipulated by the state. Resources are kept scarce and organizations function inefficiently such that people compete for friends, connections and patrons to help them procure these resources. Not only is Society in conflict with the State, but it is also in competition with itself. In this situation, it is individual solutions which predominate: people do not demonstrate against meat shortages but ask, “who do I know who can get me some meat?”

Here the Polish exception provides an instructive case. The most active members of the labor movement in Poland were young first and second generation workers living in cities, especially Gdask and Nowa Huta. Until...
1980, these workers could augment the resources obtained via official, state channels with those obtained informally, i.e., via the second economy or connections to the countryside. When the official economy began to collapse, however, the second economy was unable to compensate. Not only did the system not "work" in a benign fashion, but it could not even muddle through with corruption. Workers were thus forced to mobilize politically. Informal organization took on new functions in this mobilization.

Informal Organization as Opposition

Those who do not succumb to atomization, who seek to organize their social networks to challenge the political order, or to form corporate interest groups, become especially dangerous for the regime. This was the case with KOR and Solidarnosc in Poland, with Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and with virtually every unofficial peace, religious or human rights group in the Soviet Union, Romania, or East Germany. Only in Hungary do the authorities allow the peace and environmental groups to operate somewhat more openly, and this in order to manage them more easily. In the rest of Eastern Europe, members of such organizations are regarded as "subversive," "sick," "deviant" or as "tools of foreign powers." Police organs have used cooptation, intimidation, jail, house arrest, censorship or exile in order to eliminate such groups.

However, since dissidents' activities impinge on the public sphere, they become tainted with the same kind of disdain, duplicity or social schizophrenia which characterize other public activities. They are seen to have "ulterior motives." Since they often seek to expose the same kind of hypocrisy which most citizens are forced to live with daily, they may be seen by fellow citizens as egoistic, manipulative, or even "sick." The idea that one's genuine private beliefs would be expressed through public behavior seems incomprehensible (if not just plain stupid) for those in the upper reaches of East European bureaucracies. In 1977, the Romanian dissident writer Paul Goma was called into the office of the Minister of Culture, and asked, "What do you really want? A summer house? To publish your book? A better apartment? To emigrate?" Goma resisted this appeal to more immediate needs and was then treated more harshly. He was put under house arrest. Informal channels spread rumors that he was "a bad writer," that he was not really of Romanian origin, that his small human rights group was just a bunch of opportunists. In the end, many members of Goma's group did in fact leave Romania, while Goma himself was forced into exile. Some Romanians (and members of non-Romanian minority groups) had in fact attached themselves to the Goma movement solely in order to emigrate, to receive what came to be called the "Goma passport." The Romanian regime, however, cleverly transformed a movement for free speech into a bunch of "cases," encouraging people to use the movement to achieve individual solutions. In this sense, the Goma movement became further discredited in the eyes of the population.

The failure of the Goma movement in Romania, however, should not mask the fact that informal channels were essential to its organization. In fact, Glasow, speaking of Soviet dissent, defines dissent "as the attempt of some segments of the Russian cultural world to create their own network of communications for sharing information.... Dissent includes meeting with friends and foreigners and speaking with them about life in Russia." Similarly, actions such as signing letters of protest, were "acts of solidarity with persons to whom one was bound by longstanding friendship or with whom one had spent many an evening.... [A]ll who were inimical to Stalinism and the prison camps were mutual friends."

Informal channels were variously used among intellectuals and workers in Poland's Solidarity movement. Poland's alternative universities, newspapers, informal communication systems and underground cells of intellectuals and workers have all been successful in sheltering Solidarity activists from the police and in propagating Solidarity's message.

Within Solidarity itself, the most active factions — the shipyard workers and miners — were themselves mobilized on the basis of informal networks. These occupations are traditionally recruited on the basis of kinship and village ties and passed down through generations. Their work groups were thus more integrated, and the intimate nature of their work was such that they could not be easily penetrated by police informers or agents. The so-called self-organization of Polish society, the "horizontal structures" of the Solidarity movement, presented a direct challenge to the regime for two reasons. The obvious reason is that this organization stood for different political values challenging the hegemony of the party. But more important is that the Polish self-organization challenged the formal organization of society on formal organizational terms. That is, it was not just a case of informal structures corrupting the system, but informal networks used to build an oppositional organization which functioned in the public sphere. During the post-Solidarity period, the so-called normalization, the task of the regime is not only to eliminate the threat of Civil Society against the State, but to get Society competing with itself again, to reinstitute "competing bands," even at the risk of further corruption.

Thus, informal organization can have features which are system-maintaining, system corrupting, or system-threatening. What appears to be dysfunctional

50. The comparative effectiveness of these informal networks is discussed in O. Norgaard and S. Sampson, "Poland's Crisis and East European Socialism," op. cit., and S. Sampson, "Is Romania the Next Poland?" op. cit.
51. "The dissidents wanted to be monolingual in a society which allows only a schizophrenic existence." And "Russian dissidents expressed loudly exactly what other people thought privately but, for obvious reasons, preferred not to say" (Glasow, The Russian Mind, op. cit., p. 76, 118).
for a specific enterprise or sector may help reinforce the elites' hold on political power. Of course, the individual states of Eastern Europe exhibit considerable variation in the extent to which informal organization has benign or corruptive effects. In Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the provisioning of basic consumer goods is quite adequate. Informal structures will be used to obtain luxury (status marking) goods, high quality repairs, scarce resources from the bureaucracy, and the like.

In the more crisis-ridden parts of Eastern Europe such as Poland and Romania, which are both economically poor and politically volatile due to frustrated expectations on the part of the population, informal networks have to be used at a level previously unsurpassed, even to procure basic foods and consumer goods.

In Poland, the economic crisis of the late 1970s generated political effects, and Polish informal networks were used to spark a social movement. In Romania, the informal sector remains at the level of benign aid to the system (e.g., rumors) or as corrupting (second economy). Hence, there remains competition among networks of workers or peasant-workers, different ethnic groups, and between workers and intellectuals. Under conditions which seriously discourage the rise of alternative public forums ("what we want," "us" against "them"), Romanians are naturally cautious about renouncing what patrons, brokers and clients already have. Instead of "what we want" it is "who you know." This emphasis on individual solutions was lamented by one Romanian, who commented, "If we had Solidarity here, each Romanian would have his own."

Conclusions

Informal structures and unauthorized ways of doing things are part of every society. However, they are more important for Eastern Europe because so many resources are concentrated in the sphere of formal state organizations, and because these organizations are incapable of fulfilling their assigned tasks. Because of the historical gap between society and state institutions, informal structures come to take on a life of their own, seemingly autonomous from the formal, official system. This is not to say that informal structures are themselves stable or timeless. To establish the extent of the stability we would have to trace the dynamics of the informal sector. For example, we might trace conjunctions in which informal institutions become a barometer of system viability. Hence, when informal structures function benignly, the system "works." When they function "corruptively" the system is "muddling through" or "in stagnation." When informal structures are used largely for system-threatening purposes, we see a system in "decay," "crisis," or "revolt."

If the crisis is resolved, "faith in the state" and its institutions are restored, such that informal structures are again of minor, benign importance. This is typically the outcome of social revolutions. The "new order" creates short-term loyalties and a mobilization effectiveness which momentarily supplant family, friendship, ethnicity or other primordial ties. The question then arises as to why these primordial ties begin to reassert themselves, i.e., why revolutionary clan fails and "thermidors" re-appear.

In addition to tracing the relation between formal and informal loyalties, we could also trace cycles of dominance within the informal sector: under what conditions will informal structures based on ethnicity, networks or regional identities? How do the categories "us" and "them" change their boundaries? What is the relation between the "microstructures" of the socialist society and reforms or changes in the macrostructure?

For the time being, however, we must deal with the political realities of East European societies — realities ultimately guaranteed by Soviet tanks. In this situation, East Europeans will most likely opt for individualistic solutions, and informal structures will be utilized for this purpose. The emergence of opposition movements may be more inspiring than blat networks or friends who collude against the state. However, it is the repression of these movements which seems to be more instructive for East Europeans. To use the words of Zdenek Mlynar, this is "what real socialism does to people."

East Europeans will thus continue to forge and maintain personal relations, to "adapt," to search for personal alliances, to trust in family and friends, and cultivate patrons and brokers rather than throwing their allegiance into the arms of the formal apparatus. Instead of formal opposition, their opposition will consist of apathy at work, disdain for the party and Marxist ideology, a concern with private goals and individual mobility, and teaching their children that it is OK to lie in school but not at home; in other words, a permanent state of social schizophrenia, dimorphism of values and behavioral bilingualism.

The East European political elites will continue to use informal organization to help maintain their power and achieve economic objectives. They will try to neutralize its most corruptive effects, or manipulate them so that they drain popular energy from social movements into individual competition. As the informal sector becomes institutionalized by the East European regimes, it reveals the crisis — or defeat — of regime goals: there will be no sturdy or effective organizations, no "new socialist man," no trust in formal institutions, no "faith in the state." New forms of inequality will not only be tolerated: they will be stimulated.

Lenin’s "party of a new type" has spawned "societies of a new type." They are a curious mixture of bureaucracy and informalism, of order and chaos, of muddling through and perpetual crises, of a depressed, atomized population which is also inventive and adaptable. To call these societies "planned societies" would certainly be a misnomer. Rather, they are "societies with a plan." These unplanned aspects, as channeled through and manifested by informal structures, alternative information channels and oppositional values, were cer-

55. In his pref. to Simecka’s book op. cit.
56. Discussing "the adaption factor," Simecka writes: "Adaptation in existing socialism is a unique form of social contract such as Jean-Jacques would have had difficulty conceiving." The Retention of Order, op. cit., p. 145. Zinoviev’s Reality of Communism, op. cit., is also an argument for long-term adaptation and stability in these systems.
FORMS OF REASONING AS IDEOLOGY

by Jadwiga Staniszki

The following will analyze a surprising symmetry between the Leninist mode of reasoning and Solidarity's behavior with the help of Lévi-Strauss' notion of brikolage and Besançon's concept of “surreality.” A basic dualism pervades both communist ideology, i.e., the Leninist interpretation of Marxism, and everyday consciousness in “really existing socialist” societies. This dualism will be counterposed to a two-level thought, in which the world of ideas and the world of things are qualitatively different.

This approach obviously clashes with the conventional wisdom on the subject, both in Eastern Europe and in the West. Thus, it is claimed that, e.g., liberal or neo-conservative themes appear both in Poland and in the West. But in Poland these themes do not reflect the interests of civil society. Some of their elements are merely cultural signs, used in the intellectual patchwork of the brikolage to define social identity in a system lacking a genuine civil society. On the other hand, too much is made of intellectual differences among the various East European countries. On one level this is true, since the cultural material in particular countries is indeed different. Yet, the forms of thought characterized by dualism and by brikolage reasoning remain similar. This dualism was already present in Russia before the revolution in the form of the Platonic elements in Orthodox thought, and the non-occurrence of the intellectual turning point of critical nominalism which eventually resulted in a

1. This account is based on material collected in 1980-81 by Maria Lewicka and Maria Paciwc, “Mechanizmy postaw społeczno-politycznych w latach 1980-81,” paper delivered at the Institute of Psychology, Warsaw University, October 1981; Piotr Paciwc, Pomoc i niesune (Ossolinum 1984); Maria Marody, “Poles 1980,” mimeo (Warsaw University, 1981); Rychard Andrzej and others, “Poles 1980, 81, 82,” mimeo, Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw). See also my own study, Poland of politics and thought in Russia No. 15 (Warsaw, 1983). The Leninist mode of reasoning was reconstructed on the basis of Party documents by A. Lazarski. See also my “Types of Ideological Thinking in Real Socialism” in Kryzka No. 15 (Warsaw, 1985).

2. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, La Fée Sauvage, Chapter 1.

3. Alain Besançon, Court Trait de Sociologie (Paris, 1976). Besançon uses “surreality” to describe communist ideology that claims to be an expression of “objective historical necessity,” independent of individual wills.

4. Post-Scholastic critical nominalism developed in Western Europe at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries in opposition to Scholastic realism. It postulated a separate ontological status for concepts and for things, and the real existence of general concepts—the so-called universals. It also emphasized empiricism and individualism. This intellectual revolution seems to be a necessary precondition for the appearance, centuries later, of Protestantism, with its doctrine of predestination. It was in this doctrine that the theory of the separate ontological statuses of the world of things and the world of concepts found its ultimate consequence. See A.C. Crombie, Medieval and Early Modern Science (London, 1959), and H.O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind (London, 1938).