

Ask from Khat's the whole Conference
- in B5, April - if possible copies
of Tapes! etc

(I)

Mark Strand:

I agree. I have no experience with political censorship. But I do have some experience with the Jevtuschenko called the turning of the market place. I don't think it's a turning, it more siddle (?) the net. As I understand in a repressive regime, one had invent devious ways making oneself understood without incurring the rath (?) of the political ghost, who is in power. In the market place anything goes in the West, but it's not that everything goes. Everything goes for a period of time. One has the illusion of freedom in a free market because in East the market place seems to change. We have fashions of styles. They quickly replace eachother. And this change creates the illusion of freedom. An artist may have a notion that he is free, when in fact he is merely a slave of the particular and temporary condition of the market place. We all suffer this. We are slaves of language, we writers are the slaves of language that exists on our time. And we are slaves of what is language communicates on our time. We have to work within certain frameworks. In the market place this changes very quickly. I think it's harder to be an artist in a free society, because it's hard to anticipate what the next move is going to be. The enemy was a stable fixed force under communism in a repressive regime, so that the adversarial role of the artists was clear. It's hard to know how to maintain ones individuality when one's individuality is being anticipated by the needs of the market in a free society. It's the cause of a great deal of despair. Well, I'll say more if the discussion increases. I should say just a little there.

(7)



I agree. Insecurity is the price one pays for freedom and there's just no way around it. I agree with what you said about education, but it's not up to the artist or the writer to be an educator. For one thing I know that in order to be a fact if you have to institutionalize yourself and I don't mean put yourself away in a mad-house, but I mean you have to align yourself with the government or education institutions, and they have ways of upbraiding very much. They can either be in arm with the government or they can be hate-like the government and I'm not sure that an artist can be effective, working in such a capacity. I think the artist's job is beginning and ends to create art. And to stay ahead of the whatever the announced needs of the public are. Otherwise he becomes ato neatly to the patterns of society. I think an artist must stay a little outside. I mean this is the beauty of the "Société Imaginaire" really, that resists any alignes whatsoever. It keeps having to redefine itself against being corrupted really. Even corrupted by its own past meeting. I only have experience in the democracy or so called democracy- the U.S. and the great danger I can tell you in this main line ahead is that, resistance is never real resistance in a democracy. When you are talking about art or literature it is immediately corrupted, it becomes a style it's a of content. In some ways the democracy makes everything okay. It has to detaxify opposition. And the way it does that is a resume to style the opposition. This may be abstract, but, if you have written or worked in the U.S. you know what I mean. In ten minutes you can become a slabberty and your value as an is undermined immediately. You are bought into the system. If you refuse to be bought into the system it means you must content with the life of insecurity and uncertainty with the possibility of being impoverished for the rest of your days. To say anything else to the "Michael Jackson culture". That's something else.

10

Popular culture will always have a life and will always satisfy the needs of most people. Because most people don't have the appetite that intellectuals have. They don't like to be challenged in the way that intellectuals like to be challenged. But there is also subculture of good books being written and good art being made, and good music being listen to. And this subculture feeds itself not in the convention of lays, but nevertheless manages it to keep itself alive at all costs. It is at times resentful that much lesser minds and lesser talents receive .A great deal more publicity and a great deal more money, but publicity and money shouldn't be important to people who are dealing in ideas. They should be satisfied with their freedom. Their freedom ist predicated on the degree to which they can resist being bought in a free society or being a political tool in a repressive society.

III.

I have a few things to say about what Miss Hartwig has just said. First of all a few points. One is: bad literature often the way good literature survives in the West. I know most poets are happy when their publisher has a best seller, because it means that there is more money gonna be spent on their work. The other thing is about democracy. Democracy looks always better from a distance, when it represents the it's gonna look very good, when you have it, it brings a lot of problems. It's not that Poland has so many problems. You have to roar with the sleep under the communist dictatorship for years and years. I mean the power of communism was that it seems to give everybody 10000 copies, that were sold every month, gave everybody a sense of security. It's the insecurity that people can tolerate and they want a solution, a solution is always a fundamentalist one. I mean what is communism but a kind of

political fundamentalism. You have fundamentalism everywhere, in the U.S. You have the fundamentalists who have simple solutions to very complex issues. You have it all over the world. This is the enemy. The enemy wants to make complex issues simple. They want to live by slogans. They want to live by clichés. The intellectuals devote their lives against, because I for simplicity say, I'm linking writers and intellectuals. A lot of writers are intellectuals. I said the only writers who are intellectuals.....intend to be poets. They write, but they are not writers asonce said. Fundamentalism is the great enemy now, the desire to make simple what is in fact complex. As far as bad literature goes, you know, it too makes one of the problem with poetry is the tendency to complicate things. It's both, it draws one inward where matter are more complex, even more complex than they are on the outside. Fiction for example draws people up. They engage imaginatively in another world. They relieve the problem that exists inside. Poetry tends to try to organize, to try to give a face or a language to problems, not only problems. But a state that exists inside of each of us. If you want to escape into fiction or you escape yourself, then you escape into dictatorship or into religious fundamentalism or something else. A democracy at its best is a kind of..... It is a sort of Société Imaginaire which is constantly trying to define itself. Resolution in a democracy should always be ahead, should always be the next step. In fact the Société Imaginaire is a perfect prototype for democracy. It both works toward resolution and it postpones it. Each meeting we have, seems to resolve something but creates new things. But to be able to live in a state of flocks without being anxious is difficult. And I think most people find it intryable. The problem in the world today is: most people are dependent and weak and want someone else to solve their problems. They want to remain children forever, they don't want to define the world for themselves, which is what all writers, intellectuals, artists do. Their obligation is to remake the world, not to support the world as it is. Every time they make something they remake the world. This is subversive. Communist regimes would like artists to remake the world in their image. The artist always has its own or his own image. There is always bound to be a conflict. The illusion of democracy is: Yes go ahead. Do it your way. The problem with that is, do it your way, but it won't make any difference.

I want to say a few things. It's interesting here to speak. Actually artists have a better chance to survive in a sort of free market or in the Western market place than many other people. What they produce is commodity. It's tangible, it can be bought, you can put it up in your house, and if you are a poet, it's creating thick air. It's not tangible and you never think of selling. It's not something - I mean the publication of books is relatively meaning with speakers. What do you sell, 1000 or 10000 copies, it's not making any difference in your life. Let me tell you a story about my own beginning as a poet, because I want you to be sure, that's not easy in a democracy and I get the sense....When I became a poet, I never thought, that I would make my living as a poet. I never thought that I would do nothing, but write poetry. It was always an ideal, but I found myself doing all kinds of things to survive. First I resisted paradoxically employment because I felt insecurity was a form of validation. I was to secure that an existence, that some people lived under communist rule, I would fall asleep morally and steadily and I would produce nothing worse. So I denied myself the opportunity to drive a German car, to have a barbecue, to have medical insurance for a long time. What I did to survive was things. I wasn't selling pomes to survive. textiles, making a little money. I would find indian rocks which I would buy on one coast, sell in another coast. I wrote business letters, I did all that stuff, but then New York became too expensive. I see myself in the same position as Mr. Wilfert in Berlin. I had to leave and I left to a steady job and health insurance etc. I became a bourgeoisie, I never was happy and I never do more work, but the problem was: how good was it, in some ways the society isn't the critical but, the fact, that I had to live marginally was in some ways psychologically a validation of my own existence. And I think maybe this is a frame of mind, that could be useful. It's a positive thing. The problem in working in a democracy where anything goes, is if anything goes then nothing makes any difference. You see, we always envied the writer or artist in Eastern Europe, because we had a defined enemy, it gave his work a certain urgency. We were envious, we rade(?) with a great deal of intensity, we tried to be influenced by you, all heroes were polish poets, and others. They seemed to be writing

21

a more meaning for worse than we were. It's just, you have to welcome these problems, it's not that we overcame anything, but as artists we realized there was a lot for us to do. Not simply to a poet or to a single regime. Anyway I just want it to say: if you got to make art, it's hard all around.

V. Mark Strand

I had intended to save my remarks for this evening, that is to explain to everyone , what the Société Imaginaire is. If I did it now, I think I would have nothing to say this evening. I did

22

indicate this morning it seemed to me a paradigm for the way a democratic art institution should work. I suggested as much , but this evening I will offer my heterodox opinions, art and society and reasons for being members of the Société Imaginaire.

VI.

Mark Strand:

I should say a few things first. The photograph of me in the exhibition , the real photograph I just don't have a bear (?) the statement I made was intended to be humourous, I noticed a few people reading the statement, no one finding it humourous. at all. That's one thing, the other thing is, I thought, I would try to say what the Société Imaginaire is. I've been called on a number of times to explain the people. It seems the most delusive of things. I rather like that myself. I juttet down some things today, and I think because I want to get it straight, sometimes I'm not a public speaker either or I like to do it. But I sometimes regret after having spoken, that I left out something, I wished I had said. Let me tell you, this is my vision of the society a Société Imaginaire: to explain

39

VI.

the Société Imaginaire - I suppose means to say just what it is. Less it's being or itself is illusive. And here I feel its resistance to being pinned down- is its beauty. For the question what it actually is maybe a way of insuring its existence. It exists most peripherally in the act of forming itself and occasions such as this or the visible signs and I repeat the visible sign of its continuous reconstitution. It must both be itself and become itself. It seeks definition, but resists it, less that definition be too binding. Because it is an organization of artists, but only very loosely speaking an organization. It values improvisation, more than it does planning. It is otherly heterodox by nature. It survives approaches simulacralous. It is the only serious attempt to cultural exchange that I have witnessed. It forces to us, exchange, it takes place between people, who are artists, not art administrators, creators of bureaucracy who usually know nothing about art, or "culture-attachés", who it happened from my country are no more than propagandists in unconvincing the It offers collaboration, virtuality of enterprise as a bridge between individuals and cultures. It is model, in its ability to always resist institutionalizing itself. Even though it counts greater coherences one of its aims. Nevertheless it trusts artists and writers to have much to say to each other, even of what they say does not bear immediate in measurable results. It is always in transition, a fact, which makes most people impatient, nervous. But this is precisely why it is valuable. It resists shortcuts or slogans- It offers an interest, in problems, especially complex ones, which will likely to form the soil from which the variety of solutions might grow. Until they in turn become problems. The society, the Société Imaginaire cannot state its purpose, not organizational purpose, but artistic purpose without invalidating it. Instead it endorses the idea of purpose. It considers the bringing together artists can be a step in a making award. It is a gamble of course. But a necessary one. At a time in the world or is flying a part we are treating into one nationalism another art or maybe one of the ways. It can begin to put itself back together. The Société Imaginaire

suggests a way to begin. I happened the thing: It is the best way.

FIN