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**State patronage or state control? The Israeli case of government
involvement in the arts**

Ben-Ami, Ilan, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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STATE PATRONAGE OR STATE CONTROL ?
THE ISRAELI CASE OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARTS

by

Ilan Ben-Ami

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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1994

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Abstract

STATE PATRONAGE OR STATE CONTROL ?
THE ISRAELI CASE OF GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARTS

by

Ilan Ben-Ami

Advisor: professor Judith H. Balfe

Government involvement in the arts is a rapidly growing phenomenon. This dissertation is an attempt to provide a sociological explanation to this phenomenon, through the examination of one single case study, that of the State of Israel.

Reviewing the policy, the activities, and the attitudes of all branches of the Israeli government towards the arts from the early days of statehood to the present, this dissertation reveals a rather interesting reality: at the same time that the Israeli government is highly supportive of the arts (financially and otherwise), it is also trying constantly to interfere and regulate the arts; and not only those works of arts that are supported by the government. To complicate matters even further, numerous of evidences have been found in Israel for a rather high degree of indifference demonstrated by the government towards the country's arts and culture.

The key for understanding such a reality is the political culture of the society in question. Government involvement in the arts, in Israel as elsewhere, must be considered and could only be understood in relation to the dominant ethoi, values, ideals, and ideologies that characterize the society in which this involvement takes place. To these one should add the interests and constraints confronted by the government when acting in the field of arts. In Israel, these components of the political culture include Judaism, Nationalism, Zionism, Socialism, Democracy, National Security, and Immigration Absorption.

This dissertation makes the point that the reality found in Israel is not a unique one. It can be found in every society where the government is involved with the arts in one way or another. Only the degree to which each of these aspects exist varies from one society to another, depending on the specific history and political culture of the society in question.

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Ilan Ben-Ami

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CHAPTER 1 - ON THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH FOR MODELS OF
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR ARTS

A) INTRODUCTION

The international search for models of relationships between governments and their arts has expanded tremendously in the last two decades or so. This search did not occur in a vacuum; it was a result of two historic developments. First, the role of the state expanded steadily as it got involved in a growing number of social issues (Alford and Friedland, 1985; Mann, 1993). Even more involvement was seen in the second half of the twentieth century as most western governments expanded dramatically their responsibilities and activities in the arts, developing a wide range of art programs and increasing enormously the public spending on arts and culture (Cummings and Katz, 1987).

As a result of these two historical developments, the question of whether governments should be involved with their arts is no longer on the agenda of many of the foremost researchers in the field today. Instead, these researchers concentrate on the ways in which governments implement their cultural policies, as well as on the actual consequences of these policies.

All too often, however, this discussion concentrates only on the **supportive** nature of the relationships between governments and their arts (funding, development etc.). Other aspects of these relationships, such as politicization, censorship, to mention only two, are either seen as by-products of this support or, worse, are entirely overlooked. "It appears," writes Myers, "that we have left behind the 'whether to' arguments about government **support** of culture. We are, and will continue to be faced with the 'how to'" (1989:48, my italics). Similarly, according to Mulcahy: "the issue today is not whether the government should **support** the arts, but the level of **support** sustained by governments, and the kind of art they should fund" (1980:48, my italics).

It is within this context that two of the foremost researchers in the field today, Milton C. Cummings Jr. and Richard S. Katz, identified "four organizational forms that are in common use [by governments in the field of arts today]" (1987:12). The first two, they write, "are variants of the normal public administration approach ... [where] provision or encouragement of culture is regarded simply as one more public function to be run by the regular public service according to normal established procedures" (ibid.). The first of these variants is the so called 'French Ministry of Culture Model', whereby a single ministry, headed by a cabinet minister, is in charge of all cultural policies. With the second variant,

responsibility for cultural programs is divided among several ministries. Examples of the first organizational form, according to Cummings and Katz, exist in France, Austria, and Denmark, while the latter exist in Italy, and, to some extent, in Germany.

The third organizational form identified by Cummings and Katz is "the quasi-public foundation ... [that has] been established to remove arts policy, or at least direct support of the arts, from normal government agenda, in the hope of 'insulating' the arts from politics" (ibid.). Examples of countries exercising this form are Great Britain, the United States, and, to some extent, Canada.

Finally, Cummings and Katz suggest a fourth organizational form that is in common use by governments in the field of arts today, one that "casts the government directly in the role of impresario" - The State As An Impresario Model. Here, they write, "rather than supporting cultural institutions, the government simply runs them itself" (ibid.). The most common examples of this sort of arrangement are the public museums in the United States, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and the Swedish regional orchestras.

A somewhat similar typology is suggested by Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey, who identify "four alternative roles

for the state to play in the field of art: Facilitator, Patron, Architect, and Engineer" (1989:48). The Facilitator state, they write, "funds the fine arts through foregone taxes - so called tax expenditures - provided according to the wishes of individual and corporate donors" (ibid.). The Patron state, on the other hand, "funds the fine arts through arm's length arts councils. The government determines how much aggregate support to provide, but not which organizations or artists should receive support" (ibid:49). In the third alternative role, that of an Architect, "the state funds the fine arts through a Ministry or Department of Culture [and] granting decisions concerning artists and arts organizations are generally made by bureaucrats" (ibid:50). And in the fourth role, that of an Engineer, the state simply "owns all the means of artistic production . . . [and] supports only arts that meet political standards of excellence" (ibid:51).

As it will be made clear throughout this dissertation, Israel did not adopt any of the above forms or roles.

"Political scientists who compare political systems find difficulty in fitting Israel into their schema. Discussing political parties, Sartori finds the extended dominance of Mapai exceptional; Lijphart, in his study of relations between major ethnic, religious, and language groups, leaves Israel outside his framework because of its uniqueness; when studying the relations between the military and civilian sectors, Israel is often regarded as special; and discussions of political modernization point to Israel as falling outside many general patterns".
(Arian, 1985:1)

This dissertation categorically rejects this idea of Israel being a unique case that does not fit into the existing theoretical and empirical framework, at least as far as government involvement in the arts is concerned. Instead, I will argue here, it is the theoretical framework upon which the above forms and roles were developed that must be questioned.

B) THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In gross terms, one could identify two major problems with the above forms and roles. First is the historical background against which they were developed:

"In the broadest terms one can distinguish two overall patterns that form the background against which twentieth-century arts policies have evolved. On the one hand, there were the royal absolutist states, typified by Austria and France. On the other hand, there were the more plutocratic, mercantalist states, with more limited monarchies, such as England or the Netherlands" (Cummings and Katz, 1987:5).

This being the historical background for the stated forms and roles, it is quite clear why they do not fit Israel, and probably numerous other countries founded or regaining independence in the last two thirds of the twentieth-century. Coming from an entirely different historical background, and developing entirely different political cultures, the relationships between government and the arts in Israel, and as well as in many others countries are nothing like those suggested above. And if there are any similarities in these

countries' cultural administrations, with regard to the above forms and roles, it is usually nothing but remnants of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism that "imposed [its] own cultural values and administrative systems upon [its] hybrid creations" (Ajala, 1989:1).

Thus, a new historical approach is needed here, one that takes into account a wider range of political traditions, ideologies, interests, thereby effecting the construction and operation of cultural administrations and cultural policies throughout the world.

No less serious a problem is the theoretical approach upon which the above forms and roles rest, i.e. a structural-functionalist approach that treats the structure of an institution as 'given', without too much attention being directed to its development. Each institution is examined only with respect to its role. Thus, all we are left with are four "**organizational forms**" (Cummings and Katz, 1987; my italics), or four "alternative **roles**" for the government to play in the field of arts (Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey, 1989; my italics).

Indeed, it is the 'harmonious' view of the structural-functionalist approach that has led many researchers in the

field today to concentrate mainly on the supportive nature of the relationships between governments and their arts, seeing government involvement in the arts in western-democratic societies as good and justifiable (functional!) and that occurring in non-democratic societies as bad and unjustifiable (dysfunctional!).

Focusing on the structure of the relationships between governments and their arts, I will argue in this dissertation, is theoretically wrong. It ignores the complexity of these relationships and the natural tension inherent in them by their very definition. In this sense, "arts researchers have been like the person who looks under the streetlamp for the missing wallet, not because that is where it was lost, but because that is where the illumination is best" (Schuster, 1986:320). And although what Schuster refers to is the focus on direct government support of the arts (as opposed to indirect support), the same could be said of the focus on the structure of the relationships between governments and their arts: while it is all too tempting to focus on it, it provides only a very partial picture of these relationships. As put by Schuster in concluding his article: "art researchers may have drawn the boundary of our analysis of arts policies too narrowly" (ibid.).

One reason for these narrow boundaries of the analysis of arts policies seems to be the almost absolute absence of sociologists in the field of arts policy research. Generally speaking, this field is dominated by political scientists, economists, public policy researchers, and arts administrators who lack the sociological insight that is needed in order to fully understand the relationships between governments and their arts, whatever their other contributions may have been.

One sociologist who has done pioneering work in the field of arts policy and has pointed out to this problem of focusing on the structure of the relationships between governments and their arts is Steven Dubin, who writes in the introduction to his book Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Action: "Social scientists ... have chiefly been interested in how the production and distribution of art is structured, concerns largely external to the [art] work [itself]" (1992:4, my italics).

But Dubin, one should mention, is not the first sociologist to point to this problem. It was almost one hundred years ago that Max Weber alerted us that the purely naturalistic method alone (i.e. the structural-functionalist method) cannot possibly make human behavior intelligible to us because it deals only with the external relationships (1968, originally published 1909). Taking the view that studying the development

of an institution solely from the outside, without regard to what its participants make of it, is to overlook one of the principle aspects of social life, Weber did not sever social structures and institutions from the multifarious activities of man who both builds them up and endows them with significance.

Central to Weber's sociology, therefore, is the concept of social action. Weber did not deny Durkheim's distinction between 'social morphology' (social structures) and 'social physiology' (the development of these structures) -- indeed, the heart of the structural-functionalist approach -- but he added to them the concept of social action, of what people make of these structures. Weber, writes Freund,

"was not concerned with appraising or evaluating social structures as good or bad, useful or ill-advised, but rather with achieving the most objective understanding possible of how men evaluate and appraise, use, create and destroy their various social relationships" (1968:88).

Moving from the general discussion about social structures and social action to the specific discussion about political organizations, Weber wrote:

"It is not possible to define political organization, including the state, in terms of the end to which its action is devoted. All the way from provision for subsistence to the patronage of art, there is no conceivable end which some political association has not at some time pursued. Thus, it is possible to define the 'political' character of an organization only in terms of the means peculiar to it" (1968:55, *my italics*).

Indeed, an essential problem of the existing literature about state patronage of the arts is the way the state is conceptualized in social theory in general, and in the American version in particular. According to Alford and Friedland, each of the three popular theories of the state -- Pluralism, Elitism, and Marxism -- emphasizes a different level of analysis: for the Pluralist perspective, which dominates university research and public discourse in the United States, it is the individual; for the Elitist it is the organization; and for the Marxist perspective it is society. We believe, write Alford and Friedland, "that an adequate theory of the state must incorporate all three levels of analysis" (1985:6).

Thus, in Alford and Friedland's view, the state must first be understood as constituted at the societal level, beyond the visible appearance of legal structures, governmental decision-making, and political behavior. In addition to this, they write, the state can also usefully be seen as composed of organizational networks, as structures that differ in their political and legal capacity to control internal and external control. And finally, the state is also a decision-making arena within which multiple groups contend for influence, with varying outcomes depending on what interests are at stake.

Similarly, according to Michael Mann, all principal state theories are problematic in some ways. Pluralism and Marxism, he argues, are reductionist and tend to neglect political particularities, while Elitism regards these particularities as singular, exaggerating the power and cohesion of state actors. Thus, a "more substantive version of the state" is suggested by Mann, one that regards the modern state as crystallized around many powerful institutional particularities (1993:54).

"In beginning to identify general patterns of political particularities we cannot do better than start with Max Weber ... Although Weber did not have a final theory of the modern state, his ideas differed from the state theories identified earlier. He was not a reductionist: unlike proponents of Marxism and Pluralism, he saw that states had powers of their own. And unlike elitists, he did not lodge those powers merely in a central elite; nor were they necessarily cohesive" (ibid:58).

Like Alford and Friedland, Mann does not deny all aspects of the popular theories of the state. Rather, he adds to them an institutional dimension that he borrows from Weber:

"I believe that states are messier and less systematic and unitary than each single theory suggests ... To understand states and appreciate their causal impact on societies, we must specify their institutional particularities. Because the modern state has massively enlarged its institutional infrastructure, it has come to play a much greater role in society, enhancing the power of all crystallization" (ibid:88).

Consequently, instead of focusing only on the structure of state patronage of the arts at a given historical period, this

dissertation examines this patronage from the perspective of its development. Using the institutional particularities identified by Mann as shared by all modern states (executive, judiciary, civil administration, parties, assemblies, and military), the state is not treated in this dissertation as a passive or unitary entity. Instead, it is seen as a multifarious but autonomous actor whose interests and motives must be examined when analyzing its activity in the field of the arts.

A Similar approach was taken by sociologist Howard Becker in his study of government intervention in the arts:

"Like other participants in the making of art works, the state and its agents act in pursuit of their own interests, which may or may not coincide with those of the artists making the works The interests of the state vary, and their interests in art vary accordingly" (1982:165-166).

Indeed, organizational forms like the ones suggested above can not always reveal these interests of the state, nor do they always see the overall importance of the state as an active actor in the field of arts.

Similarly, Michael Useem, another sociologist who has been working in this field, suggests "four distinct models for explaining the state's growing interest in the production of culture" (1976:124). Thus, instead of focusing on the structure of government patronage of the arts, Useem

identifies four more important components of this patronage of the government: (1) the value of patronage for the maintenance of cultural institutions, (2) the utility of the investment for capital accumulation, (3) the value of supporting science and art for the administration of government programs, and (4) the ideological potential of science and art as a primary reason for government patronage. Indeed, it is social, cultural, and political components that constitute the background for these models, rather than a pure structural-organizational one.

For Useem then (as for Dubin and Becker), it is not that structure is unimportant, but rather that one must look beyond and behind the structure of the relationships between governments and their arts. For it is the matter of where one looks for these relationships, I argue here, that is in the greatest need of being reconceptualized.

**C) THE CASE OF ISRAEL - AN EXCEPTION OR A ROUTE TO A NEW
KIND OF ANALYSIS ?**

Israel, as noted earlier, does not fit into any of the established roles and forms of government involvement in the arts. Stated differently, **all** the above forms and roles exist in Israel, and in very interesting inter-relationships. Like the United States, Israel has a fairly developed system of tax

provisions for donors in the field of arts, making the Israeli government an art's **Facilitator**, as defined by Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey (1989). Using their typology further, by having a Public Council for Culture and Art, the Israeli government also plays the role of art's **Patron**, although the 'Arm's Length' principal upon which this role is based was never fully implemented in Israel, and arts and politics were never really 'insulated' from one another. In fact, arts and culture in Israel are handled almost exclusively by a single governmental ministry. Hence, the government is also an **Architect** of the arts, though not in a pure sense, since it is a combined Ministry for Education and Culture that handles Israel's cultural affairs, and not a separate Ministry for Culture as suggested by Cummings and Katz. Also worth noting is the fact that many artistic and cultural institutions in Israel are owned and run by the government. In this regard, the Israeli government also plays the role of an art's **Engineer**, although, once again, not in a pure form since not all cultural institutions are government owned and anyway, financial support was never denied in Israel from art that does not "meet political standards of excellence" (ibid:51). Finally, there is also the official governmental Board of Censorship to which all films and theatrical plays were subject in Israel from the early days of statehood until very recently, regardless of whether or not they had received government support.

In other words, at the same time that Israel has a structure and policy that are clearly of a **supportive** nature, very similar to the great democracies of Western Europe, it also has governmental agencies and institutions that are constantly trying to regulate and restrain the arts, and maybe more important, it has a political culture and atmosphere that allows this **interference** to take place. This interference, as noted earlier, is not restricted only to artistic institutions or projects that are supported by the government, but applies to many other artistic endeavors as well.

To complicate matters further is a peculiar paradox. In a country where the government is so much involved with its arts -- both through its support and interference -- one may assume that the arts hold a high degree of political importance in Israel. Yet, ironically enough, there is a great deal of political **indifference** towards the arts in Israel, reflected in all levels of the political system. This indifference is yet another aspect of the relationships between governments and their arts that must be identified and discussed if one is to explore these relationships objectively and thoroughly.

It is within this context that the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts is being discussed here, not so much as a unique case which does not fit into the existing models of relationships between governments and their

arts, but as a case that challenges the entire theoretical framework within which these models were developed. The challenge, one must notice, is more than academic, as it further challenges our general understanding of the relationship between culture and social structure, and the role of the state in that regard.

CHAPTER 2 - SOURCE OF DATA AND THE METHODOLOGY

The special circumstances surrounding the relationship between government and the arts in Israel prompted the method of inquiry for this dissertation. My basic research takes the form of interpretive analysis of historical documents regarding the involvement of the Israeli government in the field of arts.

A) THE NEED FOR A HISTORICAL STUDY

In presenting his analysis of government involvement in the arts in Europe, Frederic Dorian writes:

"The patterns of European art patronage are the logical outgrowth of European history. What made kings and aristocrats become munificent patrons of the arts? Why did the people themselves maintain this patronage when monarchies fell and were succeeded by republics? Why did they finally extend art subsidies to their scope? History holds the key for the answers to these questions. And so, understanding the chief problems of this study is not possible without some understanding of European traditions and governments ... We became aware that the problem of patronage is more than facts and figures" (1964:6).

More specifically, in presenting the Israeli cultural policy in the UNESCO Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies, Joseph Michman, former Director of the Arts Division in the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture, writes:

"Any description of the cultural policy of the government of Israel requires an insight into the historical process that effected both the population as a whole and the various branches of cultural life" (1973:11).

Historical analysis, as pointed out by many, is not new to the discipline of sociology. All founding fathers of sociology, most notably Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, used historical analysis in their sociological work (Abel,1970; Abrams,1982; Lipset,1968; Stinchcombe,1978).

"Historical sociology is an attempt to understand the relationship of personal activity and experience on the one hand, and social organization on the other hand as something that is continuously constructed in time. It makes the continuous process of construction the focal concern of social analysis" (Abrams, 1982:16).

Accordingly, the study presented in this dissertation is historical in two respects: 1) the data consist mostly of the specific history of government patronage of the arts in Israel; 2) the explanation of these data is based on the more general socio-historical developments of the Israeli society during the period studied.

B) THE NEED FOR AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

"A book on controversial art," writes Steven Dubin, "cannot overlook factors such as political climate, community tolerance levels and the social construction of acceptability" (1992:4). Thus, Dubin continues, "it is pertinent to invoke the notion of 'Verstehen' here, a concept associated with the nineteenth century social theorist Max Weber" (ibid:6).

Indeed, it was Max Weber who maintained that all human sciences necessarily proceed by means of interpretation - an

analysis whose purpose is to understand, quite apart from the objective development, the subjective meaning which a social relationship holds for man and by which he is guided in his social conduct. In Weber's view, understanding the motives and values toward which given activities or structures are oriented is essential to our understanding of human relations. "Understanding of motivation," Weber wrote, "consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning" (1968:8).

Accordingly, a major goal of this dissertation is to comprehend the historical and political context within which government involvement in the arts takes place in Israel. This includes clarifying the dominant myths and values of the Israeli society (or at least those myths and values that are related to this dissertation's subject matter), as well as fathoming the motivations and constraints confronted by the Israeli government when acting in the field of arts.

C) SOURCES OF DATA

Gathering reliable data about government involvement in the arts in Israel proved to be a rather difficult task. Detailed records from government sessions are not available, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is the fountainhead of art patronage in Israel, has no archives that are open to the public. This problem, one should notice, is rather common

for arts policy researchers. "The current state of data collection in the arts," write Pankratz and Morris,

"places severe constraints on ... arts policy research. Researchers most often must rely on secondary data gathered and aggregated by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and membership-based arts and arts education service organizations. Such data collection efforts are inherently limited ... Without reliable, consistent, comparable and readily available data, the testing and refinement of theories to explain and predict phenomena in the arts and arts policy world is severely compromised" (1990:269-70).

Within these limits, the data for this dissertation were collected from three kinds of sources. The main body of data consist of **primary sources**, i.e. official government documents that were examined carefully in order to establish the authentic reading of parliamentary laws and the execution of the official government policy. Only a small portion of the data is based on **secondary sources**, including newspaper clippings and other materials dealing with Israel's arts policy, as well as a large body of literature in comparative arts policy. In addition to these, several **in-depth interviews** were conducted especially for this study. These mostly involve officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture, but also include artists and arts administrators.

1) PRIMARY SOURCES

"Although no cultural policy has been formally pronounced in Israel," write Katz and Gurevitch, "the everyday acts of the legislative and executive branches of government have

clear cut consequences for culture and the arts" (1973:270). Accordingly, the data for this dissertation were collected mostly by tracing the everyday activity of these two branches of the Israeli government. It should be mentioned here, however, that while the legislative branch was very easy to approach for data collecting, the executive branch was much more difficult.

Representing the executive branch of government in Israel in the field of art is the Ministry of Education and Culture. Unfortunately, it has no archives that are open to the public or for research. Nonetheless, some documents and publications from this Ministry were obtained, though these were mostly about the structure and organization of government patronage of the arts in Israel. Together with the in-depth interviews with officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture, however, this material paints a rather comprehensive picture of the activity of this ministry in the field of arts.

Much more systematic was the collection of data from the legislative branch (The Knesset), which is the level that oversees the government's work, and for which very detailed records are available. Moreover, as most art institutions in Israel are state supported, it is the Knesset that is in charge of their destinies. Thus, all the Knesset's protocols from 1949 to 1992 were examined carefully in order to trace

any governmental and parliamentary activity in the field of arts.

Other primary sources used in this dissertation are records of the Israeli Supreme Court, an institution which also oversees the government's work, and for which very detailed records are available. As we will see throughout this dissertation, there was more than one occasion in the short history of the State of Israel that this court was asked to interfere with various government decisions in the field of arts, most notably in issues relating to artistic censorship. Examining these records exposes yet another important level of government involvement in the arts in Israel.

Annual budget books of the State of Israel have also been used in order to follow developments in government funding of the arts in Israel. Also, platforms of the major political parties in Israel were analyzed to outline yet another aspect of political involvement in the field of arts.

2) SECONDARY SOURCES

To complete the picture, I used other sources of information relating to this dissertation's subject matter, most notably newspaper articles and interviews dealing with government activity in the field of arts. These newspapers clippings were not collected systematically, thus they were

used only as additional background for the primary sources mentioned above.

Other secondary sources used in this dissertation are books and articles about other aspects of Israeli society. Much has been written in Israel about government involvement in other fields. None of these, however, has ever been concerned with the arts. Primarily, I use these other books and articles in order to frame my understanding of the specific case of government involvement in the arts.

3) IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Last, but not least, among the means of collecting data for this dissertation were in-depth interviews conducted especially for this study. They included government officials who are involved with artistic and cultural affairs in Israel, as well as artists and art administrators, outside the government, who are familiar with these issues and could shed additional light on the subject matter of this dissertation.

All interviews took place in Israel in the winter of 1992 and the summer of 1993 (see list of interviews, appendix 1)¹.

¹Naturally, the vast majority of the written or spoken data used in this dissertation was in the Hebrew language. In quoting from this literature, I have used mostly my own translation, unless otherwise noted.

D) METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The sources of data and the methodology used in this dissertation have also defined **the time frame** for this study, as well as **the definition of 'arts' and 'culture'** used herein, (i.e. what is included in this definition and what is excluded). As for the time frame for this study, the main body of data deals with the years 1948 to 1992, beginning with the establishment of the State of Israel and the assemble of the first Knesset, and ending with the close of the twelfth session of the Knesset in 1992, for which the most recent complete protocols were available. Some points, however, are made in this dissertation in regard to years previous to 1949 (most notably in regard to the pre-statehood period known as the Yishuv period) and to some important developments after 1992.

As for the definition of 'arts' and 'culture', it is quite clear that I could not adopt Thomas Mann's definition -- "Culture is everything that politics does not touch"² -- for that would simply undermine the entire subject matter of the dissertation. Thus, a more realistic and contemporary definition was needed. Instead, I include in my definition of 'arts' and 'culture' all those fields of art that are handled

² Betrachtungen Eines Unpolitischen (1918). Quoted in the Knesset during the first ever discussion to be held in the Israeli parliament about 'Culture in Israel, February 1, 1972.

directly by the main institutions involved in arts patronage in Israel: The Culture Department, The Culture Administration and The Public Council for Arts and Culture, all branches of the Ministry of Education and Culture. These are categorized as Theater, Film, Music, Dance, Painting, Sculpture, Poetry and Literature. Other fields of culture, such as Sports, Electronic Media and Archeology, although also the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture and could be easily included in a broader definition of culture, were excluded from my definition. In practice, these fields are handled by separate statutory authorities within the Ministry, and anyway, their development has been rather different than that of the fields included in the definition. Based on this definition, the terms 'arts' and 'culture' are used interchangeably in this dissertation, unless otherwise noted specifically.

**CHAPTER 3 - THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE OF THE
ARTS IN ISRAEL - AN OVERVIEW**

Government involvement in the arts in Israel today is relatively heavy. Yet, this was not always the case. When first created in 1949, the Israeli government assumed hardly any responsibility for the young country's arts and culture. The role of art patronage was left to other political and semi-political institutions. Only during the 1960s, and more ponderously during the 1970s, did the government assume more and more of these responsibilities, thereby becoming the major arts patron it is today.

A) THE YISHUV AND THE EARLY YEARS OF STATEHOOD

Interestingly enough, political patronage of the arts and culture in Israel is older than the State of Israel itself. Beginning in the early 1920s, in the pre-statehood period known as the Yishuv, two major political institutions -the General Federation of Labor (The Histadrut) and the political parties that operated in the Yishuv - assumed an almost exclusive responsibility for the cultural affairs of the Jewish community living in Palestine during those years.

According to Or-Noi, "political parties in the Yishuv were concerned not only with political questions but with all the components of the society they were building" (1987:409).

Seeing arts and culture as a means of crystallizing a unified national culture, she reports, almost all political parties in the Yishuv had Departments of Culture within their administrations, devoting much efforts and resources to fostering the cultural life of the young Jewish community of Palestine.

Similarly, Cordova and Herzog report that "cultural activity (for the Yishuv's parties) was preponderant; it manifested itself in many ways" (1978:245). But the main endeavor of the Labor movement in the cultural sphere, they continue, "was invested in the cultural committee of the Histadrut" (ibid:247).

Indeed, the greatest patron of the arts and culture during the Yishuv period was the Histadrut - The General Federation of Labor. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explain what the Histadrut is, and what it means for Israel and its political system. It should be noted, however, that this is one of the most politicized institutions in the country, related directly -- ideologically and personally -- to the Labor Party that dominated the political system of the Yishuv, and later that of the State of Israel, for more than 50 years.

Founded in 1920 as a Federation of Eretz-Israeli Workers,

the Histadrut was established "to arrange all the economic and **cultural** matters of the working class in the Yishuv" (quoted in Cordova & Herzog, 1978:248, my italics). In keeping with this plan, shortly after its creation, the Histadrut founded a newspaper and a publishing house, established libraries, and encouraged and provided facilities for drama, music and dance (Cordova and Herzog, 1978; Michman, 1973; Shoam, 1989). It was during these years that the Histadrut also purchased a large amount of paintings and sculptures that were created in the country, a step very similar to the one taken by the United States government in the early 1930s when it wanted to encourage "Depression-troubled" artistic activity (Townsend, 1985).

Reviewing the development of cultural policy in Israel from its early days, Joseph Michman, former Director of the Arts Division in the Ministry of Education and Culture writes:

"Since the government [that is the British government that received mandatory powers over the country from the League of Nations] did not represent the population and did not develop the country, the Histadrut assumed functions -- many of them cultural -- beyond what is customary for a trade union"
(1973:10, my italics)

To all intents and purposes, Michman concludes "the Histadrut operated as a kind of Ministry of Culture before an autonomous government existed" (ibid.).

This patronage of the Histadrut did not cease, however,

when the State of Israel was established in 1948. "The early governments", writes Michman, "had no desire to interfere in this activity of the Histadrut" (ibid). Thus, for quite a few years after the creation of the State, cultural affairs remained the responsibility of the political system, though not as yet reaching the hands of the government. But the young Israeli government did not leave the arts to fend for themselves during these years. Rather, it relied on an institution, many of whose leaders held important positions in the government. There is no doubt, according to any criteria, that during those years, the Histadrut could be regarded as part of the country's political administration, no less than the government itself.

To be sure, a Ministry for Education and Culture was created within the government as early as 1949, and a separate department of Culture was founded within this Ministry to deal with the country's cultural affairs. Yet only three years later, when "it became evident that the young state with its limited means and its many commitments could not carry out ambitious cultural programs, the department ceased to exist and its units which still continued to function were subordinated to senior ministry officials whose main concern was formal education and administration" (Michman, 1973:17).

Indeed, a close review of the Ministry's budget and

activity during these years reveals that most of its resources and efforts were devoted to education rather than to culture (see also Chapter 6 below). Within the field of culture, efforts were devoted mostly to Hebrew language instruction for new immigrants and to institutions, such as the Hebrew language Academy and the Holocaust Memorial Museum (Yad Vashem), for whose financing the government was legally committed. Other cultural institutions were awarded grants not to exceed 10 percent of their total budget, and in many cases even less (Michman, 1973). "Government policy in these years", Michman concludes, "was thus one of non-interference in financial and administrative matters in order to avoid this particular responsibility" (ibid).

Instead, there were two other non-governmental organizations (besides the Histadrut) which assumed responsibility for cultural endeavors in the new State of Israel, The Jewish Agency and The America-Israel Cultural Foundation.

Founded in 1929 as a division of the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency's main goal was to advance the idea of establishing an independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel. In fact, until mid 1948, the Agency served as the 'government in exile' of the Jewish community of Palestine. Thus, among its many responsibilities, it also took upon

itself the promotion of cultural and artistic activities of the Yishuv. When the State of Israel was established in 1948, this activity of the Jewish Agency was shifted towards the promotion of cultural activities for the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who flooded the country in the first years of statehood.

As of today, the Jewish Agency still supports, financially and otherwise, many cultural activities and institutions in Israel, although it is not the major art patron it used to be. Almost like the Histadrut, the Jewish Agency is a highly political institution, headed for more than fifty years by representatives of the Israeli Labor Party.

The America-Israel Cultural Foundation, on the other hand, has always been an absolutely apolitical organization whose goals and interests were merely artistic. Founded in 1939 as an American not-for-profit organization whose main purpose is the promotion of cultural and artistic activities in Palestine and later in the State of Israel, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation was, until the early 1960s, the leading patron of the Israeli arts and Culture. According to Michman, "the sums allocated by this foundation to artistic activities in the first years of statehood by far exceeded the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture for the same purpose" (1973:11).

There were, however, two areas of responsibility in the field of culture that the new government took upon itself rather early. These included the cultural absorption of the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who flooded the country during the first years of statehood, and the control over the content of artistic productions. Joined by the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture established, as early as 1951, an organization named TELEM (Hebrew acronym for 'Theater To The Transit Camps') whose main purpose was to bring culture, mainly theater, to the transit camps where the new immigrants were living. The idea behind this activity of the organization was to "create a common denominator between old and new immigrants, to narrow the cultural gap between East and West and to get the new immigrant closer to the Hebrew language" (Rahav et al:1982:5). Once again, however, after a short period under the administrative management of the Ministry of Education and Culture, TELEM was transferred to the Histadrut which was much more experienced in this kind of work.

Another area of culture in which the new government became engaged rather early was artistic censorship. As early as 1949, the young Israeli government established a Board for Films and Theater Review, better known as 'The Censorship'. Unlike its involvement in other areas, here the government remained committed for many years, only abolishing the Board

as recently as 1989. The activity of this Board constitutes an important part of government involvement in the arts in Israel and is discussed extensively later in this dissertation.

**B) THE 1960S - THE GOVERNMENT ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY
FOR CULTURE**

The year 1959 was the turning point in the Government's approach to cultural affairs. In this year, the Public Council for Culture and Art was founded, and it was planned to set up a corresponding Culture Department within the Ministry of Education and Culture which would serve as the executive arm of this Council. Consequently, other governmental ministries, as well as the parliament and local governments, began demonstrating greater interest in the country's arts and culture, bringing government involvement in these areas to a degree not known before.

1) THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Beginning in the early 1960s with the establishment of the Public Council for Culture and Art, the Ministry of Education and Culture became the major patron of arts and culture in Israel. The model for the new council was the Arts Council of Great Britain with its "Arm's length principle" - distancing arts and culture from politics and bureaucracy. Yet, for reasons specified later in this dissertation, this principle was never fully implemented in Israel and government

involvement in the arts became anything but distant from politics and bureaucracy.

In 1963, another step was taken towards the increasing involvement of government in the arts, marked by the creation of a Department of Culture and Sports within the Ministry of Education and Culture. Shortly afterwards, however, sports affairs were withdrawn from this framework and, in 1970, it was renamed the Department of Culture and Arts (see figure # 1 below).

"Driven by circumstances," Michman writes,

"and in order to prevent the collapse of institutions that were considered to be valuable cultural assets, the government increased its grants to cultural institutions ..., had shown greater willingness to take upon itself long-term obligations in the field of arts, ... and adopted the recommendations of the National Council for Culture and the Arts to establish certain cultural institutions that were to be dominated entirely, or almost entirely by the Ministry" (1973:19).

Consequently, he reports, the Culture Department of the Ministry became more and more involved in planning, budgets, and supervision of various cultural institutions and activities.

Similar developments transpired in art schools around the country. Like most art establishments in Israel, arts schools and studios were started on private initiative or by voluntary

organizations. Only gradually, Michman reports, did local authorities, as well as the Ministry of Education and Culture, enter the picture by "assuming financial and professional responsibility to these institutions" (1973:55). As of today, most art schools in Israel are funded almost or entirely by the government, and are all part of the official State education system.

Another step towards expanding government responsibility in the field of arts took place in 1966 with the creation of The Corporation for Promoting Arts to The People, known by its Hebrew name Omanut La'am. In fact, the Corporation is the direct continuance of TELEM, the organization that brought subsidized theater to new immigrants in their transit camps in the early 1950s. The only difference is that now these activities became the exclusive responsibility of the government.

In the mid 1980s, due to the increasing volume of government activities in the field of arts and culture, the government established a separate Culture Administration within the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to supervise and administer all these activities; it is, in essence, a Ministry of Culture within the Ministry of Education and Culture (see figure # 2 below).

In between these major structural developments, increasing numbers of commissions and committees were initiated by the government and by parliament to study situations in various cultural institutions.

Figures 1 and 2 below describe the changes in the Israeli culture administration from the late 1960s to early 1990.

Figure # 1 - Culture administration in Israel, 1970
(Source: Michman, 1973:23)

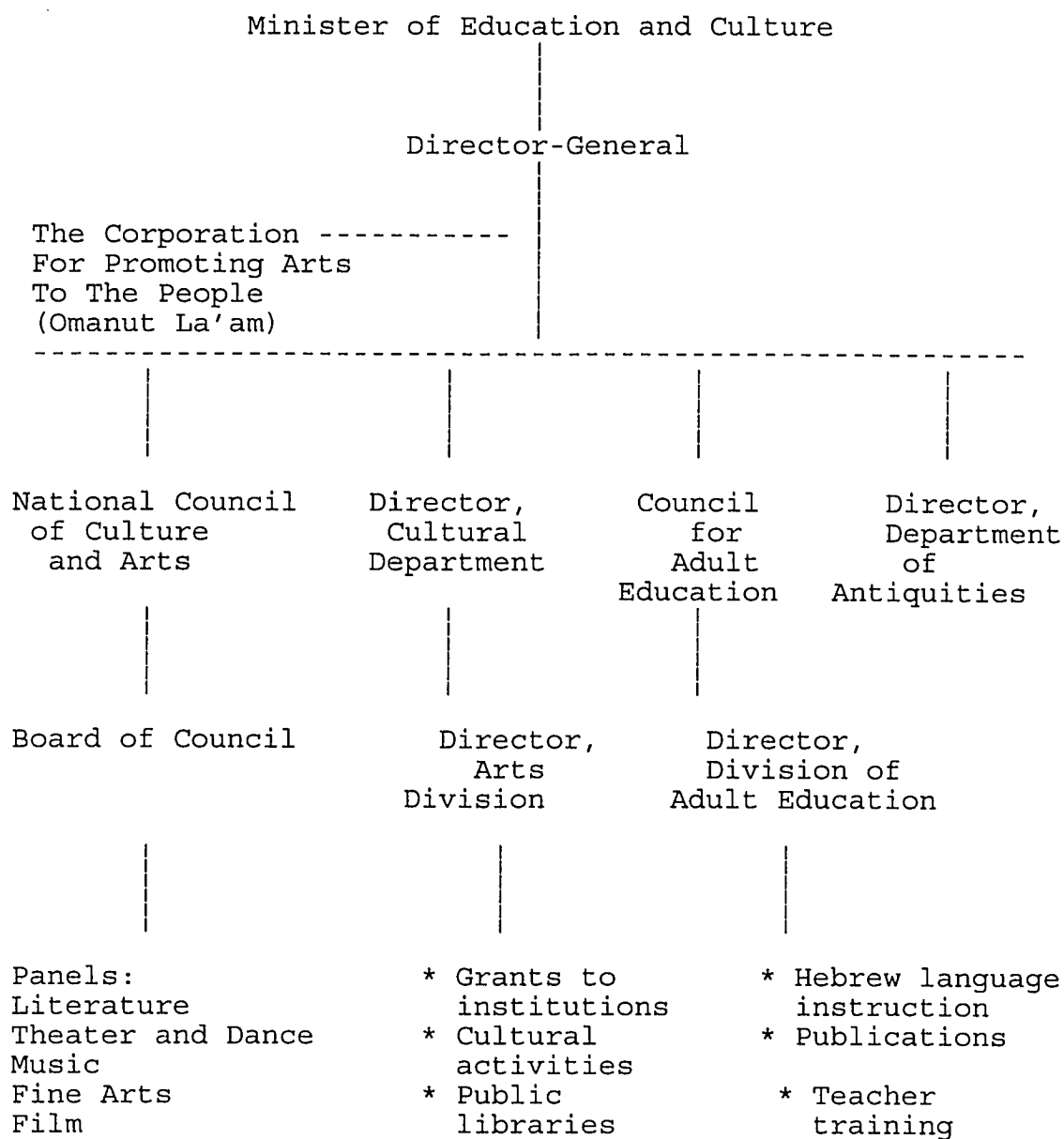
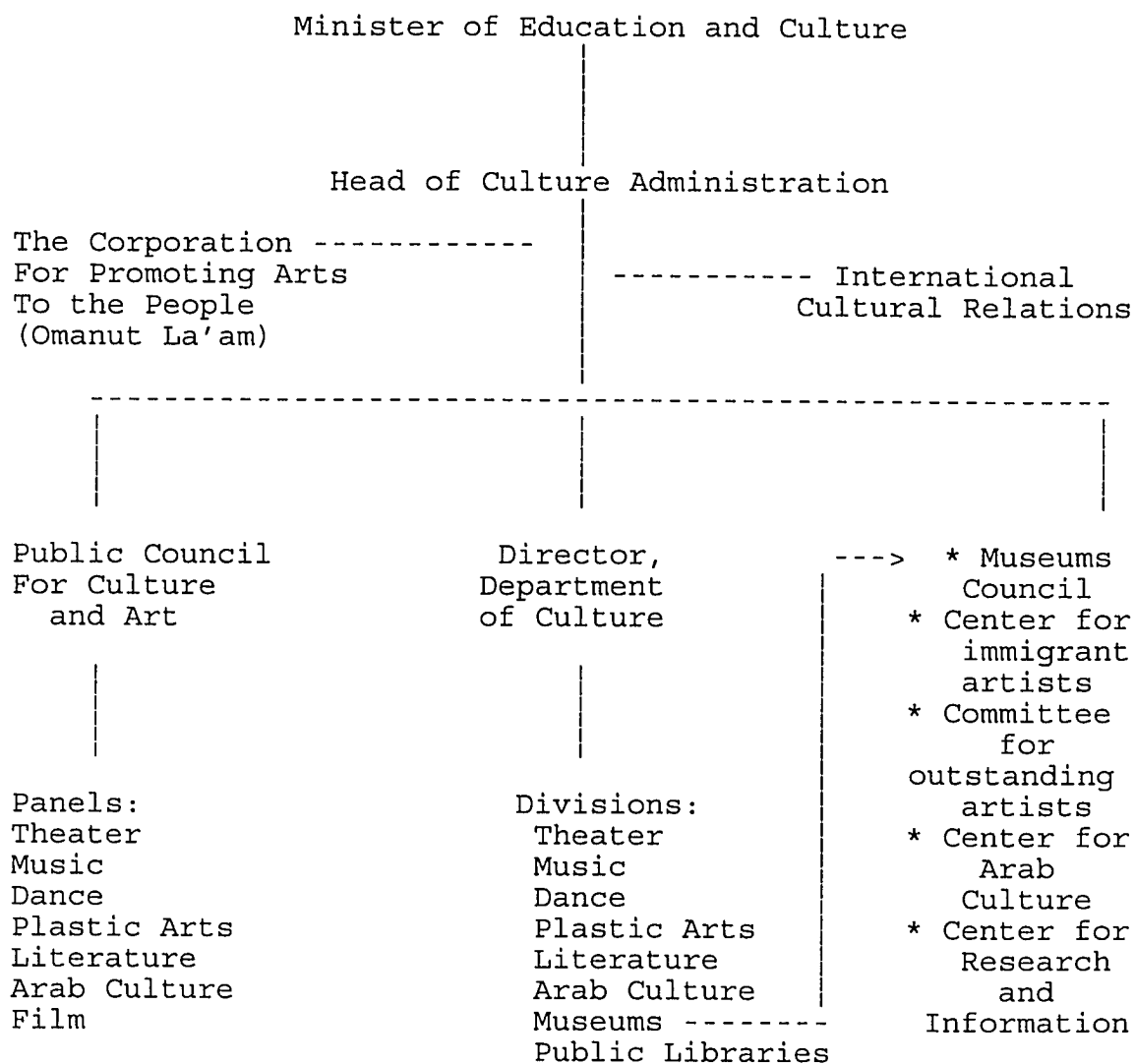


Figure # 2 - Culture administration in Israel, 1992

(Source: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992)



2) OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES INVOLVED WITH THE ARTS

The Ministry of Education and Culture, as described above, is no doubt the fountainhead of art patronage in Israel. Yet, there are several other ministries and government agencies in Israel that, either with or without the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Culture, are also involved with various cultural activities in the country and are worth mentioning as part of the overall description of government involvement in the arts in Israel.

a) THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

It was within the Ministry of the Interior that the Board for Films and Theater Review was created in 1949. Being at the center of theatrical and cinematic activity for many years, the Board for Film and Theater Review, and, consequently the Ministry of the Interior, became a major component of government involvement in the arts in Israel. More than once, the Minister of the Interior found himself at the center of some harsh public debates surrounding questions of artistic freedom and the role of government in the country's cultural life. The involvement of the Ministry of the Interior in these issues is dealt with extensively in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

b) THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Funding films, on the other hand, was always the concern of The Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Only in the mid 1970s did the Ministry of Education and Culture join this Ministry in encouraging and promoting the film industry in Israel.

Seeing films as industry rather than art, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was the first governmental ministry to initiate a law regarding any artistic activity in Israel. As early as 1953, while the Ministry of Education and Culture was pre-occupied with educational goals and devoting relatively little attention to arts and culture, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry initiated 'the Israeli Film Encouragement Law', which provided substantial tax refunds and loans for films produced in Israel (Gross, 1991). It is an official of this Ministry who is in charge of the promotion of Israeli films and it is to him that film producers go first when they want their film to be considered for governmental funding. Only in the mid 1970s, as noted above, did the National Council for Culture and Arts join the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in awarding grants and encouraging artists connected with the film industry. A fund for Encouraging Israeli Films was established by both ministries, and it currently supports about half of the films produced in the country every year. In 1991, for example, funding from the Fund for Encouraging Israeli Films constituted 57 percent of the budget of the films funded that year.

c) THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Another governmental ministry that is highly involved with the country's arts and culture is the Ministry of Tourism, which has always seen cultural activities as an important means to attract tourists to Israel. Established in 1964, the Ministry of Tourism soon created an Events Department to initiate and support various cultural activities around the country. The Department works very closely with the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as with local authorities, providing financial support to various cultural events, mostly in the form of the advertising and marketing of these events abroad. In addition, the Department organizes 'Musical Tours' around the country for foreign orchestras, choirs, and dance companies, while also producing its own Folk Events for tourists already visiting Israel. The budget of this department is one of the largest within the Ministry of Tourism.

d) THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION ABSORPTION

Another important aspect of cultural life in Israel, the absorption of artists who arrive in the country as new immigrants, is handled jointly by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Immigration Absorption. In cooperation with the Jewish Agency and the Public Council for Culture and Art, the Ministry of Immigration Absorption established in the mid 1980s a Center for Absorbing Immigrant Artists, and participates with other governmental agencies in

the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Absorbing Immigrant Artists. Efforts and resources are invested by the Ministry of Immigration in a variety of ways, including: finding jobs and housing for artists who have just arrived in the country as new immigrants, producing and financing performances of new immigrant artists, exposing new immigrants to Israeli culture, translating various artistic works and disseminating them among new immigrants, and establishing libraries of translated Israeli literature.

e) THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Recognizing culture as an important means for achieving Israel's international and political goals, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs also devotes relatively a lot of efforts and resources to the promotion of Israeli arts and culture abroad. Thus, as early as 1957, the Ministry established a special department to deal with Israel's international culture relations - KASHTUM (Hebrew acronym for Science and Culture Relations). According to Aviva Bar-Briskman, Israel's Cultural Attache' in New York and former official of KASHTUM, the department is responsible for signing and implementing cultural exchange agreements between Israel and other countries (currently about 15), as well as promoting cultural relations with countries with whom no such agreements exist (The United States, for example). As with other ministries involved with the arts, KASHTUM is working very

closely with the Public Council for Culture and Art and the Culture Administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The division of labor between the two is very clear: The Ministry of Education and Culture is the expert in cultural affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the expert in foreign affairs; together they invest in developing Israel's cultural foreign affairs.

As part of this effort, and to best promote Israeli arts and culture, official consuls for cultural affairs (cultural attaches) are stationed in 5 or 6 major cities around the globe. These cultural attaches are usually well-known artists or art administrators who are rarely permanent employees of the ministry. Instead, they are especially contracted for limited periods of time. As part of their duties, Cultural attaches help -- financially and otherwise -- Israeli artists and art institutions that come to perform or exhibit in their geographic areas.

f) THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES

Also involved with Israel's cultural affairs is the Ministry of Defense. But unlike the direct approach of the ministries mentioned above, this ministry has a more indirect involvement, through the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), the largest institution for which this Ministry is responsible.

Viewing arts and culture as an important tool for integrating soldiers from all strata of society and cultural backgrounds, the IDF created, in 1949, the position of Senior Education Officer (SEO). Among its duties, the SEO is also responsible for a very rich cultural and artistic activity which takes place in the Military.

Generally speaking, this activity of the IDF takes two routs. Together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the IDF arranges for young, promising artists to receive the title and status of 'gifted artist'. So named, these artists are then able to continue developing their talents while serving in the military. Under similar arrangement, civilian artists perform before army audiences as part of their reserve duty, providing yet another aspect of arts and culture to the young soldiers.

The other artistic activity of the IDF takes place through special artistic institutions (theatrical groups, singing troops, orchestras) which are run exclusively by the IDF. These institutions perform for soldiers in camps, providing them with cultural and artistic reliefs during their service. It is worth noting that these military-artistic institutions were regarded for many years as an inseparable part of cultural life in Israel, and invariably cradled the artistic career of many well known Israeli artists.

Answering a question raised at the Knesset in January 1979 about the nature of this cultural activity of the Military, the Minister of Defense said:

"The IDF has its own theater company and several entertainment teams that are responsible for more than half of the performances given to our soldiers. The rest is given by civilian artists and institutions, as part of their reserve duty ... In 1977/78 alone, these teams performed almost 2000 times the budget for these performances in 1977/78 was 3.560.000 LI"¹ .

And in a 1991 publication by the SEO Command, the following explanation was provided for this extensive involvement of the IDF with cultural affairs:

"We in the IDF are involved in culture because of the deep sense that for the three years in which we supply all the needs of the young men and women who serve in the Military, we must also supply their spiritual needs. More than that, because Israel is in a process of taking shape, for many soldiers the years of the military provide their first encounter with the performing arts, music, theater, and dance. The IDF's cultural activity is therefore important in encouraging society to be cultured" (1991:23).

3) THE LOCAL LEVEL

Beginning in the mid 1970s, another component of the public administration in Israel began demonstrating an increasing interest in the country's arts and culture. These are the municipalities and local workers councils (Moatzut Polaim).

¹All Knesset's citations quoted this dissertation from this point on were taken from The Knesset's Protocols (the official publication of the Knesset), Volumes 1-125, 1949-1992.

Nonetheless, because of geographical and/or political reasons, this regional system of intervention in the arts cannot be regarded in Israel as separate from the national system. The role of local governments in Israel, Arian writes, "is relatively weak ... They are highly dependent on the national government" (1985:238-241). Accordingly, everything in Israel goes through the political center. Most cultural institutions are located in the center of the country and only the large municipalities, such as Tel-Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, have their own independent culture budgets. Mayors and other officials at the local level are highly political figures, committed to their party lines no less than members of the central government, and they are usually involved in national politics as well. It is the central government that provides between one-half and two-thirds of the budgets of local authorities (Arian, 1985:135), and it is the central government that supervises these budgets. Money for the local worker councils is provided by the Histadrut, which also nominates the heads of these federations. In short, from the central government comes the framework of local patronage of the arts. Only decisions regarding where and how to implement this patronage remain matters for the local groups.

Moreover, in many cities around the country the national government runs its Development Corporations. As part of their duties, it has become customary for these corporations to

finance and get involved in many of the cultural activities that take place in their geographical jurisdiction, thereby making government involvement at the local level even greater.

Based on this reality, the local level will not be discussed broadly in this dissertation. Instead, emphasis will be on the national government, where the framework of state intervention in the arts originated.

C) CONCLUSION

Interestingly, the development of government involvement in the arts in Israel, mostly that of the Ministry of Education and Culture, was entirely different than it was in other domains of the country's everyday life. While in areas such as education, economy, health, agriculture, sports and electronic media, the government was highly involved from the very early days of statehood, gradually surrendering at least some of its responsibilities to the private sector, the opposite occurred in the field of arts and culture. Here the government demonstrated very little interest at the beginning, and then gradually assumed more responsibilities as the years went by.

As of today, Israel's cultural affairs are handled almost exclusively by the Culture Administration, the Public Council of Culture and the Arts, and the Department of Culture - all branches of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Local

authorities and other governmental ministries and agencies are also involved in the country's arts and culture, though to a lesser degree, and in a framework determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

CHAPTER 4 - GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS IN ISRAEL

A) Support of the arts at the executive level

One of the principles upon which Israeli society has always been based is that national and societal benefits can be derived from culture and the arts. The Jewish tradition of rich spiritual life is reflected in Israel, among other things, in the heavy promotion and subsidizing of individual artists and cultural institutions by the national government, as well as in the constant concern for the establishment and furthering of cultural and artistic institutions. Through the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the parliament, and other governmental and semi-governmental agencies, the State of Israel plays an enormous role in encouraging and fostering the country's culture and arts.

1) THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The Ministry of Education and Culture, as noted earlier, is the cornerstone of arts patronage in Israel. Through its Public Council for Culture and Art, Department of Culture, Culture Administration, and The Corporation for Promoting Art to the People, the Ministry supports, financially and otherwise, much of Israel's cultural and artistic activity.

a) THE PUBLIC COUNCIL FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Founded by the government In 1959 as an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Culture, the Public Council for Culture and Art is the Ministry's professional and public face in the field of arts and culture. The Council examines the activity of all cultural institutions in the country, and sets the cultural policy for which the Culture Department of the Ministry is responsible. It recommends the allocations of funds and subsidies to individual artists and institutions, and initiates new projects to advance the quality and widen the scope of cultural life in the country.

Historically, however, the role of this Council was much narrower. When first created, the Council's functions were quite limited and rather vague. A letter of appointment defined its functions as follows:

- 1) to concern itself with questions of culture and arts in Israel.
- 2) to publicize its own proceedings and to issue publications on culture and the arts.
- 3) to sponsor national research projects in culture and the arts.
- 4) to devote special attention to ways and means of propagating cultural values among new immigrants.
- 5) to devote special attention to ways of strengthening cultural values among the young.
- 6) to initiate activities in culture and the arts and to recommend these activities to the attention of the Minister of Education and Culture¹.

¹Quoted in Michman, J., (1973), Cultural Policy in Israel, Paris: Unesco Studies and Documents on cultural policies, p.21.

According to Michman, during its first few years of existence, the Council concerned itself mostly with the moral and public aspects of cultural life in Israel, but did not do much in particular to promote the country's arts and culture (1973). Only in the late 1960s, he reports, was the Council asked by the Minister of Education and Culture to take a more active role in the country's everyday cultural life, and to be more than just an advisory body. Referring to this issue in a speech he made at the Knesset's assembly in July 1972, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"... I could, of course, use the Public Council for Culture and Arts merely as an advisory body as its name says. Instead, I decided to endow part of the Ministry's budget for culture to the Council, allowing the Council to decide which experiments to fund and in what amount. I do not think that it is a good idea that decisions such as these will be exclusively in the hands of the Minister of Education and Culture".

Ten years later, this expansive role of the Council found its official expression in an official government decision that redefined the Council's roles². Among its new functions: to initiate new cultural and artistic institutions; to award grants to artistic institutions, productions, and projects; to find ways for disseminating arts and culture all over the country in order to minimize cultural gaps; to encourage the arts and culture of all ethnic groups in Israel; to promote the expression of Jewish traditional values, Zionist values,

² Government Decision No. 794, July 26, 1982.

and universal values of tolerance; and to look for ways to help new immigrants in their cultural absorption.

Clearly, this government decision has widened the Council's responsibilities tremendously, making it the most important institution in supporting the country's artistic and cultural life.

The 170 members of the Council are appointed by the Minister of Education and Culture for a four-year term. They represent and reflect a wide range of sectors of the Israeli society, from artists and art administrators, to teachers, scholars and public officials. Answering a question raised at the Knesset by one of the House members, the Minister of Education and Culture said in January 1971:

"Appointments to the Public Council for Culture and Arts are on a personal basis. In putting together the new council, we have tried to cut down the number of Council members and to do whatever we could so that the new Council will reflect different kinds of arts, different points of view, various generations, and various ethnic groups. There is no representation to any institution or political party in this council".

Most of the Council's work is done in panels -- currently seven -- each devoted to a specific field of art: Dance, Literature, Music, Theater, Cinema, Visual Arts, and Arab Culture. The panels set the overall policy of the government in their field of specialty and initiate various projects in these fields. In recent years, these projects have included participation in the visual art Biennales in Venice, Ankara,

San Paulo and Istanbul; founding the first Center for Dance in Tel-Aviv; establishing an annual dance festival; recommending the establishment of an institute for translating outstanding literary works; producing video films about famous Israeli novelists and poets; conducting seminars for new immigrant novelists; founding, together with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Fund for Promoting Israeli Films; establishing a new school for films in Jerusalem; creating an annual 'fringe' festival in Acre; and initiating music and dance festivals in the Arab sector.

In addition to these, the Council established a Center for Information and Research that collects and disseminates information about cultural production in Israel. It has also founded the Center for Absorbing New Immigrant Artists, which helps artists adjust to the country's cultural scene. Together with the IDF (Israel's Defence Forces), the Council helps gifted artists in the Military, enabling them to continue their artistic activity during their military service.

But the main work of the Council concerns recommending financial support to many of the country's cultural and artistic institutions. This role is specifically important since most of the country's cultural institutions depend almost exclusively on the council for support, and don't usually have any other sources of funding. Referring to this

question during his 1972 speech mentioned above, the Minister of Education and Culture said: "As part of its work, the Council supported in the last year and a half close to 30 productions, many of them would probably not have been possible without this support".

The year 1985 was important for the Council and, consequently, for the entire relationship between the government and cultural institutions in Israel. That year, in a revolutionary decision, the government decided to set formal criteria for financial support of cultural institution, subjecting all endowments to the Council's recommendation. Up until that time, the names of the institutions and the amounts of money allocated were specified in the government's annual budget book. The Council, up until that year, acted as no more than a rubber stamp for these decisions, which, in many cases, were the direct result of political pressures put on the government.

In 1985, these 'Specific Endowments', as they were called, were abolished. Since that time, in order to treat all institutions equally, each must officially apply to the Ministry for support, with all final decisions dependant on the Council's recommendation. It must be noted, however, that this decision of the government was not issued primarily in regard to cultural institutions, but rather to all

institutions receiving government funds. Cultural institutions thus have benefitted from this decision by default.

b) THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE

Executing the cultural policy set by the Council, as well as providing the actual funds for individual artists and cultural institutions, is the duty of the Culture Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Established in its current form in 1970, the department has seven divisions -- similar to the Council's panels -- working very closely with the Council in deciding who will get how much in the field of arts (see Figure 2 above).

Having at its disposal the entire culture budget of the state of Israel (around 120 Million dollars in 1991), this department is one of the most important institutions in the country's cultural life. It is a status that was only strengthened by the 1985 government decision to set formal criteria for financial support of cultural institutions, projects, activities and events.

In accordance with these criteria, the department provides money to almost all cultural institutions in the country. It helps museums and libraries, by financing their regular activities; it assists individual artists and cultural institutions to participate in international cultural events;

it provides financial support to research institutions in the field of culture to disseminate their information, and to arts magazines to be published; it awards grants to individual artists in order to enable them to be free to concentrate on their arts, and to students in art schools to pay their tuition; it finances festivals, arts schools, and film productions, and helps new immigrant artists find jobs; it supports artists and authors organizations, Israeli exhibitions abroad, and the Israeli branches of international cultural organizations; it subsidizes various cultural activities in the Arab sector, and much more.

c) THE CULTURE ADMINISTRATION

Overseeing and providing the administrative means for both the Public Council for Culture and Art and the Department of Culture is the Culture Administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Established in 1986 as part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's reorganization, its function is to improve government promotion of arts and culture. For most intents and purposes, the Culture Administration serves as a Ministry of Culture within the Ministry of Education and Culture.

d) THE CORPORATION FOR PROMOTING ART TO THE PEOPLE

Another institute that is affiliated with the Ministry of Education and Culture, and is involved directly with the

promotion of arts and culture in Israel, is the Corporation for Promoting Arts to The People, better known by its Hebrew name Omanut La'am.

Established in its current form in 1966, Omanut La'am is the direct continuance of TELEM - the organization that brought subsidized theater to new immigrants in their transit camps in the early 1950s (see chapter 3 above). Throughout the years, the Corporation has undergone some major changes in its ideology, orientation and goals, emerging as the leading organization in disseminating and promoting Israel's arts and culture. Like TELEM, Omanut La'am was established jointly by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Histadrut, and the Jewish Agency. But unlike its predecessor the funding for this newer institute comes mainly from the government or, more specifically, from the Ministry of Education And Culture.

The original idea behind Omanut La'am was to bring subsidized theater to the development towns where the new immigrants were living. Answering a question raised in the Knesset in June 1969, the Minister of Education and Culture specified the Corporation's goals:

- 1) To bring artistic performances to development towns, immigrants town, immigrant settlements, and to the outskirts of the main cities.
- 2) To foster artistic inclination among new immigrants and the people living in development areas, and to educate them to participate in cultural and artistic events in their communities.

Omanut La'am, write Michman,

"considers it a duty to create a fertile cultural climate in the development towns established for the absorption of new immigrants. Such a climate can be created only if there is continuity in cultural performances. It was therefore decided that those places which were included in Omanut La'am schedule would be entitled to at least one performance a month" (1973:44).

Thus, for quite a few years, the Corporation brought hundreds of theater performances to many of the development towns around the country. Tickets to these performances were sold at reduced prices (between half and one third of the usual price in the cities), with the difference being paid by the Corporation (i.e. the government). Referring to this issue in a 1972 speech at the Knesset, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

".... We also bring art -- theater, to be more specific -- to the people. Through Omanut La'am, we bring subsidized theater to development areas around the country. This year alone, this subsidy was 2.5 Million LI. The number of performances distributed this year by Omanut La'am reached 600".

During the 1970s the Corporation expanded beyond its original goals. To begin, it added other forms of cultural activities to its mainly theatrical repertoire. Next, it decided to include in its audiences not only the populations of development towns, but also those of other settlements like Kibbutzim, Moshavim (two forms of mainly agriculture communities) and even some urban neighborhoods.

This expansion of Omanut La'am's activity, along with the centralization of so many cultural activities in the hands of the Ministry of Education and Culture, brought about the organizational separation of the two entities in 1973. As of today, Omanut La'am is an independent not-for-profit organization which, **using government money**, purchases hundreds of cultural and artistic performances to be performed all over the country each year. In 1991, for example (the most recent date for which data were available), the Corporation offered more than 600 cultural activities and programs, ranging from theatrical shows and music concerts, to traveling exhibitions and meetings with writers and film makers. Needless to say, no other public or private organization in the country purchases and disseminates so many performances thus contributes so much to the promotion of Israel's arts and culture.

But there is more to Omanut La'am than its economical contribution. Studying culture consumption in Israel in the early 1980s, Rahav et al found, for example, that, in spite of their lower level of education and income, audiences in development towns and in rural areas attend the theater almost as frequently as the Tel-Aviv audience. "It seems plausible," they write, "to attribute the emergence of this audience to the extensive promotion activities [of the government], embodied by Omanut La'am" (1981:X).

Indeed, creating a new audience for culture was always a proclaimed goal of The Ministry of Education and Culture. Therefore, in the mid 1980s, the Ministry initiated another project, called Sal Tarbut (Culture Basket). The project, paid for fully by the government, and operated by Omanut La'am, works to disseminate subsidized theater and other artistic activities among high school students around the country. In 1991 alone, Sal Tarbut brought close to 300 subsidized art performances to high school students all over Israel.

Historically speaking, Sal Tarbut is not the first attempt of the Ministry of Education and Culture to introduce theater and other cultural activities to the country's high school students. More than ten years earlier, in the early 1970s, the Ministry established its own Children and Youth Theater aimed at presenting school kids with various kinds of theater productions. Answering a question raised at the Knesset in July 1971, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"The Corporation for Encouraging Theater Among Youth and Children is initiating theater productions that fit young children and teenagers ... The goals of this Corporation are to make sure that every child in the country will watch at least two to three theater productions a year and thus to expand the circle of theater lovers in general".

In the mid 1980s, when the Ministry decided that this Youth Theater was too inadequate, it initiated Sal Tarbut, creating many more opportunities for students to be exposed to cultural activities.

e) FACTS AND FIGURES

As of December 31, 1991 (the last date for which figures were available), the Ministry of Education and Culture supported 302 cultural institutions, which constitute the majority of the country's cultural institutions and are believed to serve the vast majority of the country's culture consumers. Among these institutions are 169 public libraries, 94 museums, 12 orchestras, 11 theater companies, 8 dance companies, 7 choirs, and 1 opera house. In addition, in this same year, the ministry supported 16 art festivals, 13 art magazines, and 5 films (The Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992b). To these, one should add an unknown number of cultural institutions which are not supported by the ministry on a regular basis but receive incidental financial support from the Ministry and/or local authorities.

The public subsidy of the above 302 cultural institutions constitutes between 50 and 70 percent of their total income. The rest is composed of self revenues from subscribers and box-office tickets. Of the public subsidy, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for 34 to 72 percent, depending on the institution. The rest comes from local authorities and the Histadrut. Only 3 to 10 percent of these institutions' income come from donations and/or private funding, mainly from the America-Israel Culture Foundation mentioned above.

**B) SUPPORTING ARTS AND CULTURE AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL -
SOME LANDMARK CASES**

It was during the opening session of the Knesset on November 10th, 1987, that the Speaker of the House announced at the assembly:

"This week we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of our national theater, Ha'bima. I did not check how many parliaments in the world mark the anniversaries of theaters in their countries. But I am sure that if there are any, they are very rare. The very fact that the Israeli parliament devotes its stage to mark this event is indeed evidence to the warm feelings we have towards our national theater".

Symbolic as this speech may be, it strongly illustrates the supportive attitude demonstrated throughout the years by the Israeli Knesset towards the country's artistic and cultural life. Reviewing the Knesset's protocols from its very first days reveals many speeches delivered at the Knesset assembly by the Ministers of Education and Culture, and other government members, in which the supportive nature of the government's activity in the field of arts was expressed. In addition, numerous of attempts were made by Knesset members through the years to foster and advance various cultural institutions and activities, not to mention some legislation initiated by members of the House which were clearly intended to promote and advance cultural and artistic matters. On the symbolic level, one must notice that the above speech of the Speaker of the Knesset was by no means a single event, having been preceded and followed by several similar ones.

a) GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

As noted earlier in this dissertation, the Ministry of Education and Culture has no archives that are open to the public. Yet, much of this Ministry's policy and activities in the field of arts can be traced in the speeches delivered throughout the years by the Ministers of Education and Culture at the Knesset assembly. A selected sampling of speeches helps illustrate this point.

The first of these speeches was made at the assembly as early as July 1954 and included the following announcement by the Minister of Education and Culture:

"The Ministry had decided to establish a special public fund to support aged writers, scholars and artists, as well as their widowers and families".

Three years later, during his 1957 annual address of the assembly, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"The Ministry is continuing with the endowments to artistic and literary projects. The cultural activities that are run directly by the Ministry occupy about 2 Million LI in the Ministry's budget and serve as pretty important assistance for the fostering of the country's culture climate".

Introducing his ministry's budget for the following year, in March 1959, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"Our country is teeming with exciting cultural activity. The Ministry of Education and Culture does not pretend to regulate the cultural production. The Ministry is determine to strengthen and provide real

³all italics in Knesset's citations are mine (I.B.)

help to those productions that deserve its support".

Similar determination to support the country's arts and culture was expressed by the Minister of Education and Culture in his March 1961 address of the assembly:

"The government must guarantee the economic survival of a large number of artists in Israel - writers, painters, actors, dancers, and musicians. In addition to the money raised from private sources, the government should also set aside money for these needs".

In June 1968, the Minister informed the Knesset of a new venture of his Ministry - 'The Hebrew Book Week' - an annual event in which, for an entire week, the country will honor Israeli and Hebrew books and authors.

Three years later, in February 1971, the Minister told the Knesset about important organizational changes that took place in the Ministry:

"We have appointed a new director for our Culture Unit, and renamed it The Departments for Culture and the Arts. We did so in order to put more emphasis on development of the arts and to guarantee appropriate conditions for the advancement of cultural productions and institutions".

In January 1979, the assembly learned from the Minister of Education and Culture about a plan to establish a governmental agency to disseminate and promote Israeli arts abroad.

Almost four years later, in December 1982, the Minister announced a new position in the ministry - a special advisor

for the performing arts. The advisor, according to the Minister, "will organize all the activities that are related to advancing theater education in schools, creating future theater audience by recommending appropriate plays, and guiding teachers in preparing students for these plays".

In January 1985, the Minister informed the Knesset about a recent discussion that took place in his ministry with regard to the government's cultural policy:

"The Ministry has tried -- and will continue to try -- to establish a permanent fund to support arts and culture in Israel. The Ministry is also working on persuading individual donors to contribute to the arts, an attempt that was recently impaired by the new income tax legislation. The Ministry is now working on appropriate changes of this legislation".

Finally, referring to the economic disaster suffered by most cultural institutions in the country during the Gulf War in 1991, the Minister of Education and culture announced at the assembly in March of that year:

"We have asked the Ministry of Finance to provide us with special assistance for cultural institutions We allocated February's endowments (to cultural institutions) earlier than usual, and increased them by 50% ... A special committee, headed by an official of the Ministry of Finance, will discuss additional assistance to these institutions".

b) PETITIONS TO THE MINISTER

Supportive as the Ministry of Education and Culture is of the country's arts and culture, the extent and volume of this support would probably not have been possible without the

encouragement and good determination of many members of the Knesset. As the following pages will reveal, numerous Knesset members have used the assembly's stage to express their genuine concerns over the country's arts and culture in general, and various cultural institutions in particular, asking the Minister of Education and Culture, and other government members, to increase government support for these institutions.

The first of these petitions came as early as July 1957, when MK Rokach asked the Minister of Finance:

"Valuable artistic gifts that are donated to museums by private citizens are not tax exempt. This reality appears to be an economic burden on the museums that have very limited economic means anyway. Not only that these works of art remain in the hands of the museums and are not sold to individuals or institutions, but they also serve as valuable educational tools. Will the Minister be willing to consider exempting these institutions from customs and other taxes?"

One year later, in July 1958, another kind of work of art was the issue of a petition presented by the same Knesset member, this time targeting the Minister of Commerce and Industry:

"I am afraid that Israeli films do not receive enough encouragement from the authorized institutions it is highly desirable, and it is for the sake of our country, to exempt Israeli films from various taxes and to promote them as much as we can".

A different kind of concern for the country's arts and culture was expressed at the assembly in January 1967 when MK Mikunis asked the Minister of Education and Culture:

"The 50th anniversary of the Ha'bima Theater Company is soon to be celebrated. This company had undergone a very long and glorious way, and had significant accomplishments in shaping our national theater ... It is desirable that this date will become a significant artistic and national event in our country's life. What will be the Ministry of Education and Culture's contribution to this event ?"

Six years later, in January 1973, the same Knesset member requested once again that the Ministry of Education and Culture recognize an anniversary soon to be celebrated, the 100th birthday of H.N. Bialik, Israel's National Poet.

In June 1979, MK Namir asked the Minister of Education and Culture to act upon the abolishment of the purchase tax imposed on musical instruments in general, and stringed instruments in particular.

In December 1986, the issue of withholding tax paid by writers and artists that was the heart a petition submitted by MK Ramon, asking whether the Minister of Education and Culture would "be willing to do something to cut this tax significantly".

The concern for Israeli and Jewish cultural heritage was yet another issue of many petitions submitted at the assembly

by members of the house, all asking the Ministers of Education and Culture to act upon the preservation of various artistic and cultural assets. Such were the petitions submitted by K.M Zimmermann, in April 1962, about an important historical site in which a large public construction company had been working; by MK Mikunis, in April 1967, about the sale of the original manuscripts of Jewish-German writer Heinrich Heine to a foreign collector; by MK Taiar, in May 1968, about the way the Israel Museum preserves its exhibits; by MK Nof, in October 1975, about a collection of rare manuscripts that were about to be sold to a foreign collector; by MK Namir, in June 1980, about renovating the house of Reuven, a famous Israeli painter who died a few years earlier; and by MK Namir, in February 1982, about preserving the painting collection of the late Israeli painter Lubin.

Similarly, many Knesset members had used the assembly's stage to express concerns over the high admission fees to cultural institutions and events, asking the Ministers of Education and Culture to reduce or sometimes even abolish of these fees. Such were the petitions submitted by MK Levi, in November 1966, about the rise in admission fees to concerts of the Israeli Philharmonic; by MK Shahal, in November 1967 (and again in June 1983), about the high admission fees to the Israel Museum; by MK Grossman, In April 1972, about the price of Israeli books; by MK Sarid, in July 1979, about the price

of movie tickets; by MK Namir, in February 1980, about the admission fees to performances disseminated by Omanut La'am; by MK Goldman, in July 1989, about the high price of tickets to cultural events in general; and by MK Bibi, in January 1990, about the fees collected by the Diaspora Museum in Tel-Aviv.

But more than anything else in the field of arts and culture, Knesset members were bothered by the financial conditions of cultural institutions and with the government's subsidies to these institutions. Beginning in the early 1960s, this aspect of Israel's cultural life became the main issue of art-related petitions by Knesset members, all asking the Ministers of Education and Culture to help various cultural institutions to overcome their financial difficulties and prevent their closing. Such were, for example, the petitions submitted by MK Serlin, in February 1961, about the Cultural Center for Israeli Writers; by MK Peled, in November 1965, about the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; by MK Mikunis, in January 1968, about the Ha'bima Theater Company; by MK Peled, in March 1968, about the Tel-Aviv Museum; by MK Mikunis, in november 1972, about the Bimot Theater Company; by MK Namir, in January 1975, about the Tel-Aviv Cinematheque Institute; by MK Nof, in May 1975, about the Israeli Opera; by MK Tubbi, in July 1976, about the Haifa Orchestra; by MK Namir, in December 1976, about the Inbal Dance Company, The Nisan Nativ School of

Drama, and the Chan Theater Company; by MK Namir, in February 1977, about the Theater for Children and Youth; by MK Arbeli-Almuzlino, in November 1977, about the Mizmor Chorus; by MK Yadlin, in March 1978, about the Bat-Dor Dance Company; by MK Shpaizer, in July 1978, about the Painters and Sculptures' Organization; by MK Namir, in August 1978, about The Bat-Sheva Dance Company, The Chamber Ensemble, and the Magazine 'Painting and Sculpturing'; by six different Knesset members, in November 1978, about The Rina Sheinfeld Dance Company, The Bat-Sheva Dance Company (2), The Museum for Mediterranean Archeology, The Prime Minister's Award for Creative writers, and The Betzalel College of Arts; by MK Namir, in January 1979, about the Galilee Orchestra; by MK Katzav, in March 1979, about a chorus of new immigrants of Georgian origin; by MK Namir, in May 1979, about The Kiriath Shmona's Theatrical Workshop; by MK Yitzhaki, in June 1980, about The Israeli Opera; by MK Shilanski, in January 1981, about The Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem; by MK Gil, in January 1983, about the Jerusalem's Folk Dance Company; by MK Artzi, in January 1985, about The Kameri Theater of Tel-Aviv; by MK Raz, in March 1986, about Ha'meiri Museum in Tsfat; and by MK Libai, in December 1986, about the Kol U'dmama Dance Company.

The above list, one should realize, is not, by any means, a complete one. Another museum, another dance company, and another orchestra. A long list of Knesset members taking the

stage to ask the government to increase support for various cultural institutions around the country, in the hopes of preventing collapse. In most cases, the government's responses were supportive but not conclusive: "we will try", "we will do our best", "It is the government's interest to support...", etc, etc.

c) MOTIONS FOR THE AGENDA

Greater opportunities for Knesset members to express their concern over the country's arts and culture occurred during discussions held at the assembly in the form of Motion for the Agenda. In this kind of discussion, more than one Knesset member is allowed to speak, and the speeches are usually much longer than in a Petition to the Minister. Such discussions were initiated by MK Serlin, in August 1962, about "the situation of public libraries around the country"; by MK Bentov and MK Mikunis, in February 1964, about "the planned cuts in government subsidies to the Israeli Philharmonic"; by MK Avneri and MK Pat, in July 1972, about "the possibility of closing The Bimot Theater Company"; by MK Namir, in June 1978, about the turmoil in The Betzalel College of Arts; by MK Rozolio, in January 1980, about "the financial situation of Israeli orchestras"; by MK Namir, in June 1980, about "the financial situation of The Be'er Sheva Municipal Theater; by MK Perach, in June 1982, about "the cuts in government funding of the Israeli Opera; by MK Namir, in February 1984, about

"the financial situation of The Israel Museum"; and by MK Aloni, in June 1985, about "the situation in The Be'er Sheva Municipal Theater".

In addition to these, the assembly held several more general discussions about the country's arts and culture in which a large number of Knesset members participated, expressing their genuine support, not for a specific cultural institutions, but for the entire idea of culture. Such were the discussions held at the assembly in January 1972, about 'Culture in Israel'; in November 1975, about 'Priorities and Policy in Cultural Activity'; in March 1982, about 'Culture in Israel'; and in December 1983, about 'The Ministry of Education and Culture's Position On The Administrative and Cultural Managements of Theater Companies'.

d) THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Supportive as they were, the above discussions at the assembly could not be too comprehensive and/or conclusive. Thus, in many cases, the issues in question were sent for further discussion to the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture. Protocols from these discussions are not available, but the recommendations of this Committee are delivered back to the assembly and published in the Knesset's Protocols. As the following pages will reveal, most of these recommendations were clearly of a supportive nature, demanding

the Ministry of Education and Culture to sustain or even to increase its support for arts and culture, as well as for specific cultural institutions. It should be emphasized here, before we review some of the Committee's recommendations, that according to the Knesset's regulations, government ministries must comply with the recommendations of the Knesset's Committees, or at least respond to them in some way (meet with the committee, speech at the assembly, letter to the Speaker of the House, etc.).

The first 'supportive' set of recommendations by the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture was delivered following the 1962 discussion at the assembly concerning the situation of public libraries throughout Israel. Among the recommendations:

"to increase the Ministry of Education and Culture's involvement in promoting and fostering Israel's libraries... (and) to initiate a Libraries Bill that that would take care of the maintenance of libraries throughout the country".

Three years later, following a discussion it held about government subsidy of the Israeli Philharmonic, the Committee recommended that the Minister of Treasure "add 100,000 LI to the subsidy given to the Orchestra for 1964/65".

Much wider were the recommendations delivered by the committee in early 1976, following the discussion it held about 'Priorities and Policy in Cultural Activity'. In the

first part of its recommendations, the Committee "demands that the Ministry of Education and Culture will set clear criteria for its endowments for cultural institutions ... (and that) these criteria will be sent to the Committee within four months from the day these recommendations are published".

It was further recommended by the Committee that "instead of founding new theater companies, the Ministry of Education and Culture will strengthen the existing ones and encourage local cultural initiatives in the periphery".

Two years later, in April 1981, the Committee delivered its recommendations in regard to the crisis in the Be'er Sheva Municipal Theater. In its recommendations,

"the Committee calls upon the government and the local municipalities to transfer their grants for cultural institutions on time; to search for ways to encourage original productions in the field of theater and music and to give this encouragement appropriate budgetary expression; to foster the status of Israeli actors; to increase the budget of Omanut La'am and expand its activity; and to encourage the development of local drama workshops among minorities".

The most extensive, and probably most important, set of recommendations by the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture was delivered to the assembly in March 1984, following the discussion it held about 'Culture in Israel'.

The following are the Committee's recommendations:

- 1) The committee calls for the promotion of cultural pluralism in Israel and for the creating a climate that will encourage freedom of expression, artistic freedom, and freedom of thought for all.
- 2) The Committee recommends decentralization of power and influence in the field of arts and culture.
- 3) The Committee demands that the cultural budget (of the State of Israel) will be allocated in accordance to the criteria set by the Committee.
- 4) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education and Culture will adopt a policy of subsidizing cultural productions in development towns and the outskirts of the main cities, with the emphasis being put on the production itself and not on the producer.
- 5) The Committee recommends deepening the multi-ethnic cultural awareness in all areas of culture.
- 6) The Committee recommends on the establishing of an independent foundation for advancing Israeli culture, a foundation that will be fund and managed by public and private institutions.
- 7) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education and Culture and local municipalities will encourage celebrations of songs and light music.
- 8) The Committee recommends establishing an orchestra for light music, an orchestra that will serve as a home for composers and performers, and disseminate light music all over the country.
- 9) The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education and Culture will develop drama, music, and dance programs in high schools around the country, in order to create professional diversity in these areas.
- 10) The Committee Calls upon the Ministry of Education and Culture to make sure that there are music, dance, painting, and arts class in all schools and kindergartens in the country.
- 11) The Committee recommends developing classes for painting, music, dance, and drama education in teachers colleges around the country.
- 12) The Committee was glad to learn that the military will reestablish its entertainment corps which, in the past, contributed significantly to the development of original Israeli music and entertainment.

Three years later, in late 1987, the assembly appointed a committee composed of members of the Knesset's Committee for

Education and Culture and the Knesset's Committee for Finance, to discuss the financial conditions of cultural and artistic institutions. In its recommendations, the joint committee asked the Knesset's Committee for Finance to provide an additional 5.600,000 Shekels from the state's reserves for various cultural institutions around the country. It should be noted that the sum recommended by the Committee is about a 12 percent increase of the total culture budget for 1987/88.

Finally, in late 1989, the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture discussed 'The Possibility of Closing The Tel-Aviv Museum for Art'. In the recommendations that followed this discussion, the Committee reemphasized the importance of fostering the country's arts and culture, asking the Ministry of Finance

"to increase their participation in the budget for culture ... [and] to instruct the officials of his ministry not to confiscate any works of art from museums and public institutions as a way of paying their debts, and to initiate a legislation that will demand all municipalities to be responsible, financially and otherwise, for each museum within their geographical jurisdiction".

e) LEGISLATION

Not surprisingly, the concern of Knesset members for the country's arts and culture have also found its expression in legislation initiated by the Knesset throughout the years. The first of this 'supportive cultural legislation' took place as early as September 1952, when the Knesset corrected several

sections in an old British law regarding artists' copyrights. The amendment, as put by the Minister of Justice, "enables the government to provide more protection to all literary and artistic productions, even those that were produced out of the country".

One year later, the government initiated its first full arts-related law, entitling it 'the Israeli Film Encouragement Law'. Presenting this law to the assembly, in November 1953, the Minister of Interior at that time said:

"There is a group of people in this country who are working very hard for quite a few years now and are doing a great pioneering work - those are the people who produce films... It is about time that the State of Israel will encourage these pioneers ... The government has decided that without a legislation that will enforce movie theaters to exhibit original Israeli films, the Israeli film industry will not move forward".

Indeed, a few months later, in July 1954, the Knesset passed the suggested law which, among other things, says:

"In every place in respect of which an exhibitor has been granted a licence to exhibit cinematograph films The exhibitor shall exhibit in every year beginning on the first of January, as part of his performances between 2 P.M. and 12 Midnight, Israeli films for a number of hours equal to the average weekly number of these performances in that year, but not less than 4 hours a year".

Throughout the years, the Israeli Film Encouragement Law has undergone some major changes and adaptations, all leaning towards the welfare of Israeli film makers and the Israeli film industry in general.

The 1970s and '80s saw a significant increase in arts-related legislation, most of them extremely important for the discussion of government support of the arts in Israel. The first of these laws, 'The Public Libraries Law', was passed by the Knesset in July 1975. Yet, the need for such a law was first expressed at the Knesset as early as November 1960, when MK Abramov asked the Minister of Education and Culture:

"As an important responsibility of your ministry, one must also consider our public libraries whose operation and renovation were highly neglected. Does not the Minister think it is about time to initiate a law that will solve this important cultural problem?"

Two years later, in August 1962, the issue was once again on the Knesset's agenda, raised this time by MK Tzabbari:

"Appropriate conditions for appropriate libraries depend on an appropriate law - a libraries law. Our request is to pass a law that will determine the size of a population for which a local library is a must; will enforce an appropriate building for a library; will provide a budget for a library; and will set progressive local taxes that will go to library".

The request, as noted above, was fulfilled in July 1975 when the Knesset finally passed the Public Libraries Law, of which the most important points are:

"The Minister [of Education and Culture] may direct a local authority or several local authorities jointly, by order, to establish, maintain, and conduct a public library in the area or areas of its or their jurisdiction; Each year, the Minister shall prescribe the amount of the contribution of the Treasury to the establishment, maintenance, and conduct of public libraries; The services of a public library shall be given free of charge; The Minister may make regulation as to any matter relating the implementation of this

law including procedures for the inspection of public libraries, professional qualifications for the management of public libraries, and the encouragement of the acquisition of books published in Israel".

Three years later, in 1978, concern for Israel's cultural heritage found its way into legislation passed by the Knesset as The Antiquities Law. Consisting of nine comprehensive chapters, this law deals with all aspects of preserving cultural heritage, among them: State ownership of antiquities, excavation of antiquities, dealing in and export of antiquities, collectors of antiquities, museums, antiquity sites, expropriation of antiquities or antiquity sites, and the establishment of an Archeological Council to advise the Minister and the Director of the Department on any matters of archeology and antiquities requesting further attention.

One of the most important pieces of legislation concerning Israeli arts and culture is, undoubtedly, the Museums Law of 1983. In fact, this was the first law enacted by the Knesset which refers directly to the artistic institutions in the country, recognizing them as important cultural assets. According to this law:

"The Minister [of Education and Culture] may, after consultation with the Council, declare a particular museum to be recognized as a museum for the purposes of this law. The duty of a recognized museum management are to employ professional workers in accordance with a prescribed establishment; to preserve the exhibits and to provide for the maintenance and suitable exhibition to the public; to keep a record and description, and to photograph, all the exhibits at the museum; to give the public

information on exhibits at the museum; to issue catalogues and other publications; to conduct educational and cultural activities at the museum; and to comply with instruction concerning security and safety. A recognized museum is not allowed to sell, export, exchange, gratuitous transfer, destruct or dispose exhibits, nor dose it allowed any commercial activity, and advertising, either direct or indirect, within the precincts of the museum".

The last part of the Museum Law is a large chapter dealing with the establishment of a Museums Council, which was created to advise the Minister of Education and Culture on all issues regarding museums, including "the amount fixed in the State budget as contributions to the budgets of recognized museums".

No less important was the legislation passed by the Knesset in April 1984 regarding performers' rights. According to this law,

"A performer -- a person who performs in acting, singing, playing, dancing, or any other way, a literary, artistic, dramatical, or musical production -- has the right that the following things will not be done without his/her consent: reproduction, duplication, or copy of the production; broadcasting of the production, unless by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority, the Educational Television of Israel, or Galei Tzahal (the IDF Radio station), and even then only if there is an agreement between the performer and the Broadcasting Authority".

It was further determined by this law that the selling, renting, distribution, importing, or holding for commercial proposes of a copy or reproduction of the production is not allowed unless the performer's consent was given in writing.

In April 1989, the Knesset passed legislation that postponed, and later abolished permanently, 'The Ordinance of Dramatic and other Public Performances' based on which the governmental Board for Films and Theater Review (better known as The Censorship) operated. Introducing this legislation at the assembly in March 1987, MK Virshuvski, the person who fought for this law for more than a decade, said:

"Members of the Knesset, this bill was discussed so many times before at the Knesset that any additional word would be unnecessary. We all know what this bill is all about ... let us send this bill to the Knesset's Committee for Legislation for further preparation so that we could all get rid of this censorship which is an evil sore in our society".

Two years later, in April 1989, the law was finally brought to the assembly with the Chairman of the Knesset's Committee for Legislation saying:

"The essence of this law is the abolishment of censorship on theatrical performances ... The Committee has decided to adopt the principal notion of this law whereas it suites other principal notions of our democratic regime, in particular the notion of freedom of artistic expression."

Almost unanimously, the assembly had accepted the proposed law and abolished the Board for Films and Theater Review altogether.

Increasing government support for the arts in another way was the purpose of a July 1989 legislation proposed at the assembly by MK Aloni on behalf of a group Knesset members.

Naming it 'The Gambling and Lottery Income Law', the group suggested that "ten percent of all state gambling and lottery income will go to artistic and cultural matters". According to the suggested law, the aforementioned ten percent will first go to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which, with the advice of the Public Council for Culture and Arts, will distribute it for artistic and cultural purposes. As of the end of the twelfth Knesset (May 1992, the last Knesset session for which records were available), the law was still on the agenda of the Knesset Committee for Monetary Affairs.

CONCLUSION

For over forty five years, as we have seen throughout this chapter, the Israeli parliament was highly attentive to the welfare of the country's artists and art institutions. Through government announcements, Petitions to the Ministers, Motions for the Agenda, and legislation initiatives, the Knesset expressed its genuine support for Israel's arts and culture, constantly looking for ways to foster and nourish them. In concluding this part of our discussion, it should be emphasized that, unlike in many other parliaments in the world, during all the years covered in this study, there was no one single request by a Knesset member to decrease or to abolish government support for the arts altogether. Only in some specific cases, where specific issues were on the agenda, some Knesset members asked the Ministers of Education and

Culture to suspend a specific endowment for a specific activity or institution. These cases are an important part of the discussion about government interference in the arts in Israel, and are discussed in details in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

We opened this section of the dissertation with a quotation from the 1987 Knesset's discussion in which the Speaker of the House congratulated the Ha'bima Theater Company for its 70th anniversary. It would only be appropriate, then to conclude this section with another quotation from the same discussion, during which the Minister of Education and Culture said at the end of his speech: "Let me say to the Knesset and to the government, for seventy years Ha'bima paid its dues to the State of Israel, it is time for the State of Israel to pay its dues to Ha'bima". Symbolic as this declaration may be, it strongly illustrates the government's and the Knesset's attitude towards the country's arts and culture through the years.

CHAPTER 5 - GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN THE ARTS IN ISRAEL

In spite the high degree of government support of the arts in Israel, as was described above, arts and culture in Israel have always been subject to some very serious regulations and interference attempts by all levels of the political system; and not only those works of art that are supported by the government! As the following pages will reveal, many attempts have been made throughout the years, by both the executive and legislative branches of the Israeli government, to regulate, to censor, and to increase control over the country's arts and culture. The Judicial system, as it will soon appear, if did not take an active role in these interference attempts, had certainly not tried to prevent them from taking place.

First to be discussed in this chapter will be the official-governmental Board for Films and Theater Review (also known as 'The Censorship'), which was operating in Israel from the very first days of statehood until very recently. Delving into this Board's history and activities will enable us to expose any 'Sacred Cows' on which this Board had based its decisions, thereby illustrating any conflicts with the democratic ethos with which the State of Israel has always claimed to be concerned. At the end of this section, I will describe the long process by which this Board was eventually abolished.

In the second part of this chapter, I will discuss other forms of direct and indirect government interference with the arts in Israel, most notably by agencies of the Ministry of Education and Culture and by the Israeli parliament.

A) INTERFERING WITH THE ARTS AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL

1) THE BOARD FOR FILMS AND THEATER REVIEW

Established by the government in early 1949, only eight months after the creation of the State, the Board for Films and Theater Review was the oldest and most explicit government agency to interfere with Israel's arts and culture.

a) historical background

Upon its establishment as a state in 1948, Israel adopted the law of the British Mandate which had governed the country, then Palestine, from 1917 to 1948. Thus, the decision to establish a board of censors in Israel had its roots in two ordinances that were issued in 1927 by the British High Commissioner of Palestine at that time. These were The Ordinance of Cinematograph Films and The Ordinance of Dramatic and other Public Performances.

Both ordinances included sections that authorize the Minister of the Interior, who is the Minister responsible for the enforcement of these ordinances, to establish a board of

censors for films and/or theatrical plays. Indeed, one of the earliest actions of the first Israeli Minister of the Interior was to establish such a board in 1949.

Officially, however, this Board was never called a board of censors. "Censorship," writes Zygmunt Hubner in his most illuminating book Theater and Politics, "even when it acts legally and in accord with the statutes, prefers to keep low profile" (1992:50). To strengthen this argument, Hubner cites C.B. Ponsonbly-Fane, the chairman of the British board of censors, saying in his appearance before a British parliamentary committee in 1892: "we do not like to be called censorship" (ibid). Similarly, the board established in Israel in 1949 was named The Board for Films and Theater Review.

According to the regulations determined by the Minister, each film and play, prior to its exhibition, had to be submitted to the Board. The Board either granted or withheld the authority for screening the film or exhibiting the play. Sometimes, it asked for scenes to be cut from a film or a play, or restricted audiences to certain age groups. None of the ordinances, however, stipulated any criterion by which the Board was to exercise its direction. All they said was that "The Board may, at its discretion, grant either with or without conditions imposed, or withhold authority for the exhibition of any film or any part thereof" (section 6(2) to

the Ordinance of Cinematograph Films). Thus, the Minister of the Interior was absolutely free to determine the regulations governing the Board, as well as to nominate its members. By doing so, most legal experts agree, it is the Minister himself - a highly political figure - who gave character to these ordinances.

Thirty five percent of the Board's members were officers of the government, mainly the Ministries of the Interior, Labor and Welfare, Education and Culture and Religion (More, 1979). The remainder were described as "public representatives", or people representing different strata of the Israeli society, although they were nominated exclusively by the Minister of the Interior. It should be emphasized that the position of Minister of the Interior in Israel is traditionally held by a representative of one religious party or another. Undoubtedly, the fact that a religious person controlled this board all these years only added to the public debate surrounding this board.

Hoping to gain some public legitimacy, most ministers of the Interior asked various authors, poets, artists and academics to join the Board. Loyal to their liberal principles, however, most of these artists refused to join the Board or left it shortly thereafter, when they could not live with many of its decisions.

In his 1967 letter of resignation, Haim Gurri, a writer and a former member of the Board, explained the reasons for his resignation from the Board:

"I came to the conclusion that the Board had lost its way. It does not have any criteria for making its decisions thus every discussion becomes a long sequence of improvisations As a writer, it is very difficult for me to use the law for determining the fate of a work of art ... Rotation is essential for a democratic society, let alone for a board that deals with matters of the soul" (Quoted in the Knesset, Jan. 24, 1967).

And in a newspaper interview with him, shortly after his resignation, Gurri added a few more comments about the Board and the composition of its membership:

"I could not avoid the fact that the Board does not include one single new immigrant. All of its members are of Eastern European origin, with no representation to Sepharadic Jews or of people living in development towns. How can the Board express the views of these people? Moreover, some members of the Board were nominated more than 18 years ago, most of them are far from being young people" (Ma'ariv, Dec. 2, 1966).

A somewhat similar criticism of the Board and its way of operating was expressed by Ya'acov Ha'elyon, a journalist who joined the Board, but resigned shortly afterwards:

"I used to vote automatically for any play submitted to the Board to be granted the authority for exhibition... I resigned the Board when I noted that it refuses to learn from the past... There is a high degree of hypocrisy on this board, holding to the authority granted to it as if it was 'the horns of the altar', as if you have to use the force granted to you ... There was an absolute scorn in the Board whenever there was a demand to discuss, at least once, the criteria by which the Board will discuss a film or a play submitted to it ..." (Ma'ariv, Feb. 9, 1987).

This being the situation, it is not surprising that the Board, and its makeup, had been discussed several times in the Israeli parliament. In a report issued in 1972 by the Knesset's Committee for Internal Affairs, the Committee found the membership of the Board to be somewhat disturbing, recommending that "the composition of the Board will be re-examined in order to make sure that it will be composed of people representing a wide range of the Israeli society".

But there was more to the public debate surrounding this board than its composition. Throughout the years, many of the Board's decisions, as well as its very existence, were the subject of some heated public debates in Israel. The debate over whether there is a place in Israel for such a board will be discussed later in this chapter. First, one must understand the way in which this Board operated for all these years and the kinds of decisions it made.

According to Daniel More, Professor of Law at the Tel-Aviv University in Israel,

"In the lack of any criterion for the Board to make its decisions, the various considerations guiding the Board can be gleaned only from the decisions themselves, especially from the different reasons submitted by the Board whenever it decided to ban films or plays or cut scenes thereof" (1979:234).

To find out these reasons, a sample of all Board decisions that went before the High Court for Justice on appeal was

taken. Thus, besides having a very interesting group of some of the most controversial decisions made by this board, this particular sample also enables us to examine the role of the Israeli Judicial system in dealing with the issue of government interference with the arts.

Moreover, the decision to concentrate only on those cases heard by the High Court for Justice had yet another reason, relating directly to the unique status of this Court in Israel. In the lack of a written constitution, which ordinarily defines the character of the state and the way it perceives itself, the State of Israel does not have any legal document which guarantee basic citizen right such as freedom of speech, artistic freedom, and the public's right to know, to name only few. Instead, it has a few basic laws and many principal decisions of the High Court for Justice, which are considered landmarks in defining and designing the state's character in various issues. One of these issues is artistic censorship.

**b) The Board for Films and Theater Review and The High Court
for Justice**

As an official governmental institution, the Board for Films and Theater Review was under the supervision of the Israeli Supreme Court, in its role as High Court for Justice. Throughout the years, this court was petitioned dozens of

times with requests to interfere with, or to reverse various decisions of the Board. In most cases, however, the Court tied itself to a formalistic approach, refusing to interfere with the Board's decisions. When asked, for example, in 1960 to interfere with a certain decision of the Board, the Court refused to do so, arguing that "The Board is a representative public body which expresses the outlook of different strata of the people" (H.C. 260/60); or as it was put in another decision regarding this board: "... they (the Board's members) were nominated as public representatives ... and anyway it is the public that speaks from their throat" (H.C. 549/75).

In other cases, the Court had used another formal reason to uphold a decision of the Board, arguing that "the ordinance does not provide the Board with any guidelines regarding its consideration, thus the Board is absolutely free in its decisions. In a case where the discretion of a public authority is unlimited, the Court will not interfere with a matter which is equivocal and open to legitimate arguments by men of normal understanding" (H.C. 383/73).

But this constant refusal of the Court to interfere with the Board's decisions had a much more fundamental basis than any of formal reasons given by the Court. As the following examples will reveal, these decisions of the Court related directly to the **content** of the reasons put forward by the

Board whenever it decided to ban films or plays or cut scenes thereof. A close review of the Court's decisions regarding the Board for Films and Theater Review reveals several issues, namely the 'Sacred Cows' of the Israeli society, which appeared time and again in the Board's decisions to ban or cut scenes from a film or a play. Whenever one of these issues appeared in a Board decision, the High Court for Justice refused to interfere with these decisions, employing the formalistic justifications mentioned above. As a consequence, writes More, "the validity of all the reasons put forward by the Board has been recognized by the Supreme Court, in its role as High Court for Justice" (1979:235).

Among these reasons one could find anti-religious material, anti-Israeli propaganda and any material that possibly jeopardized Israeli national security and foreign affairs. In addition to these, the Board for Films and Theater Review has been especially sensitive to issues related to the IDF (the Israeli Defence Forces), to Israel's wars and bereavement, (i.e. everything which relates to those who were killed in Israel's wars and their families), and to everything that is related to the Holocaust and the Nazi era.

The first of these cases appeared on the Court's agenda as early as 1960 when the Court refused to reverse a decision wherein the Board ruled that the exhibition of the German film

'Paradis und Feuerofen' would be allowed only if the German language commentary in the film were to be will be replaced by Hebrew commentary. In its decision, the Court made it clear that "if the Board thought that the German commentary was inappropriate to the content and purpose of the film in question, we are not prepared to say that it was unreasonable" (H.C. 260/60).

Discussing the issue in much greater detail was the Minister of the Interior in one of his speeches at the Knesset's assembly:

"The legal basis for banning the use of the German language in films and theater may be found in the 1927 Ordinance of Dramatic and other Public Performances. This ordinance does not limit the Board's authority merely to cases of national security or religion... The Board may consider any factor that may be offensive to the public's feelings It is the Board's opinion that any performance in the German language is offensive to the feelings of the Israeli public who can not forget the fact that this is the language of the nation that, only recently, barbarically annihilated a third of the Jewish people ...".

A few years later, in a decision that was not even appealed to the Court, the Board decided, for the first time in its history, to ban an entire play, 'The Egg' by French playwright Philisian Marssoux, when it was discovered that the writer was a former collaborator with the Nazis. The decision, however, had nothing to do with the content of the play, and in fact was made after the play was performed successfully around the country more than 200 times. Yet, once the writer's past was

revealed, the Board found it inappropriate that a play written by a former Nazi collaborator be performed in Israel, and decided to ban it altogether.

Also facing the Board, and, consequently, the High Court for Justice, were issues concerning the Israeli army, Israel's wars, and the subject of bereavement. Among the most controversial plays ever performed in Israel was 'Malkat Ha'ambatia' (Queen Of The Bath), written by Hanoach Levin, one of Israel's most talented and thought-provoking playwrights. The year was 1970, only two and a half years after the heroic Israeli victory in the Six Day War, and during what was known in Israel as 'The War of Attrition' between Israel and Egypt. Emotions surrounding these issues were at a high when 'Malkat Ha'ambatia' premiered, harshly criticizing all these 'Sacred Cows' simultaneously - the IDF, the Six Day War, and "the worship of heroes" that followed this war.

What followed was a huge public debate, culminating with a surprising decision in which the Board asked to cut out only two scenes from the original text: one that described the Israeli Minister of Defense as someone who promised the people 'blood and tears' and indeed delivered his promise completely, and another one that dealt ironically with the heroic Israeli Air Force.

Originally, the entire play was banned by the Board, and the producers, as a matter of routine, appealed the decision in Court. Yet before it was even discussed in Court, the Board granted a license for the play to be performed, "in light of the changes made in the original text". Influenced by the huge public debate around the play, however, the Theater's Board of Directors decided, less than two months later, to remove the play from its stage altogether.

Only three months later, in June 1970, the Board banned the American film 'M.A.S.H' because, as the Minister of the Interior said during one of his speeches in the Knesset, "the story takes place in a military hospital and it could aggravate those civilians whose relatives are now in active duty at the front".

In 1972, the Board banned yet another Israeli play, titled 'Friends Talk about Jesus', describing it as "offensive to the feelings of Christians and members of other faiths". Moreover, the Board continued, "the play offends parents whose sons died on the battlefield and it is furthermore offensive to ordinary social moral values and good manners in talking obscenity about sexual intercourse". It was probably this combination of religion, bereavement and sex -- three more Sacred Cows of Israeli society -- that made the Israeli Supreme Court decide unanimously that "the play indeed contains subject matter

seriously offensive to the religious feelings of local Christians," and that "the performance requested would have constituted a criminal offense". "There is no doubt," wrote one of the judges sitting in this case, "that the insults to the feelings of bereaved individuals, and of the entire public, which fill the pages of this play, reflect an unparalleled crassness and insensitivity" (H.C. 351/72).

Ironically, this play was among that year's recipients of governmental funding from the Public Council for Culture and Art. When questioned in the Knesset in March 1973, the Minister of Education and Culture said: "Indeed, this is one of the absurdities that have led me to propose to abolish the Board for Films and Theater Review".

As we will see later in this chapter, it took the Israeli government 15 more years before this Board was actually abolished.

In 1981, the Court decided, once again, not to interfere with a "sacred" decision of the Board, demanding scenes be cut from an Israeli film ('The Vulture') that harshly criticized "the commercialization of the memorizing of those who were killed in Israel's wars". In its decision, the Court made it clear that "the issue of the bereavement of the families of those who were killed in Israel's wars is highly sensitive,

and the obligation to be careful with their feelings, is weighed against the revulsion from any kind of censorship" (H.C. 243/81). It was in this decision that the Court recited the formalistic argument that "the Board (is) an organ representing the public itself... and anyway it is the public that speaks from their throat".

Once again, the ironic state of Israeli arts was demonstrated in this case when it was revealed that this film was among that year's recipients of governmental financial support from the 'Fund for Encouraging Israeli Films'. Moreover, even though an official of the Fund had testified in court about the high artistic value of this film, the Court still refused to reverse the Board's decision.

Pornography, on the other hand, was hardly ever an issue on the Board's agenda, unless it was combined with other Sacred Cows. Thus, in a 1975 decision, for example, the Board decided to withhold the license for a well-known film named 'The Night Porter', which showed an erotic and deviant relationship between a man and a woman against the background of the Holocaust. Although this decision of the Board was reversed by the Court, it was done on technical grounds with no connection to the content of the Board's decision (H.C. 549/75).

Three years later, in 1978, yet another decision of the Board came to Court, this time on a slightly different background. In the case in question, the Board decided to ban the screening of the political film 'The Struggle For Land - Or Palestine In Israel', arguing that "it includes incitement of the minorities (that is, the Arab citizens) against the State and its citizens, and thus it might lead to emotional outbreak and violence". In its appeal, the petitioner claimed that the Board's decision restricted his right for freedom of expression and therefore should be reversed altogether. Once again, the Court rejected the petitioner's claim, agreeing with the Board that "if the film would have been screened in Israel, the danger is most likely, because of the convincing power inherent in this visual material." (H.C. 807/78).

The year 1982 brought another 'Sacred Cow' to the Board's agenda, this time in regard to a new Hanoach Levin play called 'The Patriot'. Once again, the Board decided to ban the entire play, but later allowed it based on the condition that three short scenes be cut: one that presented a Jewish child from Warsaw during WWII and his Palestinian counterpart (a 'forbidden' comparison between Jews in the Holocaust and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories); another, describing a Jewish settlers in the occupied territories beating up an Arab citizen; and a third that dealt with the relationship between family values and the Sabbath. Once again, it was the

probably this combination of several 'Sacred Cows' that impelled the Board to ban this play.

In a move of their own, the producers of the play did not appeal the Board's decision. Instead, they ordered the actors to stop the play whenever it was time for one of banned scenes and to announce:

"Stop - Censorship ! According to chapter 3 of The Ordinance of Dramatic and other Public Performances from 1927, we are not allowed to continue with the following" (Quoted in Alexander, 1985:186).

For the first time in its history, the Board decided to fight back, filing a lawsuit against the theater's administrative directors for violating the Board's decision. Needless to say that the Court found them guilty as charged. It is important to emphasize, however, that the charges in this case were administrative only, and not at all directed at the writers of the play.

It was not until 1986, almost forty years after the Board for Films and Theater Review was established, that the Israeli High Court for Justice finally changed its attitude towards a board decisions and allowed the performance of a highly controversial play. In the case in question, the Board had banned the performance of an Israeli play named 'Efraim Is Back In The Army', describing it as an "... obscene mish-mash of erotica, politics and deviances of all kinds". It was

further argued by the Board that:

"The Israeli army is portrayed in this play as an army that shoots children and offends suspects ... it compares the (Israeli military) administration to the Nazis and anyway has no artistic value and therefore should not be performed".

Joined by The Israeli Union of Playwrights and The Israeli Civil Rights Union, Yitzhak Laor, the writer of this play, appealed the Board's decision in Court, arguing that the decision restricted his right for freedom of expression. In a revolutionary decision (H.C. 14/86) the Court agreed with the petitioner, explaining that although it concurred with the Board's description of the play, some decisions must be weighted against other principles, such as freedom of expression and freedom of arts. The Court examined and criticized the unlimited authority of the Board, claiming that:

"The question is not whether the play has appropriate artistic value or not. The Board is not an artistic critic, nor an organ meant to valuate the artistic value of plays... Freedom of expression is the freedom to write plays and to present them ... it is the freedom to produce any piece of work, whether it has an elevated artistic value, or it has no artistic value at all. In a democratic regime, the existence or non-existence of any piece of work, is the expression for the internal strength inherited in this piece, and not the power of the regime. Censorship in general, and the banning of a theater play in particular should be the last measure to be taken".

In concluding its decision, the Court wrote: "In light of this conclusion, the question which arises here is whether there is, still, a point in the existence of the censorship of

theater in Israel, or maybe it is time for the legislature to reconsider this issue".

Indeed, shortly after this landmark decision, the Israeli Knesset began discussion about a bill that would abolish the Board for Films and Theater Review altogether. But before this legislation could be completed, the Board for Films and Theater Review again made history by choosing to appeal the Court's last decision regarding 'Efraim is Back in The Army'. In a very short decision (H.C. 3/87), the Chief Judge upheld the Court's previous decision, giving more validity to what had already been said.

But the Board did not give up. In 1988, as late as three months before its final abolishment, the Board banned the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ' by American film director Martin Scorsese, arguing that:

"the screening of a film that deals with the very basic elements of Christianity will hurt the religious feelings of the Christian public ... and will damage the State of Israel".

Continuing the line it drew in the case of 'Efraim is Back in The Army', the Court decided, unanimously and without any hesitation, to once again reverse the Board's decision:

"There is no doubt that freedom of expression is outstretched to film expression as well ... only extreme, deep and inconsiderate danger could justify the limiting of such freedom ... Such danger was not found here" (H.C. 806/88).

c) The Abolishment of The Board

Coincidentally or not, it was exactly one day after this Court's last decision in March of 1989 that the Israeli Knesset passed a legislation that abolished the Board for Films and Theater Review; first, temporarily for two years, and then permanently. The decision was not an easy one. It was a result of a long and harsh political battle, taking place both inside and outside the political system. Reviewing the history of this battle exposes yet another facet of government interference in the arts in Israel.

The first decision of the government "to abolish all public control over the performing arts in Israel" was made as early as January 1973, and was reaffirmed almost two years later, in October 1974, when a government's sub-committee decided to submit to the Knesset a bill that would abolish the Board for Film and Theater Review (Alexander, 1985). But before this bill was actually submitted to the Knesset, the government reversed its own decision. The reason: the 1973 decision was made when the National Religious Party, in a rare instance in Israel's history, was not part of the government coalition. When rejoined the coalition in 1976, the Minister of the Interior who represented this party in the government, appealed the 1973 decision, and the government accepted the appeal and reversed the decision.

Asked about the fate of the 1973 government decision to abolish the Board in May 1976, the Minister of the Interior said at the Knesset:

"Indeed, the government had decided on January 20, to cancel the demand from all theater plays to be granted a license according to the 1927 Ordinance of Dramatic and other Public Performances. Yet, due to the unclarity of this decision and the many interpretations it may get, I have asked the government to rediscuss this decision".

It took six more years before another Knesset member (Weiss) raised the issue at the Knesset's assembly again, asking the Minister of the Interior in March 1982, "whether the institution of censorship is still necessary in Israel?". The Minister's answer this time:

"Of course it is ... I have just recently come to a conclusion that it is more and more necessary. We are a small country. There are a lot of problems. There is tension and there are conflicts. Religious conflicts, ethnic conflicts, and national conflicts. We must take actions that these conflicts will not explode".

Seven months later, in October 1982, the Knesset held the first discussion about a bill, submitted by MK Virshuvski, "to abolish all artistic censorship in Israel". Responding to this bill on behalf of the government was, once again, the Minister of the Interior who opposed it, arguing that "since we live in a very complicated and explosive reality ... we must maintain certain restrictions [of the arts] in order to guarantee the security and the existence of our society".

In spite of the government position, the majority of Knesset members voted to transfer the bill to one of the Knesset Committees to be prepared for final vote. But as often was the case in matters like this, the committee "buried" the bill and never sent it back to the assembly.

But MK Virshuvski did not give up. Four years later, in March 1986, he was joined by another member of the House (MK Aloni), and the two submitted to the Knesset a similar bill. But, once again, the bill faced the objection of the government, and was rejected by the majority of the house.

Nine months later, in December 1986, another attempt was made at the Knesset by a group of members to submit a bill that would abolish the Board for Film and Theater Review. Once again, however, this attempt was rebuffed by the government, and, consequently, by the majority of the Knesset.

It was not until March of 1987, more than 24 years after its first decision to abolish the Board for Film and Theater Review, that the government had finally changed its traditional position and did not object to a bill submitted to the Knesset by MK Virshuvski to abolish the Board. After a very short discussion, the bill was transferred to The Knesset's Committee for Legislation to be prepared for voting. Finally, in April 1989 the bill was passed by the assembly,

putting an end to more than forty years of the highly controversial activity of this Board. Extensive parts of this legislation were quoted in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

2) THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The abolishment of The Board for Films and Theater Review, however, was not by any means the end of government interference in the arts in Israel. Nor was this board, during the years it operated, the only government agency to interfere with the country's arts and culture. A review of the structure and activities of the Ministry of Education and Culture throughout the years reveals that ever since this Ministry assumed responsibility for the country's arts and culture in the late 1950s (see chapter 3 above), many of its branches and agencies, along with their support of the country's arts and culture, had also interfered constantly with these domains, trying to censor, regulate, and maintain control. The two agencies of the Ministry whose structure and activities seem to be the most interfering with the country's arts and culture are Omanut La'am and the Public Council for Culture and Art.

a) Omanut La'am

One institution of the Ministry of Education and Culture whose structure and activity most strongly resembles the Board for Films and Theater Review is Omanut La'am (see chapter 3 above). On the surface, a governmental institution which

disseminates so many cultural and artistic activities to so many people at such cheap prices seems as yet another way for a government to support its arts and artists. And indeed it was treated that way in the previous chapter. Yet, the very manner in which this institution has been operating in Israel all these years raises some very serious questions about the value of this support.

Indeed, the way Omanut la'am operates represents a highly paternalistic approach according to which the government decides what cultural performances many of its citizens will not see. Surely enough, it is the weakest and poorest groups of the Israeli society, those living far from the urban centers, that suffer the most from this approach. While the citizen of Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, or Haifa are exposed to an almost unlimited number and scope of cultural performances, the population in the less urban areas (mostly in development towns) depends almost entirely on Omanut La'am to bring cultural performances to their area.

In fact, this paternalistic approach was even stronger in the first years of Omanut La'am when the organization decided "not only to disseminate cultural performances to the people but also to prepare the audience for these performances by initiating local cultural activities" (Rahav et al, 1982:11). It took a few more years before this paternalistic approach

was somewhat moderated, yet the basic idea remained the same: a governmental committee decides for many of the citizens what they will and what they won't see.

1) Structure and Activities

Omanut La'am was established as a governmental institution that brings cultural performances, mainly theater, to people living far from the urban centers. The Head of Omanut La'am was, for many years, an officer of the government, nominated exclusively by the Minister of Education and Culture. Only since February 1993 has this person been appointed by the organization's board of directors, still "in coordination with the Director of the Culture Administration in the Ministry of Education and Culture" (Omanut La'am's regulation, 1993).

The most important work of the organization is done by three repertoire committees which decide which plays to purchase. The decisions of these committees are based solely on the content of each play, exactly as was the case with the Board for Films and Theater Review. According to Omanut La'am's regulations, "the organization can, and should, offer its audience every performance produced in the country unless:

- a) the content of the performance is vulgar and offensive to part of the population.
- b) the content of the performance and/or the production itself are not in a reasonable standard of production.
- c) the performance, although reasonable in terms of its content and production, does not make sense or is understandable to most of the population".

These being the regulations, with a committee affiliated with the government determining what is 'vulgar', 'offensive', or 'does not make sense', it is not surprising that many people in the country, playwrights and actors in particular, see Omanut La'am as yet another governmental board of censors.

Answering a question raised about this issue in the Knesset back in April 1979, the Minister of Education and Culture reported that:

"within the three months prior to the question, the committee decided to purchase twenty different productions for dissemination around the country, with sixteen other productions being rejected by the committee during this period".

Such a ratio between approved and disapproved performances, one should realize, is higher even than the one used to be in the worst days of the official Board for Films and Theater Review. Even the discussions of the repertoire committees, like those of the late Board for Films and Theater Review, "are confidential and not published anywhere" (The Minister of Education and Culture in the above speech at the Knesset, April 3, 1979).

Moreover, since for most of their history the two institutions were operating simultaneously, only plays that were first approved by the Board for Films and Theater Review were discussed by the repertoire committees of Omanut La'am. The fact that so many performances were rejected by this

committee although they were approved by the Board for Film and Theater Review means that the Corporation thought that performances and productions that were good for the citizens of Tel-Aviv, Haifa, or Jerusalem, were not always good enough for those living in the periphery.

An example of Omanut La'am's reasoning not to purchase a certain play may be in order here. In early 1992, the repertoire committee of Omanut La'am decided not to purchase Joseph Mundi's play 'The Immigrant' which dealt with recent problems of absorbing immigration in Israel. In its decision the committee argued that:

"This play presents people and situations in such an extremely stereotypical way that it distorts reality. It presents an Israeli society in which everybody, but the new Ethiopian immigrant, is a liar, swindler, crook, blackmailer, law-breaker, not to mention dreams about leaving the country, all in a very simplistic, unsophisticated and unhumoristic way and in a very poor language and hysterical acting" (Ha'aretz, Dec. 8, 1992).

Relevant or not, it should be at least mentioned here that most of the reviews this play got in the Israeli press were extremely good.

But there is more to the censorial tendencies shown by Omanut La'am. Disseminating over 6000 performances a year, the organization is undoubtedly the largest impresario in the country. As a result, for many cultural performances produced in the country, the question of whether or not they will be

purchased by Omanut La'am is almost a matter of life or death. Not only because of the almost absolute monopoly this institution has in the field of culture, but also because for many people in the country, the decision of Omanut La'am to purchase a play serves as sort of a 'ritual permit' as to what they should see as well. A similar observation was made by sociologist Steven Dubin about the status of the NEA in the United States, arguing that "foundations and corporations which support the arts often use NEA decisions as a guide to what funding actions to take themselves. In crucial respects, as the NEA goes so goes much of the rest of the arts subsidy realm" (1992:279).

Yet another danger of an institution such as Omanut La'am is that of stagnation of the country's artistic and cultural activities. Thus, beginning in the early 1980s, Omanut La'am began also to engage in the encouragement of production activities, e.g. supporting theater festivals, assistance to special performances for children, etc. Given this tendency, write Rahav et al, "one might ask whether promotion is now taking over the production process, thereby creating artificial demand which is, in the long run, of negative consequences" (1982:35).

b) The Public Council for Culture and Art

Another important branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture whose structure and activities proved to be somewhat interfering with the country's arts and culture is the Public Council for Culture and Art. Similar to Omanut La'am, the idea behind founding the Council was seemingly full of good intentions. This was to remove cultural policy and grant allocations to artists and art institutions from the normal government agenda in the hope of insulating arts and culture from politics. But only he who knows the Israeli political system and political culture well enough, knows that this goal is unrealistic, not to say unachievable. Reviewing the history of the Israeli Public Council for Culture and Art from its very first days reveals that, almost from the beginning, step after step was taken by the government to maintain control over this Council, making the country's arts and culture anything but insulated from politics.

The first of these steps, as reported by Michman, was taken early in the Council's years of operation, when the government failed to define the Council's legal status and let it "operate as a section of the Ministry of Education and Culture" (1973:21). This being the situation, it is quite clear that the word 'public' in the Council's full name loses much of its meaning and the potential for the government to interfere with the country's arts and culture increases

tremendously.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that there is nothing in the paragraphs defining the functions of the Council that obliges the Minister of Education and Culture to consult the Council on questions of cultural policy or the allocation of grants. According to Michman, "during the first ten years, successive ministers reserved their exclusive rights, and did not quite comply with the Council's repeated requests to let it participate in policy decisions" (1973:23). It was only in the early 1970s that the Ministers of Education and Culture gradually began consulting with the Council on cultural policy and grant allocations, and it was only in 1985 that they were legally obliged to do so.

Another early step taken by the Ministry of Education and Culture towards undermining the Arm's Length principal upon which the Council was created is concerned with the Council's permanent staff. "Although composed mostly of professional artists that are not part of the Ministry of Education and Culture", writes Michman, "the Minister has repeatedly stressed that in carrying out its programs, the Council should not establish its own staff but rely on those of the ministry and be subject to the same civil service regulation" (ibid:22). Once again, it was only in the early 1980s that the Council finally established its own small staff, but since the

Council is still very much part of the Ministry of Education and Culture, this staff is also subject to the same civil service regulations.

But there is no doubt that the most distressing thing about the relationships between the Public Council for Culture and Art and the Ministry is the persons who head this Council. According to Michman, "after a short period of three years, when a person of public standing served as the Chairman of the first council, it became the practice for the Minister of Education and Culture himself to act as the Council's Chairman" (ibid.: 21). As an Executive Director of the Council during these years served the Director of the Ministry's Culture Department, who is himself a government official. Then, in the mid 1980s, with the creation of the Culture Administration within the Ministry, it became customary for the Head of the Administration -- who is also an officer of the government -- to act as the Council's Executive Director. Ironic, but true, it is for this officer of the government that all final decisions of the Council are reserved.

Referring to this question during a 1975 discussion in the Knesset, MK Namir, the Chairwoman of the Knesset Committee for Education and Culture said:

"Our system [of supporting culture] is, undoubtedly, over-centralistic ... It is the same person who heads the Culture Department, which is the executive branch of the Ministry, and the Public Council for Culture

and Art, which is an advisory branch to the Minister. In addition to this, he is also a director in some of the main cultural institutions in the country where the budget, the repertoire, and the policy are determined. Can our cultural policy be determined by one person, be he the brightest and most suitable person ?".

Heads of the Council's panels, like the officials of the ministerial Department of Culture, were, until very recently, employees and received salaries from the State. Appointments to these positions were made exclusively by the Minister of Education and Culture, while appointments for the less important offices in the panels were proposed by the head of the panel with the approval of the Minister (Greenfeld, 1989).

As for the Council's other members, most are professional artists and arts administrators whose main concern is the promotion of artistic and cultural creativity in Israel. Yet, the very fact that many of these members are representatives of cultural institutions that are supported by the Council is somewhat distressing, especially if one recalls that these members are supposed to decide on potential grants to their institutions. In a question directed at the Minister of Education and Culture about this issue in the Knesset back in October 1979, MK Doron asked the Minister:

"It was brought to my attention that some disturbing things are taking place in the Council for Culture and Art There are no regulations for nominating board members [and] there are no clear criteria for allocating grants. Moreover, I heard that the head of the Council's Projects Committee is a theater person who himself enjoys the Council's support. Will

the Minister tell me please who determines what institution gets council grants and according to what criteria? Doesn't the Minister think it is aesthetically wrong that a theater person is heading this Projects Committee?"

Not surprisingly, given all we have seen up to this point about the government's approach towards culture, the Minister did not see any problem with the Council's composition and/or way of operation.

Yet another distressing custom of the Council is to be represented on the boards of directors of many of the cultural institutions it supports. According to Avner Shalev, former Executive Director of the Council, "in recent years every member of the Council served on the boards of an average fifteen different cultural institutions" (Interview to Ha'aretz, Dec. 25, 1992). Having such close relationships between the Ministry and the Council, this custom undoubtedly increases the Ministry's potential to interfere with the internal affairs of the country's cultural and artistic institutions. A rather strange explanation for this custom was provided by Michman who was, for many years, an official of the Ministry of Education and Culture. "The responsibility for the theaters", wrote Michman, "which was very soon expanded to other institutions as well, obliged the Ministry to interfere increasingly in their internal policy" (1973:19).

Answering a question raised about this issue at the Knesset in October 1976, the Minister of Education and Culture explained his Ministry's policy in this regard:

"As for the boards of directors of the cultural institutions that are supported by the Ministry, there are three possibilities: (1) the entire board is appointed by the Minister of Education and Culture; (2) The Minister is informed and has to approve the composition of the board; (3) The Minister is appointing one or more people to represent the Ministry on the board".

Then there is the culture budget of the State of Israel, yet another example of the Council's dependence on the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the level of control maintained by the government over the country's arts and culture. Unlike other countries, where similar councils exist (Great Britain, Canada, United States), the culture budget of the State of Israel was never made the province of the Public Council for Culture and Art. Instead, these funds were always part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget and as such were subject to the same political pressures and supervision as any other governmental ministry. As we will see later in this chapter, this pressure was indeed put on the Ministry many times, mostly by members of the Knesset. It was only in the early 1980s that the Council was granted a small independent budget to fund its own self-initiated projects. The significantly largest part of the culture budget of the state of Israel, however, is still part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget.

Referring to this question during one of his speeches in the Knesset, the Minister of Education and Culture said in July 1972:

"I asked the Director of the Culture Department in our Ministry to formulate a bill that would make the Public Council for Culture and Art an independent statutory council, a council that will obtain its authority from the law and will not be subject to the personal preferences of one minister or another It will have its own budget and will use it according to its own discretion".

As of today, thirty five years after it was created, and more than twenty years after the above speech of the Minister of Education and Culture was made, the Council is still very much part of this Ministry, with no statutory authority having been created for culture and the arts. Such authorities, one should realize, were created in Israel for sports, electronic media, academic affairs, and banking, to mention only a few. But not for arts and Culture. In fact, arts and culture is the only sub-field that has remained completely within the control of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Considering the long history of the relationships between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Public Council for Culture and Art, as they were described above, it hardly seems coincidental that an independent statutory authority was not created for arts and culture. It is more likely that the government did not create such an authority in order to maintain full control over these domains.

Was this control ever executed in Israel ? Were cultural institutions ever denied government support because of political, ideological, or other non-artistic reasons ? Interviewing a large number of people involved with arts and/or politics in Israel, David Alexander writes:

"Many politicians might have wanted this norm [of denying government support from certain institutions or productions] to take place in Israel, but practically speaking, we have no evidence that something like this had ever happened" (1985:191).

This is not entirely accurate. Back in 1971, for example, the Endowments Committee of the Ministry of Education and Culture rejected a grant application submitted by the Abu-Gosh Festival for Church Music, arguing that "it is not the Ministry's duty to support an institution whose goal is to play music that condemns the Jewish religion" (Davar, Jan. 7, 1972). Even the High Court for Justice, where the festival's producer appealed this decision of the Ministry, rejected his claim that the decision limited his artistic freedom, and refused to reverse the decision.

There was, however, a minority opinion to this decision of the Court which is worth mentioning here. "The fact that the Minister of Education and Culture was granted the authority to endow grants to cultural institutions", wrote Judge Haim Cohen in the minority opinion, "does not provide him with the authority to interfere, if only by denying the support, with the artistic freedom of these institutions" (H.C. 175/71).

Other cases of government interference in the arts in Israel are delineated in the next section of this chapter.

CONCLUSION

The Abu-Gosh festival, was, more or less, a single case of an explicit interference of the Ministry of Education and Culture in an artistic activity. In most cases, however, the Ministry had found other, more implicit ways to maintain very close control over the country's arts and culture. As put by sociologist Steven Dubin:

"Explicit censorship is not often necessary when producers are effectively enmeshed within bureaucratic structure. Implicit control can anticipate and check problems in process before they emerge into public view. These derive from organizational characteristics of both sponsoring and allied agencies, informally conveyed notions of 'what is and what is not done', uncertainty over continued funding, and deference to professional notions of conduct" (1986:667).

The organizational characteristic of the Israeli Ministry of Education and culture, as we have seen throughout this chapter, and more specifically that of the Public Council for Culture and Art, certainly conveys similar notions to the Israeli arts community. Having one, or more, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture on their boards, and knowing they depend almost entirely on the Ministry and on the Council for their survival, artists and art institutions in Israel must have, either consciously or unconsciously, censored their own works, or chosen to limited themselves to

safe productions, as to not jeopardize this support. In this sense, Dubin's conclusion about the nature of the NEA in the United States is more than suitable for the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture as well: "While censorship per se might not have occurred ... the nature of sponsorship certainly did" (1992:293).

3) Interfering Activities of the Executive Branch - Some Landmark Cases

The above discussion about the Ministry of Education and Culture, as one may have noticed, had focused mostly on the organizational arrangement which enable this ministry to maintain control and to interfere with the country's arts and culture. The actual interfering activity of this, and other, governmental ministries, are naturally much more difficult to trace. A rather reliable way to do so is by reviewing the petitions submitted at the Knesset by members of the House, in which they challenged various interfering activities of the executive branch in the field of the arts. Such were the petitions submitted by MK Ben-Aharon, in May 1949, concerning "the interference of the Military Censor, not only in our political and public life, but also in banning songs that deal with matters of everyday's life"; by MK Raziell-Naor, in August 1958, concerning an order given by the Prime Minister to remove a certain picture from an exhibition devoted to

Israel's 10th anniversary; by MK Talmi, in June 1983, about censorship of a satirical review by Kol Israel (Israel's National Radio); by MK Avneri, in February 1966, about a decision made by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Importing Foreign Artists not allowing the visit to Israel of the famous rock group, The Beatles; by MK Avneri, in December 1966, about a condition, imposed by the governmental Fund for Encouraging Israeli Films, that a specialist for religion will approve every script before submission to the Fund for a grant; by MK Avneri, in January 1967, about banning a book by author Dan Omer by the Committee for Fighting Obscene Literature "that was recently appointed by the Minister of Education and Culture"; by MK Avneri, in January 1970, about banning songs by Galei Tzahal (the military radio station); by MK Grossman and Aloni, in November 1977, about a press interview with the Minister of Education and Culture's senior advisor, in which he said that "there is no reason for the Ministry of Education and Culture to support bad theater which, to the best of our knowledge, the public does not want either"; by MK Namir, in December 1983, about "the government's interference in the freedom of artistic creation"; by MK Raz, in March 1985, about the Palestinian Al Hakauati Theater Company that "was recently schemed by the police"; by MK Virshovski, in August 1986, about a decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to interrupt a tour of the Haifa Municipal Theater in the United States; and by K.M Ramon, in November 1990, about the Prime

Minister's decision not to sign the document which awards an important governmental prize to poet Yitzhak Laor.

**B) INTERFERING WITH THE ARTS AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL -
SOME LANDMARK CASES**

Another very active arena of interference with Israel's arts and culture is The Knesset -- The Israeli parliament -- where numerous attempts were made throughout the years by members of the house to interfere with the country's artistic freedom, to censor various cultural and artistic activities, and to abrogate government subsidies to cultural institutions. As it will soon appear, most of these interference attempts were firmly rebuffed by the respective ministers. Yet, it is the very fact that these attempts were made at the first place that is at issue here. As put, more than sixty years ago, by Philosopher Theodore Beman:

"It is common to all people, let alone for politicians, to want to censor certain ideas that are abhorrent to them, but it is when people act on their inclinations that freedom becomes endangered" (1931:62).

1) Petitions to the Ministers and Motions for the Agenda

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to introduce the dozens of Petitions to The Minister, the Motions for The Agenda, and the legislative initiatives submitted by Knesset members throughout the years, which were either explicitly or implicitly intended to interfere with the country's arts and

culture. Thus, only selected examples will be introduced in this chapter in order to give the reader at least a sense of the variety of issues and the extent to which members of the Knesset have tried to interfere with artistic and cultural matter. The reader, however, should keep in mind that the following inventory is not, by any means, a complete one.

Not surprisingly, the attempts of Knesset members to interfere with various cultural and artistic activities followed, in terms of their content, the same Sacred Cows guidelines identified earlier in this chapter, in the section about the Board for Films and Theater Review (i.e. the Holocaust, Nazism, the Israeli Army, and the Jewish religion). Unlike members of the Board for Films and Theater Review, however, Knesset members were not granted official authority to ban cultural or artistic activities, thus all they could do was complain, protest, or explicitly ask the respective ministers to act upon the banning of these activities. It should be emphasized here that most interference attempts specified below were made by members of the various religious parties, the conservative Likud party, and the Israeli Communist party. The importance of this party affiliation will be discussed later in this dissertation.

The first attempt by a Knesset member to interfere with an artistic activity in Israel took place as early as June 1953

when MK Raziell-Naor complained to the Prime Minister that Kol Israel (Israel's National Radio) was airing the music of German composer Richard Strauss "who was an active Nazi and a close friend of Adolf Hitler". "Is it the duty of our National Radio," asked MK Raziell-Naor, "to disseminate this kind of music? What does the Prime Minister intend to do to prevent the airing of German music on our National Radio?"

A few years later, in December 1956, it was the playing of German music by The Israeli Philharmonic that made the same Knesset member ask the Minister of Education and Culture:

"I understand from recent advertisements of the Israeli Philharmonic that the orchestra is about to play the music of composer Richard Strauss who was a known active Nazi. The Israeli Philharmonic is the highest musical institution in the country, it bears the name of the People and the State, and it is even being significantly supported by the government. Doesn't the Minister think that his ministry should make everything possible to prevent this embarrassment from taking place?"

Similar petitions concerning German music played by the Israeli Philharmonic were also submitted by MK Raziell-Naor, in November 1966; by MK Shilanski, in July 1988; by MK Mirom and MK Verdiger, in November 1989; and by four other Knesset members, in December 1991.

But not only German music was challenged by members of the Israeli parliament. Films and theater plays that had something to do with Germany, with the Nazis, or with the Holocaust,

were also the issue of several petitions by Knesset members, all asking the Ministers of Education and Culture to act upon the banning of these activities and/or the punishing of their creators. Such were the petitions submitted by MK Noruk, in October 1956, about "the recent attempts to bring to Israel actors from the Burg-Theater of Vienna to perform in the same language that the Germans murderers ordered the death of our children, parents, brothers and sisters"; by MK Shofman, in July 1958, about "the flooding of Israel with German films"; by MK Aram, in December 1958, about the film 'The Girl from Berlin', "that deliberately distorts the war against the Nazis"; by MK Mikunis, in May 1968, about a film whose producer was an active Nazi officer; by MK Shilanski, in May 1978, about the play 'The Egg' "whose writer was a former collaborator with the Nazis"; by MK Shamir, in February 1981, about a German Films Festival in Jerusalem in which some of the films were created by former collaborators with the Nazis; by MK Cohen, in July 1987, about the play 'Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria', "which contains some harsh expression about the Holocaust"; and by MK Ravitz, in March 1990, about the play 'Cabaret' "in which the Nazis are portrayed as cute, adorable, nice, freedom fighters".

Another issue that seems to have bothered many Knesset members and therefore appeared frequently in their petitions and motions, is anything related to Judaism, to the Jewish

religion, and to the Jewish tradition. Such were, for example, the petitions submitted by MK Noruk, in July 1958, about "a highly missionary film that describes the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the Jews"; by MK Katz, in January 1961, about the play 'The First Sin' "which strongly offends the name of God"; by MK Lorentz, in November 1967, about "the Carmon Dance Company that refused to eat Kosher food during a recent trip abroad"; by MK Levy, in June 1968, (and MK Sanhadrai, in July 1968) about the concert 'Mathias Passion' "in which young Jewish children participate, and which includes material that was used for generations as a source for anti-Semitism and harassment of Jews"; by MK Ben-Meir, in January 1972, about Hamartef Theater Company that "broke the law and performed during the Sabbath"; by K.M Shoval, in July 1972, about "the anti-Semite film 'Jesus Christ Superstar' which distorts and falsifies history"; by Knesset members Verdiger and Ben-Meir, in April 1973, about the play 'Status Quo Vadis' "whose only goal is to disseminate hatred of the Jewish religion and of the Jewish faith in God" (the play, by the way, was written by another Knesset member, MK Aloni); by MK Cohen, in July 1974, about an American singing group that, while performing in front of wounded Israeli soldiers, "conveyed strong Christian messages"; by MK Verdiger, in April 1975, about the play 'Zionism Without a Beard' "which ridicules Jewish faith, the coming of the Messiah, and those who believe in complete redemption"; by MK Ben-Meir, in June 1976, about the Bimot

Theater Company which performs on Sabbath eves; by MK Shainman, in July 1979, about the Diaspora Museum in Tel-Aviv that opens its doors on Sabbath; by MK Shaki, in December 1986, about the play 'The Explosion in Ahalan Street' "which introduces, among other things, a mixed couple" (an Arab and a Jew); by MK Drukman, in December 1986, about the play 'The Last Secular', "which is an awful play that offends everything that is sacred to the People of Israel"; by MK Azran, in January 1990, about art classes that actually teach Christianity; by MK Verdiger, in July 1990, about desecrating the Sabbath by the Israeli Film Festival, and about the fact that some of the films in this festival seemed to oppose the religious establishment of Israel; and by MK Dayan, in July 1991, about the National Broadcasting Authority's Orchestra that was rehearsing on the eve of 'Tisha Be'av', "a day in which the hearts of the People of Israel are mourning the destruction of Jerusalem".

Then, there were those Knesset members who, for various other reasons, challenged the government support of cultural institutions and/or productions, asking the Ministers of Education and Culture, and other government members, to suspend, or abrogate altogether the subsidies for these institutions and productions. Such were the petition submitted by MK Tubbi, in July 1960, asking the Minister of Industry and Commerce to suspend the financial support given by the

government to the film 'Exodus', "which explicitly offends the Arab citizens of Israel"; by MK Katz, in February 1965, asking the Minister of Finance not to increase government subsidy for movie tickets; by MK Hassin, in November 1966, asking the Minister of Industry and Commerce not to send an Israeli film named 'Fortuna' to an international film festival abroad because "the film is humiliating to a certain ethnic group in Israel, and, it furthermore presents the State of Israel as discriminating and exploiting its new immigrants"; by MK Hammer, in March 1970, challenging the government's decision to spend "huge amount of money on a new opera house"; by MK Gross, in March 1971, challenging the entire idea of government support of culture; by K.M Yadid, in February 1973, questioning the grants given by the Public Council for Culture and Art to the play 'Friends Talk About Jesus'; by MK Berman, in February 1978, asking the Minister of Education and Culture "whether the number of museums supported by the government is not out of proportion for the size of our country and the number of citizens"; by MK Drukman, in November 1982, demanding that the Ministry of Education and Culture will suspend its financial support for The Newe Tzedek Theater Company because "the theater is breaking the law, poisoning the public and the youth with self-hatred, and offends the basic values of our people and our State"; by MK Cohen, in June 1986, (and MK Cohen-Avidov, in January 1987), asking the Minister of Education and Culture to reconsider his ministry's

support of The Haifa Municipal Theater "whose repertoire is despicable and outrageous"; by MK Landau, in December 1986, asking the Minister of Industry and Commerce to change his ministry decision to send to the Academy Award Ceremony an Israeli film that "portrays the Israelis as rude and empty-headed and the Egyptians as kind and humane"; by MK Porat, in March 1989, asking the Minister of Education and Culture to consider the suspension of his ministry's support of the literature magazine 'Iton 77' because it published a poem that calls soldiers on not to serve in the occupied territories; And by MK Perach, in December 1990, asking the Minister of Education and Culture "to make sure that writers whose works are infected with anti-educational and anti-traditional elements, will not be candidates for the annual Prime-Minister Award for Writers".

In most cases, as noted earlier, the respective ministers rejected these interference attempts and allowed the support to stand. Yet, it is the very fact that these interference requests were made in the first place that is important for the discussion about government interference in the arts.

Another way for Knesset members to interfere with cultural and artistic affairs was to call upon the Ministers of Interior to interfere with the work of the Board for Films and Theater Review and to act upon the changing of the Board's

decisions. Such were, for example, the petitions submitted by MK Snne, in January 1952, about the film 'Four in a Jeep' "which is an anti-Soviet and pro-Nazi film"; by MK Arditti, in July 1956, about the film 'Temptation and Sin' "which is historically wrong and has no artistic value at all"; by MK Ulmart, in February 1961, about "a large number of Arab films (that) are now screened in Israel and whose artistic value is extremely low"; by MK Katz, in March 1963, about the play 'A Bit of Honey' "which shows only spoilness, family degeneration, and transgression of every elementary modesty"; by MK Zuaretz, in February 1967, about the film 'Motive for Murder' "which profanes sacred values, encourages violence, and educates for murder"; by MK Shainmen, in August 1974, about the Israeli film 'My Margo', "whose content and scenes delineate moral deterioration, destruction of virtues, and the destruction of quiet family life"; by MK Gross, in July 1976, about the play 'The Governor of Jericho' "which includes a reckless instigation against the IDF, ridicule of its commanders, and obscenity scenes typical of its officers; by MK Plato-Sharon, in June 1978, about the film 'Julia' whose star, actress Vanessa Redgrave, "is a notorious supporter of The Palestine Liberation Organization, played in propaganda film for the Palestinians, and declared that she wants the liquidation of the State of Israel"; and by MK Cohen, in August 1982, about "a film full of incitement and enmity against the State of Israel".

Some interference attempts by Knesset members were so unique and unconventional that they do not fit into any of the aforementioned analysis. Nonetheless, they should be mentioned here, at least briefly, because they give the reader a sense of the variety of issues and the extent to which the interference of the members of the Israeli parliament was achieved. Among these petitions were those submitted by MK Nissim, in August 1960, asking the Minister of Education and Culture to abrogate the Histadrut's plan to open an artists impresario agency; by MK Sanhadrahi, in June 1970, asking the Minister of Education and Culture to prevent the entry into the country of the actors of the musical 'Hair'; by MK Be'eri, in May 1976, asking the Minister of Education and Culture "whether, and in what way, his ministry supervises the correctness of the language used in Israeli theater"; by MK Be'eri, in July 1976, asking the Minister of Justice to indict a poet and a newspaper "for writing and publishing a poem that offends the Jewish people and calls for civil uprising"; by MK Nof, in February 1981, asking the Minister of Education and Culture to interfere with that year's Israeli Song Festival and to suspend four songs that were written by people who migrated from the country; by MK Eitan, in February 1986, complaining that "the sculpture that was chosen to represent the Israeli arts in a handbook published by The Government Information Center is an inappropriate one"; by MK Cohen, in February 1988, complaining to the Minister of Defense that

"IDF soldiers are exposed some outrageous theatrical plays"; by MK Azran, in March 1989, asking the Minister of Education and Culture to bring back from a tour abroad the Haifa Municipal Theater that, "according to an official report of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, created a huge damage to the State of Israel during its recent visit abroad"; by MK Levy, in February 1990, complaining that high-school art students are using nude models in their classes; and by MK Haetzni, in June 1990, complaining to the Minister of Education and Culture that "a dance company supported by his ministry had performed in Hungary with a dance that, according to some reports, was a clear propaganda for the Palestinian Liberation Organization".

Last among the ways Knesset members have interfered in the field of arts was through the use of Motions for the Agenda, the more comprehensive form of discussions held at the Knesset assembly. Typical of these were the motions submitted by MK Mikunis, in July 1958, about "the damaging influence of entertainment groups, arts, and books"; by MK Katz, in January 1959, about "the epidemic of evil in our literature, journalism, and art"; and by K.M Drukman, in October 1982 (and again, in December 1983), about "the offense of Jewish and Israeli basic values in theater plays".

It should only be mentioned here, before we end this

section about interfering with the arts at the legislative level of government in Israel, that the Knesset itself was not, by any means, the only arena in which Knesset members interfered with the country's arts and culture. Throughout the years, many of them have taken an active part in public debates and in street demonstrations, trying to interfere in many ways with various artistic and cultural activities.

C) CONCLUSION

In his book The Jester and The King, David Alexander summarizes his study of direct and indirect artistic censorship in Israel:

"The presence of mechanisms of control on everything that is related to public resources does not necessarily suggest indirect censorship. They definitely cannot be regarded as means of control in the hands of politicians, bureaucrats and other representatives of the government ... The existing regulations, guarantee pluralism of opinions and positions, while the discussions and decisions are part of a democratic process that is not subject - none what so ever - to political pressures -- even if the authorities sometimes would like them to be (1985:197).

As the journey through all three levels of government in Israel reveals, this conclusion of Alexander is not entirely accurate. The structure, as well as the magnitude of actual government interference in the arts in Israel, as described above, suggest that a high degree of interference is indeed practiced by the Israeli government in the field of arts. The history of the Israeli government in the field of arts,

therefore, is, as put by Steven Dubin, the history of "the development of institutional capacities to contain artists and their activities more effectively" (1986:669). As it will be further elaborated later in this dissertation, the political pressure put on government in regard to artistic and cultural matters, and the actual activity of the government in this field, are not necessarily part of a democratic process, as suggested above by Alexander, but rather part of a much more complicated political culture of which democracy is only one component.

It should be mentioned here, however, that within the existing theoretical framework of government interference in the arts, Israel must be treated as a liberal democracy and not as a repressive non-democratic regime (Tribe, 1973). Whatever was done in Israel in terms of government interference with the arts, as we have seen, was merely directed against works of art and not against artists personally; Israeli artists were never asked to follow a certain line a-priori, at least not officially; and those artists who did not follow the dominant line in Israel were never subjected to arrest, expulsion or execution, as was the case in many non-democratic repressive regimes¹.

¹ For a good review of government interference in other countries of the world, see Tribe, 1973, Ch. 6-8.

CHAPTER 6 - GOVERNMENT INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE ARTS
IN ISRAEL

Despite the high degree of government involvement in the arts in Israel, both in supporting and interfering with the country's arts and culture, there is also a surprising amount of government indifference towards the arts reflected in all levels of the political system. Presented as dense and concentrated as it was above, the volume of government activity in the field of arts is undoubtedly misleading. Thus for the purpose of this chapter, it is not so much what Israeli governments have done in the field of arts, or what has been said in the Knesset about the issue of culture, but rather the amount of attention and the importance given to this issue at the various levels of the Israeli political system. As the following pages will reveal, arts and culture in Israel are not, and never really were, important to the political system, not to mention cases where they were treated with disrespect and sometimes even with scorn.

Indeed, Israel is not unique in this regard. "Government responsibilities for the arts," writes Dick Netzer in his book The Subsidized Muse: Public Support for The Arts in The United States, "are not central to the concerns of the principal decisions makers - president, governors, and legislative majority leaders...". The stakes in the arts, Netzer

concludes, "are low for politicians and high for people in the arts" (1978:17).

Yet, the difference between Israel and the United States in this regard must be mentioned here again. While in the United States the government is only the "shortest leg" of what Dimaggio calls "an institutional tripod on which our artistic enterprise rests" (1986:58), in Israel the government is the main, and almost only leg on which arts and culture rest.

**A) POLITICAL INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE ARTS AT THE
EXECUTIVE LEVEL**

1) The Ministry of Education and Culture

Political indifference towards the arts on behalf of the Israeli government began, as Michman points out, as early as 1949, when "the early governments had no desire to interfere with any of the country's cultural affairs" (1973:10). Thus, although a Ministry of Education and **Culture** was established in 1949 to handle all of the country's educational and cultural affairs, most of this ministry's efforts, attention and resources during those years were directed at educational goals, leaving culture to the mercies of the marketplace and other social institutions. It was precisely this early link between Education and Culture that became one of the main sources of the political indifference towards arts and culture

in Israel. "The early governments", writes Michman,

"devoted themselves wholly to first priorities ... Education was rated from the beginning among these priorities, and to it the Ministry devoted all its efforts and financial resources. Culture, on the other hand, was considered a luxury which the state was under no obligation to encourage" (1973:10).

The notion that educational and cultural matters are intimately linked and should be administered by a single entity is, of course, not new. Until the second half of this century, there were no sharp distinctions among educational and cultural activities, even in European countries where government responsibility for culture was always immense (Cummings and Katz, 1987; Dorian, 1964). Yet, while most of these countries, as part of expanding their obligation to the arts and culture, transferred their responsibility in these areas to separate Ministries of Culture during the 1960s and '70s, in Israel this idea was hardly ever raised, let alone considered seriously. Even in countries where arts and culture are still under the responsibility of a combined Ministry of Education and Culture (most notably Sweden and Japan), the arts manage somehow to benefit from this situation and to win the political recognition some say they deserve. In Israel, on the other hand, this has only created problems for the arts, preventing them from winning the same recognition.

Referring to this question during a 1960 discussion in the Knesset, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"There are countries where there are separate ministries for education and for culture ... and if in our country these two domains are under the same ministry, we must also nurse culture so it will not look superfluous to educational matters; it is clear that in our country educational matters come first, but we should not let culture be unobtrusive"

Indeed, the Minister knew what he was talking about. Although named 'The Ministry of Education and Culture' when it was first set up in 1949, it was not until 1970 that culture was even formally defined by this Ministry, let alone given a division of its own. When finally created, this division did not last long and its units "which still continued to function were subordinated to senior ministry officials whose main concern was formal education and administration" (Michman, 1973:17, my italics).

Referring to this issue in their most comprehensive book about culture in Israel, Katz and Gurevitch wrote in 1973: "The Ministry of Education and Culture is just now beginning to face up the latter part of its name" (1973:41).

It was probably this early attitude of the Ministry of Education and Culture that led MK Yeshaiahu to suggest, during the 1953 discussion in the Knesset about this Ministry's budget, "to change the name of 'The Ministry of Education and Culture' into merely 'The Ministry of Education' ". The reason given by MK Yeshaiahu for this suggestion was that "anyway most of the Ministry's content and activity are devoted to

educational matters with cultural issues only lingering on the outskirts".

Fourteen years later, another Knesset member pointed to the problem of having a combined Ministry for Education and Culture, this time suggesting a different solution. Reacting to the annual address of the Knesset by the Minister of Education and Culture, MK Rimalt said in July 1967:

"Your Ministry, Mister Minister, is the Ministry of Education and Culture. Education is the basis for our existence. Yet the Ministry stands on two legs: education and culture, and they are not equal. The educational leg is well, healthy, and walking safely, but the issue of culture is a little bit underprivileged. I suggest that the government and the Knesset will consider if there is no need in the future for a special Deputy-Minister for Culture".

But even this suggestion was not considered seriously. The amount of attention given to culture by the ministry remained incidental and negligible.

One explanation for the Ministry of Education and Culture's attitude towards culture was given in a 1992 newspaper interview with the Chairman of the Knesset Committee for Education and Culture at that time, MK Avraham Burg, who said:

"We must understand that, a-priori, the link between education and culture is a catastrophe for culture. Any minister will always have a greater political interest to pay a teacher before he even looks at a frustrated filmmaker" (Ha'ir, Oct. 30, 1992).

This being the Ministry's attitude towards culture, it is not surprising that, to this day, the media in Israel, as well as the majority of the Israeli public, refer to the Ministry of Education and Culture merely as 'the Ministry of Education', and to the Minister of Education and Culture merely as 'The Minister of Education'. Even when the issue in question is a cultural one.

According to Dan Ronen, the present Director of the Culture Department in the Ministry of Education and Culture, who has served under several ministers, all Ministers of Education and Culture were clearly more interested in education than in culture. "Whatever was done by one minister or another in the field of culture", Ronen argues, "was never a result of a clear policy of the Ministry towards culture, rather of the individual background and interests of the person in office" (Personal interview, Nov. 9, 1992). Ideas about creating a separate Ministry of Culture, Ronen continued, "were raised from time to time in the Ministry, but they never really progressed to a serious stage".

The late 1960s, for example, a time when the late Zalman Aranne was in office as Minister of Education and Culture, are considered one of the better times for the arts and culture in the Ministry. Yet, even Mr. Aranne, himself a writer and a poet, "had devoted himself primarily to education, and, in

particular, to the role of primary education in the integration of the reunited tribes of Israel" (Katz and Gurevitch, 1973:21). Only the constant delegations of artists and their managers, they continue, "continually reminded him of his role as Minister of Culture and thus his power as Patron of the Arts in a welfare state" (ibid).

In a 1992 newspaper interview with Boaz Appelbaum, a junior political activist in the Labor party and a person who says he wants to be the first ever Israeli Minister of Culture, Appelbaum tells:

"On February 1st 1989 I submitted a bunch of documents to the Minister of Education and Culture at the time, Mr. Yitzhak Navon. These documents dealt with the reorganization of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The main idea was to separate education from culture and to put culture on separate independent legs ... but the idea was rejected by Mr. Navon... he got cold feet ... he could not grasp such a reform"
(Ma'ariv, June 13, 1992).

There was, however, one huge advantage for having a combined Ministry for Education and Culture, that is, that at least until 1977, the position of Minister of Education and Culture was always held by a very strong, influential political figure who was always part of the top leadership of the party in power. Thus the voice of this minister was always heard and his opinions were highly regarded. Had a separate Ministry for Culture been created, it would have probably become a junior ministry that no one would pay attention to.

Somewhat similar argument was raised by Cummings and Katz in their most comprehensive book The Patron State: "One lesson that emerges from our study is that the arts may be better served by being a small part of an agency headed by a political heavyweight than by being a stand-alone agency headed by someone with little political clout" (1989:12). The only problem, of course, is that in the current situation in Israel, all Ministers of Education and Culture were always preoccupied with education, devoting relatively little attention to culture anyway.

Things only got worse in this regard following the 1977 'political earthquake', when, for the first time in its history, the Ministry of Education and Culture was 'given' by the major party in power to a small coalition partner, more specifically to the National Religious Party. Thus, not only did the position of Minister of Education and Culture lose the little political influence it still had until then, but it was also given to a party about which, three years earlier, one of its representatives in the Knesset had said during a discussion concerning the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget:

"The Ministry of Education is also the Ministry of Culture. Examine please what is this culture that is submitted and supported by the Ministry of Culture. You will find out how small the budget for religious culture is... [while] huge sums of money are given to culture that leads to destruction of values". (MK Shainman, June 26, 1974).

Once again, it is only an indifferent attitude towards culture that allows the party in power to surrender its responsibility in this field to a minor coalition partner.

Some reflections about the Ministry of Education and Culture's attitude towards the arts and culture were brought out in a 1992 newspaper article, published soon after the nomination of Shulamit Aloni as Minister of Education and Culture. "The most basic thing I am expecting now," said Yona Fisher, Artistic Director of the Tel-Aviv Museum, "is that culture will not be the **miserable brother** or the **poor cousin** of education any longer" (Yediot Achronot, July 24, 1992, my italics). Similar expectations were raised in the article by Alon Garbuz, Director of the Tel-aviv Institute for Film (Cinematheque) who said: "I expect that culture will finally get the same weight as education"

Last to express her opinion about the amount of attention given to culture by the Ministry of Education and Culture was the new Minister of Education and Culture herself who said: "indeed the issue of culture was neglected culture will not be the **step-daughter** of the Ministry of Education and Culture anymore".

2) The Prime Ministers and the 'Basic Lines' of the Government

If all of the above is correct for the Ministry, and the Ministers of Education and Culture, it is even more true for the Prime Ministers of Israel who have rarely demonstrated any interest in the field of the arts at all. In the 1992 newspaper interview with Boaz Appelbaum mentioned above, the following anecdote is quoted: "During all his years as Prime Minister of Israel, the only formal meeting with Israeli culture that Yitzhak Rabin held was through a reception he threw for the writer Amos Ettinger when his new book was published". Accurate or not, this episode clearly demonstrates the importance assigned to culture by the Prime Ministers of Israel.

One cultural event that was traditionally honored by the attendance of the Prime Ministers of Israel is The Israel's Award ceremony, which takes place every year on Independence Day, and in which the most prestigious governmental prize is awarded to selected artists and intellectuals. The traditional attendance of Prime Ministers at this ceremony was broken however in 1978 when Menachem Begin, in his first year as Prime Minister, did not show up at the ceremony. When asked in a petition in the Knesset why he did not attend "the most prominent cultural event of the country this Independence Day", one of the Prime Minister's deputies said: "The reason

why the Prime Minister did not attend this ceremony is other ceremonies and events in the country that day, and the need to choose among them". Legitimate as it may be, this answer demonstrates the very low priority assigned to the arts by the Prime Minister of Israel.

This attitude of the Prime Ministers, however, should not come as a surprise for anyone who examines the 'basic lines' of the governments that these persons have headed. 'Basic lines', one should realize, is a list of issues, sort of a declaration of principals, published whenever a new government comes to power, in which the government delineates the issues with which it intends to deal. The list accommodates a wide range of issues from national security and foreign affairs, to education, housing, agriculture, religion, transportation and crime. Never, in the 45 years of Israel's existence, has the issue of arts and culture appeared on this list!

3) Political nominations in the field of culture

This being the government's attitude towards culture all these years, it is not surprising that the field of arts and culture in Israel suffers from yet another 'problem' - a lack of political nominations. As much as this reality may be a positive thing that the government should be very proud of, and the art community very happy with, only he who knows the Israeli political system and the Israeli political culture

well enough knows that, in Israel, a lack of political nominations simply means lack of interest. It is a phenomenon rooted so deeply in the Israeli political culture (Arian, 1985; Lissak and Horowitz, 1992), that it is only political indifference towards culture that can explain this lack of political nominations in this field. Only once, during the entire period of time studied in this dissertation, did a Knesset member accuse the Minister of Education and Culture of nominating people to the Public Council for Arts and Culture for political reasons, accusations that were firmly denied by the Minister.

4) The Culture Budget of Israel

Yet another facet of the political indifference towards culture in Israel is the country's culture budget, that was always very limited, amounting no more than 0.3 percent of the total national budget. Here too, one could argue that Israel is not different than many other countries in the West, but, once again, it should be mentioned that the government in Israel is the chief sponsor of arts and culture, with other sources practically nonexistent.

Being always part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget, one may mistakenly see this budget as the second or third largest among the government ministries. Yet, when broken into specific issues, this budget certainly looks

different. In the fiscal year of 1954/55, for example (the first year for which records were available), the budget of the Ministry of Education and culture was 5.4 percent of the total government budget for that year, but only 1.1 percent of this budget was devoted to Science, Culture and Art, which makes the culture budget of Israel for that year a modest 0.06 percent of the total government budget.

A similar ratio was kept in the budget for 1960/61, when the expenses for Science, Culture and Arts formed 1.1 percent of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget, or 0.07 percent of that year's total government budget.

Things changed slightly during the 1970s, when the budget for cultural affairs increased to around 3 percent of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget, but the share of this budget in the total government budget remained exceedingly low. In 1970, for example, the culture budget formed only 0.2 percent of the total government budget.

Referring to this figure during his 1971 annual address of the assembly, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"I feel unsatisfied with the relatively modest budget that is devoted to our activity in the field of arts and culture. It is a situation that reflects a sad reality of many years that we have still not managed to change".

In 1976, the entire culture budget of the State of Israel

was between 0.17 to 0.3 percent of the total government budget, depending on what sections one includes in the definition.

"Figures such as the above", writes Ridley in his article about cultural policy in Great Britain, "need to be placed in some perspective, if the significance of state patronage is to be assessed" (1987:232). Thus, as haphazard as it may be given the differences between countries (Schuster, 1989), it should be mentioned here that in France, for example, during these same years (the 1970s), the budget of the Ministry of Culture alone was about 0.6 percent of the total government budget, reaching 1.4 percent of this budget when including all government expenditures for cultural activities (Andrault & Dressayre, 1987). In Israel, on the other hand, most of the government expenditure for culture comes from the Ministry of Education and Culture, thus the above figure is very close to the total government funds devoted to culture.

In Denmark, Bakke reports, "the Ministry's [of Culture] part of the total national budget has in all years since 1961 been around 1 percent" (1987:154), while in Sweden, cultural spending in 1981 reached 1 percent of the state's running expenses (Kleberg, 1987:195). In Canada, since the early 1970s, total government expenditures for the arts is a steady 0.6 percent of the gross general expenditure (Meisel & Van

Loon, 1987), while in Italy, during these years, they have reached 0.35 percent of the total government budget (Palma & Luca, 1982). In Great Britain, arts expenditures of the central government in 1981-82 came to 0.25 percent of the total public expenditure, rising to 0.7 percent when including the local government (Ridley, 1987); and in the Netherlands, expenditures of the Arts Section of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Sciences in 1975 were 0.22 percent of the total central government expenditure (Fenger, 1987).

Israel, as one can see, demonstrates one of the lowest percentage of government expenditure for culture of all European countries.

Not surprisingly, this low share of the government in cultural activities found its expression in the Israeli parliament as well. Thus, during a 1964 discussion in the Knesset, dealing with the planned cuts in the government's subsidy to the Israeli Philharmonic, MK Mikunis said:

"The issue we are dealing with is symptomatic to the unbearable attitude of the government towards cultural activities it would be enough if we mention that the entire government subsidy to culture, science and art for 1964/65 is 0.5 percent of the Ministry of Education and Culture's budget This small subsidy means indifference and disrespect on behalf of the government towards artistic work in general, and that of the Philharmonic in particular".

Referring to the 1976 budget during his annual address of the Knesset, the Minister of Education and Culture himself said in March of that year:

"Imagine what it would be like if we had a separate Ministry for Culture whose entire budget was only 100 Millions LI....".

Another, rather ironic, reference to this budget was made at the assembly three months later, when MK Aloni asked the same Minister of Education and Culture:

"Since the share for culture is only 2 percent of your Ministry's budget, and even this sum is about to be decreased significantly, why won't you obliterate the word 'culture' in the name of your Ministry in order to avoid pretentiousness and misleading?"

In the mid 1980s, the portion of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture that was devoted to culture slipped back to around 2 percent of its budget, or 0.16 percent of the total government budget. Referring to this figure during his June 1986 address of the assembly, the Minister of Education and Culture said:

"He who examines the culture budget must reach some very sad conclusions. From 20 Millions Dollars just a few years ago - a rather modest sum - this budget decreased to 14 Millions Dollars ... This figure is not even close to our pretensions and desires to see in Israel a society with a significant cultural life...".

Six month later, in December 1986, it was MK Harel who referred to this low share of the government in cultural affairs, saying during a discussion at the assembly about the Broadcasting Authority Orchestra:

"I am terrified by the scornful attitude towards artistic and cultural institutions that is being established in the Israeli society. It is hard to believe that in a civilized country, the budget for cultural activities is so tiny".

In 1988, the small amount of money spend by the government for culture was raised once again in the Knesset, this time by MK Virshuvski who said:

"The entire sum devoted to culture in the government budget is 82.000.000 Shekels, which is 3.6% of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture ... which is 0.16% of the total government budget We pretend to be a cultured nation, as other Western countries, it is inconceivable that the state of Israel, that has such a huge budget, will devote such a miserable sum to culture. I call this House to condemn the government, and maybe even ourselves, for devoting so little money to something that we are so proud of. I think it is very severe. we will not be able to establish a culture for a long time with such miserable support of the government".

5) The Public Council for Culture and Art

But the budget, one could argue correctly, does not always tell the entire story. In the United States, for example, "despite the Arts Endowment's tiny budget the NEA Chairman has strong symbolic powers and represents a vocal constituency" (Mulcahy, 1982b:324). Nothing like this could be said about the Israeli Public Council for Culture and Art. For all these years, the head of this Council has remained largely anonymous to people outside the arts world, and his political power or constituency was never strong or vocal. In fact it is doubtful if many people outside the arts world in Israel even know that such a Council even exists.

Knowing the attitude and the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Culture all these years, this political weakness of the Council should not be surprising. The fact that the Council is so strongly tied to the Ministry of Education and Culture (with the Minister of Education and Culture serving as its Chairman, and the Head of the Culture Administration of the Ministry serving as its Executive Director) has helped to prevent this Council from gaining the political power of similar institutions in other countries of the world, most notably the American NEA and the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Referring to this question in a newspaper interview before leaving his position as Head of the Culture Administration and Executive Director of the Public Council for Culture and Art, Avner Shalev said: "I failed in trying to make the field of arts and culture a strong political constituency ... only a political person could rise and say that the arts are his first priority" (Ha'aretz, Dec, 25.1992). And that, as we have seen, no political person has ever done in Israel.

Conclusion

"American governments", writes Milton Cummings in his article 'Government and the arts: An Overview', "have played an important role in the remarkably flowering of the arts that has occurred in the United States over the last generation"

(1991:77). Sadly enough, the same cannot be said about Israeli governments. If cultural life in Israel is flowering after all these years (and indeed it is), it is despite the government's attitude towards culture and not because of it.

**B) POLITICAL INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE ARTS AT THE
LEGISLATIVE LEVEL**

Things did not look any different at the legislative level of government in Israel, where concern for the arts was never deeper, and were often shallower, than at the executive level. As the following pages will reveal, rarely has the Israeli Knesset seriously discussed the issue of culture. Not one single report about the state of the arts was submitted to the assembly. There are numerous pressure groups and lobbies working at the Knesset, trying to promote many important and unimportant issues; none of these groups being concerned with the arts. In other words, there was never an 'arts caucus' (or 'anti-arts caucus' for that matter) in the Israeli Knesset, as is the case in many other countries. With some very few exceptions, no Knesset member will, or should, be remembered as an arts advocate, or an arts opponent for that matter. And above all, very few arts-related laws were initiated or enacted by the legislative body of Israel in its forty five years of existence. Important as they are, the landmark cases brought in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, were the exceptions that point to the rule.

1) The Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture

Structurally speaking, culture at the legislative level is facing the same problem as faced at the executive level; it is always being bound together with education. Thus, the House Committee which deals with cultural and artistic matters is a combined Committee for Education and Culture. According to a 1949 Knesset decision, House Committees -- where the most important parliamentary work is done -- will not be set up according to government ministries, but rather by subject matter. Yet, for one reason or another, the Knesset decided that arts and culture will be handled by the same committee as education, determining by this decision the priority given to these issues at the legislative level. Moreover, within the Committee, there are several permanent Sub-Committees, dealing with various issues such as sports, youth, and others. No sub-committee was set up for culture.

According to the Committee's charter, "the Committee for Education and Culture is responsible, among other things, for questions of education, culture, science, art, broadcasting, films, and physical culture". Having so many issues of responsibility, it is not surprising that the Committee devoted relatively little attention to culture. According to Dana Feller, the Committee's secretary from 1974 to 1991, the Committee was always preoccupied with educational matters, devoting relatively little attention to other issues, such as

culture (Personal interview, Oct. 27, 1992). Most of the Committee's discussions, tours, and guests, Feller continued, were related to education, and very few of them to arts and culture.

Indeed, a 1970 report presented to the Speaker of the House by the Chairman of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture strongly affirms what Feller has said. Out of 33 sessions held by the Committee that year, not one **single session** was devoted to cultural issues; among the dozens of guests invited to testify in front of the Committee that year, **no one** was an artistic or cultural figure; and out of 6 tours conducted by the committee that year, **only one** was to Israel's National Museum in Jerusalem, thus it could be regarded as related to the arts more than to education.

Previous or future reports of the Committee did not reveal more interest in the arts on behalf of the Committee. Reflecting on this issue during the first ever discussion about arts policy to be held by the assembly, MK Namir, the Chairwoman of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture said in November 1975:

"It is unfortunate that in the work of both the Committee for Education and Culture and the assembly, we devote most of our time and attention to more actual issues I thought I am being misled by my memory when I recall only two sessions, that is in two years of the Committee's work, were devoted to cultural matters. I looked it up in the protocols, only two sessions..."!

2) Discussing Culture at the Knesset's Assembly

Things did not look better at the Knesset's assembly, where the issue of culture was hardly ever discussed seriously. Indeed, in more than forty five years of legislative work, as revealed by the archives, the assembly held very few -- three to be exact -- discussions about cultural policy in Israel, and only in one of them was the issue of culture discussed seriously before it was transferred to the Committee for Education and Culture for further discussion. In the other two, the issue was transferred to the Committee **without any discussion**. Even in the United States, where there is a strong philosophical tradition against government intervention in the arts, the issue of culture was constantly on the agenda of the Congress (Larson, 1983; Cornwell, 1985; Wyszomirski, 1988), as it was on that of the British Parliament (Harris, 1978). But rarely on that of the Israeli Knesset.

Indeed, the history of discussing the issue of culture by the Knesset's assembly is very interesting and could enlighten the reader's eyes as to the priority and the importance given to this issue by the Israeli political system.

Thus, during its first ten or fifteen years of existence, culture was simply a non-issue for the Knesset's assembly. Not only did the assembly not hold any comprehensive discussion about culture or cultural policy during these years, but also

very few specific comments, statements and questions about cultural matters were heard there during these years.

In the mid 1960s, however, the assembly finally acknowledged the need to discuss these issues seriously, although it took ten more years before such a discussion actually took place.

Accordingly, in March 1963, the Knesset's assembly heard the Minister of Education and Culture at that time announcing:

"After consulting the Chairman of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture, I suggested this week that the assembly will conduct a special discussion about the state of the arts and culture in our country. I do not think that we should be satisfied with the brief comments made here every year in a discussion that is primarily an educational one".

Coincidentally or not, three months later a new government was formed, with a new Minister for Education and Culture, but the discussion about culture never took place.

The following year, a similar promise was made by the new Minister of Education and Culture, saying during his 1964 annual address of the assembly:

"There will be no section about cultural activities in my speech today ... I accepted the advice of the Chairman of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture, according to which a special comprehensive discussion about cultural question will be held at the assembly in a few months".

But no such discussion took place in the next few months. Not even in the next few years. Referring to this issue only one year later, during the 1965 discussion about the Ministry of Education and Culture, MK Raziell-Naor said:

"In opening my speech, I would like to express my regret that the promise to conduct a special discussion about the state of the culture in our country was not fulfilled. It is impossible to unnoticeably include these things in a discussion about educational problems from kindergarten to university, and every year to postpone the discussion about culture and never get to it Due to impatience and hard work we forget that the Ministry whose budget we discuss today is called the Ministry of Education and Culture. Maybe it is time for us to devote a special discussion to the Department of Culture [in this Ministry]".

Three years later, in June 1968, the issue is once again on the assembly's agenda, this time in a speech delivered by MK Cohen:

"... Just a few words about an issue that, due to lack of time, we never discuss enough, that is the issue of culture. It is about time that we devote a special discussion to this issue".

It was only in January 1972 that the assembly finally found the time to hold its first ever discussion about culture, entitling it 'Culture in Israel'. But as its title tells, it was a very general and unsatisfying discussion, with very few Knesset members attending the discussion, and its only importance lies in the words of the Minister of Education and Culture in opening this discussion:

"... We must congratulate the Knesset for deciding to discuss an issue that, if I am not mistaken, was

never discussed here before, unless coincidentally and partially - the questions of culture in the Israeli society. If one was to assess the state of our culture by the attention given to this issue in the Knesset's discussions, it is certainly not a gladdening one. It may not be a measure, but it is certainly a symptom".

In November 1975, the assembly was once again discussing the issue of culture, this time under the title 'Priorities and Policy in the Cultural Activities'. The discussion, however, was nothing one would expect after such a long plea. After a short presentation by the Chairman of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture, pointing out the importance of the issue in question and suggesting that the assembly will discuss this issue seriously, the Minister of Education and Culture took the stage and said:

"I have certainly waited a long time for the assembly to discuss issues of arts and culture. Nevertheless, I suggest that we consider if it will not be better, in order to get into details details, to transfer the issue to the Committee for Education and Culture".

Not surprisingly, none of the Knesset members attending the discussion objected to the Minister's suggestion; not even the Chairman of the Committee for Education and Culture who suggested to discuss the issue in the assembly.

But the discussion at the Committee did not change much in the Knesset's attitude towards the arts; it did not lead to new legislation in the field of arts, nor open the door to more discussions in the future. As a matter of fact, it took

the assembly seven more years before it held its next, and last, discussion about culture in March 1982.

In fact, the 1982 discussion, titled once again 'Culture in Israel', was conducted following the request of one Knesset member that argued that nothing had happened in the Knesset in this regard since the 1975 discussion. Opening the discussion was MK Raiser, the Chairman of the Knesset Committee for Education and Culture, who said:

"It is about time to deal with the problem of culture in Israel, further ignoring of the Knesset and the government from whatever happens in our world of culture will necessarily lead to the creation of several sub-cultures. We must unite ourselves around a few basic principals and come up with an operative plan".

As familiar as this plea should sound by now, the routine that followed this speech was rather different this time. Unlike in the past, when, due to the importance of the issue, the Minister of Education and Culture himself responded to such a call, this time he sent his Deputy to appear in front of the assembly, suggesting, in a very short speech, to transfer the issue to the Committee of Education and Culture. Once again, the Israeli Knesset missed an opportunity to seriously discuss the issue of culture.

3) Annual Addresses of The Assembly by The Ministers of Education and Culture

The annual addresses of the Ministers of Education and Culture at the assembly, as we have already seen, were another opportunity for the assembly to discuss the issue of culture seriously. But here too, virtually all the speeches and discussions that followed them were devoted to educational goals and objectives, with very few providing any more than lip-service to arts and culture.

Thus, presenting his Ministry's budget for fiscal year 1958, the Minister of Education and Culture said at the assembly in March 1957:

"There are three fields of expenses in this budget: 91.6 percent for education, 3 percent for the activities of the Culture Department, and 5.4 percent for administration".

Not surprisingly, the same ratio was kept in the Minister's speech, with its largest part being devoted to education and only few sentences devoted to culture.

Two years later, at the end of his 1959 speech (always at the end), the Minister of Education and Culture paid his annual lip-service to culture by saying: "The Ministry of Education and Culture, whose main concern is education . . . also does a lot to encourage and increase the cultural activity in our country". Nevertheless, two or three more

sentences about this increased cultural activity ended the Minister's speech that year.

Things did not look any better in the discussion that followed this, or future, speeches of the Ministers of Education and Culture, during which very few Knesset members - if any - referred to questions of culture. Thus, following the 1962 address of the assembly by the Minister of Education and Culture, only one Knesset member - out of 18 registered to talk - referred to the issue of culture.

The year 1967 was no different in this regard. Out of 30 objectives presented by the Minister of Education and Culture to be achieved by his Ministry in the following year, only one (and, again, the last in the list) was related to culture.

Two years later, in 1969, out of 7000 words of the Minister of Education and Culture's speech that year (27 pages!), not one single word was devoted to culture. Similar disregard of the issue of culture was demonstrated by the Minister in the speeches of 1972, 1974, 1975, 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1987.

In 1970, however, the assembly heard the Minister of Education and Culture saying:

"... Among other things, our ministry is also responsible, according to its name and the authority given to it -- if not always according to the amount of its activity -- to the field of arts and culture.

Naturally, the education system takes most of the Ministry's attention....".

Seeing things this way, it is not surprising that about 95 percent of the Minister's speech was devoted to education with only 5 percent devoted to culture. Referring to this speech of the Minister of Education and Culture one year later, MK Grossman said at the assembly in March 1971:

"... We can assume that it is not a coincidence that all the discussions about the Ministry of Education and Culture were devoted mostly to problems of education with cultural question being left behind. In your speech last year, Mister Minister, you devoted only a page and a half to questions of culture and art, that is out of a very wide and inclusive booklet about the activity of your ministry"

In July 1982, The Minister of Education and **Culture** opened his annual address of the assembly by saying: "Members of the Knesset, I came here to talk about the **education** system, about its objectives and its future, because this is the heart of the matter....". Having said this, the Minister of Education and Culture fulfilled his promised and did not say a single word about the cultural system.

The 1986 address of the assembly by the Minister of Education and Culture was somewhat different. This time, the Minister at least said a few words, however insignificant, about the cultural branch of his Ministry: "Our ministry is called The Ministry of Education and Culture, thus I should devote at least a few sentences to the issue of culture...".

In his 1988 address of the assembly the Minister of Education and **Culture** opened his speech by saying: "First of all, the Knesset and the government must determine the priority of **education** on our national agenda". The priority of culture, as we have seen throughout this section, was already determined by the Ministers of Education and Culture themselves.

4) Petitions to The Minister

The most popular way for Knesset members to support or interfere with cultural issues, as we have already seen, is through the institution of 'Petitions to the Minister'. But these too, must be put into perspective as far as the total number of petitions submitted in the Knesset. A close review of the many thousands of petitions submitted in the Knesset in its forty-five years of existence reveals that culture-related petitions constituted only a small portion of the total number (See Table 1 below). Most of these were submitted in the late 1970s and early 1980s when one or two Knesset members, then serving as Chairmen of the Knesset's Committee for Education and Culture, submitted 70 to 80 percent of the total number of petitions regarding cultural matters. This trend ended, however, in the mid 1980s, when these Knesset members no longer served as chairmen of this Committee.

Table 1

Culture- Related Petitions to Ministers (1949-84)

Knesset Term	Number of total Petitions ¹	Number of Culture-Related Petitions
1949-51	998	2
1951-55	653	8
1955-59	1786	14
1959-61	998	14
1961-65	2529	12
1965-69	7898	43
1969-73	6007	38
1974-77	6939	46
1977-81	7127	118
1981-84	3631	40
1984-88	-	37
1988-92	-	56

CONCLUSION

It was at the end of his annual address of the assembly in July 1989 that the Minister of Education and Culture said: "allow me to end my speech with a few comments about culture in Israel". Indeed, as we have seen throughout this section, no more than a few comments is all the Israeli Knesset ever devoted to the arts and culture in 45 years of legislative work.

Perhaps the best conclusion for this attitude of the Knesset towards the country's arts and culture was brought out in a newspaper interview with Shlomo Bar-Shavit, one of

¹ taken from Sager, S., (1985), The Parliamentary System of Israel, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Israel's most prominent actors, explaining why he decided to run for the Knesset in the 1992 elections: "I did it only to promote the issue of culture in the Knesset. Look at the list of candidates, not one single writer, not one single poet, no artists, no actors. It is important that one of us be there to promote these issues" (La'isha, Oct. 26., 1992). Needless to say that this first ever attempt to run for the Knesset on a cultural basis failed at a very early stage.

C) POLITICAL INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS THE ARTS IN ISRAEL'S POLITICAL PARTIES

Another facet of the political system where indifference towards the country's arts and culture is strongly evident is in the platforms of the major political parties which consistently, over the years, have not commented, or have made only the most general comments, regarding the issue of culture.

Political parties in Israel, one must notice, are the main component of the political system, playing a much more important role there than in any other country. In his famous article about 'The Role of Parties in Israeli Democracy', Benjamin Akzin, one of Israel's most prominent Political Scientist writes:

"When comparing the part played by the parties in Israel with the part played by them in other

countries, it will be found that they occupy in Israel a place more prominent and exercise an influence more pervasive than in any other state ... No one who wants to understand political life in Israel can afford to ignore that country's parties, representing as they do the single most influential political institution" (1955:509).

In a more recent account about Israeli politics, Herzog et al write: "Even today, the Israeli political system can be characterized as a system in which parties occupy a central place and are more important than in other Western democracies ... It is in the parties where candidates and platforms are determined ... (thus) the parties play an important role in setting the public agenda..." (1989:1).

Indeed, party platforms can play an important role in putting the issue of culture on the public agenda (Cornwell, 1985). Especially in Israel, where an average of 21 parties took part in each election from 1949 to 1984 (Sager, 1985), each with its own agenda and priorities, manifested in its own formal platform. As in the 'basic lines' of all Israeli governments (see above), party platforms in Israel accommodate a wide range of issues from national security and foreign affairs to education, economy, agriculture, housing, transportation, religion and environment. **Very rarely** has the issue of arts and culture appeared on these platforms, and maybe more important, it has never been an issue in itself; it was always bound up with education.

1) The Labor Party

The first time that 'culture' appeared as an issue on a political platform in Israel was in 1959, in the platform of the Workers Party of Eretz Israel (later, the Labor Party), Israel's leading political party for its first thirty years. As in other branches of the political system, here too, it was bound in the same chapter with education, with only one short statement referring to cultural issues: "A government headed by the Workers Party of Eretz Israel will increase its efforts to establish a fund for culture, literature, and the arts, and to attract prominent Jewish schoolers, scientists, authors, and artists to Israel".

Ever since that year, arts and culture have appeared continuously in the platforms of the Israeli Labor Party, but always in the same chapter with education (and sometimes with youth and sports as well), and always in no more than one or two very general, unsatisfying statements.

The 1977 platform, however, was different: not because the issue of culture was somewhat broadened or received more attention than in the past, but rather because it did not appear in that year's platform at all.

Four years later, in 1981, out of 96 pages of party platforms issued by the Labor Party towards that year's

election, only one third of a page was devoted to arts and culture, appearing as the last section of a chapter entitled 'Education and Youth'. As in the past, the section included three or four short and very general statements about fostering the country's arts and culture, the kind of statements one could find in most parties' platforms that year.

More or less similar attention (or should one say inattention) was given by the Labor Party to the arts and culture in the platforms of 1984, 1988, and 1992.

2) The Likud

The second major political party in Israel -- The Likud -- did not demonstrate more interest in the field of arts and culture, and often demonstrated even less than their counterparts in the Labor Party. Appearing in the Likud's platform for the first time as late as 1977, arts and culture were certainly a non-issue for the this party in most of its election campaigns. When appearing, it was always as the last section of a chapter about "Education and Culture", and included three or four short and very general sub-sections, opening with the following statement: "Fostering culture is an unseparated part of education in its most comprehensive view. It is a continuous process of elevating the human level in the Israeli society".

With the exception of the 1981 platform (which did not include even one single word about arts and culture), the very same sub-sections appeared in the Likud's platforms in 1984, 1988, and 1992.

3) Meretz

The third largest party in Israel today is Meretz, a coalition of three left-wing parties, created just before the 1992 elections. Given its reputation and the people that make up this party, it was expected that Meretz would pay much more attention and would demonstrate more interests than other parties to the issue of arts and culture. But they certainly did not. In its platform, Meretz also grouped the issue of arts and culture with education and sports, devoting an extremely short and very general section to these issues. Similar to other parties' platforms, this section was opened with the following general statement: "One of the main goals of education is the cultural production of the Israeli society. Cultural and artistic institutions, theater, authors, poets and artists, are the ones who give expression to the strength of the national-cultural production". Three or four more general statements concluded this section about arts and culture in that years' Meretz platform.

Interestingly enough, the section that follows this half a page, is a page and a half section about sports, opening with

a demand to separate sports from politics. Needless to say that such a demand was not made in regard to arts and culture.

CONCLUSION

"Whether platform statements help to assure that various policies are implemented", writes Cornwell in her article about party platforms in the United States, "or whether the statements merely reflect policies that are well on their way to fulfillment is difficult to determine. In any case, having a plank devoted to its particular interests is extremely important for any advocacy group, and over the past two decades the arts have won this recognition" (1985:260).

Regretfully, the same could not be said about political parties in Israel. What began as an absolute ignoring of the issue of culture by the three major political parties in Israel, turned out to be no more than a lip service paid to this issue in the form of very general statements. Playing such an important role in setting the public agenda in Israel as they do, there is no doubt that the major political parties in Israel should be blamed, at least partially, for the absence of the issue of culture from the Israeli political agenda. Not only did they not help the arts win the recognition they deserve, they surely contributed to the arts' marginal status on the Israeli political agenda.

Perhaps the best summary of the entire attitude of the Israeli political system toward the country's arts and culture was brought by Meir Vizeltir, one of Israel's most prominent poets, who wrote:

"The main tools of this approach are basic, more or less permanent, attitude of general neglect, red-tape, indifference and drowsiness on behalf of the government, the Knesset, and other institutions (the Histadrut, the municipalities) towards the cultural institutions that depend on them and towards small and big cultural questions that require thinking and solutions" (1992:15).

Indeed, as we have seen throughout this chapter, very little thinking was devoted to questions of culture for all these years in the Israeli political system.

CHAPTER 7 - CULTURAL POLICY AND POLITICAL CULTURE

How can all of the aforementioned findings be explained ?
How can these three very different aspects of government involvement in the arts -- support, interference, and indifference -- co-exist in one single political system ?

A political system, writes Arian,

"must be understood in terms of the people who under it, their values, their ideals, the resources at their disposal, the challenges that face the the system, and the institutions to meet these challenges" (1985:1)

More specifically, about cultural policy, Ridely writes:

"To understand the cultural politics of a country, one must first understand its political culture. State policies towards the arts are shaped by wider beliefs about how government ought to be conducted and what it should try to do" (1987:225).

Stated differently:

"Art patronage is not an isolated phenomenon; it is conditioned in every phase of its growth by the state of general culture Political, economic, and psychological factors have contributed directly to the development of European art life in all of its diversity. Research in the arts and humanities - even when restricted to so specialized a field as art patronage - must recognize the inter-relationship of these components" (Dorian, 1964:7-9).

Finally, as far as Israel's cultural policy is concerned:

"cultural policy and activity in Israel must be considered in relation to the social structure and the values that characterize the society" (Katz and Gurevitch, 1973:28)

Based on all these arguments, the purpose of this chapter will be to explore the social structure of the Israeli political system, as well as the political culture that characterizes the Israeli society, especially those aspects of the structure and those aspects of the political culture that contributed directly to the shape of Israel's cultural policy. It should be noted, however, that the decision to separate the discussion about structure from the discussion about the political culture is merely for analytical purposes. In reality, as it was already emphasized in the introduction to this dissertation, these are two facets of the same society with highly reciprocal relationships between them.

Moreover, I already emphasized that in casting a cultural policy, the state is not a passive entity. It has its own interests and motivations pursued "both by supporting what it approves and by discouraging or forbidding what it disapproves" (Becker, 1982:167). It is these interests and motivations of the State of Israel that this chapter will also try to explore in order to fully understand Israel's cultural policy.

A) THE STRUCTURE OF THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SYSTEM

The first and most fundamental characteristic of government involvement in the arts in Israel, as it was described above, is the highly centralized structure within which this

involvement takes place. This structure, one should notice, is not typical only of the field of arts and culture; it is part of a much wider centralized structure according to which the Israeli government is highly involved (by owning, running, supporting, regulating, and controlling), not only with the country's arts and culture, but also with almost every other area of everyday life. A somewhat similar structure of government involvement exists in Israel in the field of economics (Aharoni, 1992); in the field of science and academia (Eisenstadt, 1967); in the field sports (Eisenstadt, 1989); and in the field of electronic media (Caspi and Limor, 1992).

Trying to explain the institutionalization of this kind of structure in Israel, Eisenstadt writes:

"Several basic attitudes towards the state emerged in the institutionalization of the new political framework and process in Israel. The first of these was the conception of the state as bearer of the major collective future and the investment of the state and its active organs (especially the government) with the task of fulfilling these goals When transformed into the new framework of the state ... these tendencies had many implications on the constitutional level ... and they were, in turn, greatly reinforced by a tendency to bureaucratization and administrative centralization" (1967:362-3).

In other words, the structure of the Israeli political system may be attributed both to the strong socialist-collectivist background of the founding fathers of the Israeli society (to be discussed below), as well as to the unique

circumstances upon which this society was established.

Referring specifically to the structure of government involvement in the field of culture in Israel, MK Sarid said during a 1974 kneset discussion about the Ministry of Education and Culture:

"The first twenty six years that the State of Israel exists so far, have been twenty six years of increasing government patronage in every aspect and activity of the Israeli society. There is no place, issue, problem, or enterprise, that the central government does not leave its signature on. This is one of the most centralistic systems in the world when compared to other western democracies".

One of the most noticeable similarities in this regard is between the sphere of economics and the sphere of arts and culture:

"The regime that was created in Israel is one that maintains full control over the economy through a system of support, reliefs, bonuses, and subsidies on the one hand, and taxes, surveillance, restrictions, regulations, and governmental instructions on the other hand (Aharoni, 1992:139).

One has only to replace the word 'economy' in the above paragraph with the words 'arts and culture', in order to have the best summary for the four previous chapters of this dissertation, where government involvement in the arts was described.

The result, artists and artistic institutions in Israel depend almost entirely on the government; not only for their

financial survival but also for every other aspect of their work and activity.

B) ISRAEL'S POLITICAL ELITE

Related directly to the structure of the Israeli political system is the elite group that headed this system from the early days of the Yishuv and through the first thirty years of statehood.

"Arts patronage," write Balfe and Wyszomirski, "has so often been dominated by elites" (1985:4). In the United States, for example, the dominant elite was always the economic one, and so is the nature of arts patronage. The US government is hardly involved with the arts, leaving it, for the most part, to the mercies of the economic marketplace (Dimaggio, 1986). In Israel, on the other hand, the dominant elite was always political (Arian, 1985; Shapiro, 1984), thus arts patronage, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, is also political in its nature.

Moreover, according to Shapiro, an essential condition for a true democratic regime is the existence of a counter-elite that competes for power with the ruling elite (1977:119-120). In the lack of such counter-elite, he argues, the responsiveness of the ruling elite decreases significantly, resulting in a high degree of indifference. As we have seen

throughout this dissertation, and mostly in chapter 6, this poor responsiveness of the ruling elite was indeed manifested in the field of arts as well.

But as noted earlier in this dissertation, there is much more to arts patronage than its structure or the elite that exercises this patronage. Thus, the wider political culture within which this patronage takes place has to be explored if one is to fully understand the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts.

C) THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF ISRAEL

Israel's political culture, writes Arian, "demonstrates a fascinating mix of ideology and pragmatism" (1985:8). On the ideological level, it derives, first and foremost, from the Jewish religion and from the history and tradition of the Jewish people. It is further derives from the ideology of modern Zionism, and from the three important nineteenth century secular ideologies: Liberalism, Socialism, and Nationalism (Eisenstadt, 1989; Etzioni-Halevi, 1975; Galnoor, 1985; Liebman and Don- Yehiya, 1983; Shapiro, 1977). To these, one should add some more circumstantial influences on Israel's political culture, including the state of war in which the Israeli society has been living since its very first days (Barzilai, 1992; Lissak and Horowitz, 1990), the huge number of immigrants it has absorbed, along with the Melting Pot

ideology adopted by the state in carrying out this absorption process (Eisenstadt, 1967, 1989), and the country's colonial past which left its mark on many of the forming structures of the young State of Israel (Lissak and Horowitz, 1977). Many of these structures became part of Israeli political culture for many years, with the Board for Films and Theater Review being a most typical example.

1) The Ethos of a Jewish State

One of the most important components of Israel's political culture, and consequently of Israel's cultural policy, is the commitment to Jewish values and the desire to see Israel not only as a Jewish State but also the State of the Jewish people. This commitment to Jewish continuity, therefore, is not only a commitment to the Jewish religion, but also to the social and cultural history of the Jewish people. It is the concept of a nation-state that merges with the concept of a religious state, creating a unique problem for the definition of the collective identity of the state of Israel.

Thus, according to historian Jacob Katz,

"The question of the Jewishness of the Israeli society cannot be reduced merely to the religious aspect The boundaries between national identification symbols and the religious ones are rather vague. The national identification symbols, as well as other all-Jewish solidarity symbols of the Israeli society, are based, in the last instance, on symbols of the religious tradition . . . Although the Israeli society had gone quite far, in its everyday life, from the traditional

Jewish society, it had certainly not disconnected itself from its influence" (1979:93-5).

It is this ideological link between the Jewish religion and Jewish nationality, Katz concludes, that enables religion to play such an important role in the Israeli political culture, although most of the society's members are not religious.

There is no doubt, in my opinion, that the Jewish context of nation-building that has worked so well in other areas of the Israeli society (Eisenstadt, 1967; Shapiro, 1977) has also worked in the field of arts and culture. Not only that the cultural activity itself was perceived in Israel for many years "as taking place under the aegis of the overall vision of national-cultural renaissance" (Eisenstadt, 1989:296), but also the government's involvement in the field of art must be regarded as part of the nation building process. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, and primarily in our discussion of government interference in the arts, the government of Israel was always highly sensitive thus tried to regulate works of arts that "subvert" the Jewish national dream.

As put by the ministry of Education and Culture itself:

"The status of culture in Israel also stems directly from the status of culture among the Jewish populations in western countries since the period in the nineteenth century known as the Enlightenment.

The Jewish tradition of rich spiritual life is reflected in Israel in the continual promotion and subsidizing of individual artists and cultural institutions by the national government. Since the beginning of the renewed Jewish settlement in Palestine at the turn of the century, society has subsidized cultural institutions while demanding that artists contribute to achieving national and collective goals" (1993:1).

But the Jewishness of the Israeli society is even more pervasive. To the strong influence of Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism, one should also add the Holocaust, which left a tremendous mark on Israel's political culture and, consequently, as we have seen, on the content of government involvement in the arts.

It should be mentioned also that at some point in the short history of the Israeli society, it seemed to many people that the influences of the religious and national ethoi, as well as that of the Holocaust, were being somewhat diminished in Israeli political culture, or were at least being replaced by more Israeli-secular ones (Deshen, 1978; Liebman and Don-Yehiya, 1983). But then came the 'political earthquake' of 1977, bringing the revisionist-nationalistic Likud party to power (and the National Religious Party, as a coalition partner, to the Ministry of Education and Culture), and reinstitutionalizing the Jewish ethos of the State of Israel (Eisenstadt, 1989).

2) The Socialist-Collectivist Ethos

As quoted earlier from a publication of the Ministry of Education and Culture itself, society in Israel has always "demanded cultural institutions ... [and] artists to contribute to achieving national and collective goals" (1993:1). These collective goals, however, were inherited not only from the Jewish religion and/or from Jewish nationalism. They were also influenced by the strong socialist-collectivist ideology brought into the country by the founding fathers of the State of Israel.

Being founded by people with a strong Russian background of appreciation and commitment to support culture, government involvement in the arts in Israel was always part of the prevailing Zionist-socialist ideology of the Israeli society (Cordova and Herzog, 1978). Although the founding fathers of the Israeli society were not intellectuals in the conventional sense of the word, they certainly understood the value of culture and cultural activity.

Thus, Zionist Socialism, or Constructive Socialism as it was sometimes called, was quite different from the socialism developed in Europe after the first World War. It was an attempt to combine class interests with national interests, thus it touched not only the sphere of economics but every other aspect of everyday life (Shapiro, 1977). Behind the

notion of constructive socialism, Shapiro writes, "stands a much more basic ideological notion, that of collectivism" (ibid:27). Indeed, it is the same notion that, as opposed to individualism, puts society, or the state in our case, at the center of any human and social activity.

Moreover,

"the institutionalization of the collectivist principal as a core belief of the Israel's political culture was not only a result of the success of the Zionist-Socialist Workers Movement, but also of the fact that collectivism is one of the basic ideas of Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism" (ibid:29).

Thus, it is the combination of three very strong ethoi -- religion, nationalism and socialism -- that blend together here into one single political culture.

Discussing the influence of this collectivist principal on the sphere of arts and culture, Eisenstadt writes:

"The one important factor of inflexibility in the cultural sphere was the strong totalistic movement element, which saw all cultural creativity as an integral part of the national or social effort ... It had several important repercussions in the institutional sphere, where various attempts were made to impose ideological inference on the organization of cultural life ... Identification with the state was expected from literary and scientific creation, vesting the government with the right to guide the development of scientific and literary activities. Though by no means predominant, these varied totalistic orientations and their institutional implications could not be ignored Under propitious circumstances, and taken together with the various attempts to establish the supremacy of the state in other spheres as well they might easily become of

great importance in directing the development of Israeli cultural life" (ibid:370-876).

Thus, it is the socialist-collectivist ethos that shaped the very unique nature of government involvement in the arts in Israel: on the one hand, high commitment to support the arts; on the other hand, a continuous demand from artists to adhere to collective national goals.

Can this situation be define as Cultural Bolshevism ?

Historically speaking, Shapiro writes,

"The leaders of the Labor movement had certainly sympathized with the Russian Bolshevists They were very impressed by the way theses Bolshevists took over the Soviet Union... The political culture they brought from Russia had guided their efforts to establish in Israel a political organization that would control the entire economy, and consequently, other systems (1975:202).

A somewhat similar argument is raised by Cordova and Herzog:

"The Labor leaders were most profoundly influenced by the cultural policy of the Russian Communist Party. They certainly knew the arguments about 'proletkult'. Many key ideas therefrom have had their parallels in their own debates over cultural issues In line with the tradition of Russian revolutionary literary criticism, they were conscious of the political implications of literature" (1978:244).

In the early 1950s, however, this Socialists-Bolshevist ideology was officially replaced by a less totalistic ideology, known as Nationalistic Statism (Mamlachtiut). The idea behind this ideology was that "services required by all

citizens must be provided by the state", and that "national interest must prevail over party interests" (Arian, 1985:226).

Yet the highly centralized structure of government involvement in the arts, as it was described above, and the continuous demand from artists to adhere to collective goals which, to a large degree, still exist in Israel, are certainly core organizational principals of the Bolshevik notion.

Trying to explain this contradiction in Israel's cultural policy, Katz and Gurevitch write:

"This is not quite the cultural dictatorship of an authoritarian regime whose elite is fully prepared to dictate the rules for both artists and audience; it is, rather, a mix of freedom and paternalism, centralism and individual initiative, tradition and modernization" (1973:271).

"The process of nationalization of services in Israel," writes Arian, "is a long and incomplete story Four areas indicate the complexities: defense, education, employment, and health services" (ibid). There is no doubt, in my opinion, given everything that was described above, that arts and culture represent yet another area in which this process was never completed.

Perhaps the best evidence for the strong influence of the Jewish and collectivist ideologies on Israel's cultural policy can be found in the fact that when the Liberal Likud party

came to power in 1977, not only did they not try to eliminate the highly centralized structure of government intervention in the arts, as they have always promised, but they even intensified their interference in this field in the name of national and other collective goals.

Moreover, the influence of these Jewish and socialist ethoi on Israel's cultural policy is also reflected in the different degree of involvement demonstrated by the government in various field of the arts. Thus, theater, for example, which has always been part of Jewish cultural life but is also an art which can easily express ideas, gets the largest part of the government's financial support in Israel, and at the same time is subjected to the highest degree of interference. Conversely, music, dance, and the creative arts, which were never part of Jewish cultural life, and can hardly be used to convey ideas or to subvert the government, get very little government support and are rarely the subject of any government interference.

3) **The Democratic Ethos**

Surprisingly, given the nature of the above three ethoi, the Israeli political culture has also been influenced by traditional Liberalism ideology. Thus, democracy was always an important part of the prevailing political culture of the Israeli society. It is even more surprising if one accepts the

common political cultures theory, which states that the political culture of immigrant societies is a reflection of the political traditions brought by these immigrants from their native lands (Hartz, 1964). In this regard, Israel is certainly an exception. Although more than 90 percent of the people who immigrated into the country in the first twenty years of statehood came from non-democratic traditions, either in Eastern Europe or in the Mediterranean area, democracy did prevail in Israel. Perhaps this is because, in their countries of origin, Jewish communities were sort of 'democratic islands' within an ocean of autocracy.

Nonetheless, the democratic ethos of the State of Israel was always somewhat limited:

"Unlike the other three core principles of the Israeli society -- nationalism, religion, and socialism -- that, to a large degree, complete and even support each other, the democratic principal creates somewhat of a disharmony in the Israeli cultural system; mainly because it does not correspond with the collectivist notion that all three share with each other"
(Shapiro, 1977:34).

Accordingly, the State of Israel did not adopt the western European version of democracy which is constituted of a formal component (which refers mainly to the election process) and a liberal one (which refers mainly to the rights of the minority and their protection). Instead, it adopted the eastern European version, which is a "formal democracy without its liberal component" (ibid:36).

Similarly, Lissak and Horowitz talk about Israel having a "restricted perception of democracy that regards political representation as its essence, while tending to downplay its other components" (1990:194). This perception, they continue, "has also taken a dim view of the autonomy of the mass media and of freedom of information" (ibid).

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the Israeli government has also taken the same dim view of cultural institutions and of freedom of arts. As a result, artistic freedom in Israel is confined by religious/nationalistic/socialist boundaries, not to mention national security constrain.

4) The Ethos of National Security

Ever since the early days of the Yishuv, and during its entire existence, Israeli society has been living under a prolonged external conflict marked by several major wars. The continuous state of war, write Lissak and Horowitz, "has resulted in the issue of national security becoming central to Israeli society and having a major impact on the values and institutions, as well on the everyday life of the people (1990:240).

Similarly, according to Arian, "there is no debate in Israel over the importance of security Maintaining a

strong defense is the overriding concern of all Israeli governments, and many policies [including the cultural one] are cast in the name of defense" (1985:7).

According to Barzilai, "It is impossible to understand Israeli politics and society without analyzing the influence of wars and states of emergency on the political system" (1991:271). "The very fact that Israel lives in a political environment which challenges its very existence," he writes in his book Democracy In A Wartime, "contributes to the fact that there are significant differences between Israel and other Western democracies" (ibid:14).

"National security in Israel is the highest political goal Security and military issues are more important to the Israeli national public agenda than civil issues such as social justice In order to guarantee social and political order, the State is using various emergency regulations, while offending basic citizen rights ... The military Jewish society of Israel is not a civil-liberal society. Thus, it tends, more than other western societies, to enable sanctions against individuals or groups that are perceived as endangering the national security"
(ibid:15-17).

Concluding his study, Barzilai writes: "The military society of Israel had designed a system of statutory norms which enables the political establishment to regulate any public information because of national-security needs" (ibid:138).

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, these national security needs have also influenced the cultural policy of the Israeli government, both in terms of what to support and where to interfere.

Moreover, it is the ethos of national security that explains, at least partially, the high degree of indifference towards the arts and culture in Israel. In trying to explain why the arts are not central to the concerns of the principal decision makers in the United States, Dick Netzer writes: "They have much more urgent and, in monetary terms, more weighty responsibilities and pressures involving large constituencies" (1978:17). And if that is true for the United States, it is certainly true for Israeli decision makers:

"The extended conflict under which the State of Israel lives had also effected the amount of resources devoted to national security. During the mid- and late 1970s and early 1980s, national security consumed between a quarter and a third of Israel's GNP..., or about half of the government's budget" (Lissak and Horowitz, 1990:240).

Together with the massive government's expenses on immigration absorption (see section below), it is not surprising that the government's share in the culture budget during all these years was so poor and insignificant.

5) The Ethos of Immigration Absorption and Cultural Integration

Yet another component of Israel's political culture that has a direct impact on Israel's cultural policy is the everlasting aspiration for immigration absorption and cultural integration. Regathering the Jewish people into the Land of Israel is the essence of modern Zionism. This gathering, in its modern version, began in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, intensified in the first four decades of the twentieth century, and reached its peak throughout the 1950s, after the establishment of the State of Israel. Within four years, between 1948 and 1952, Israel's population was more than doubled, and by the end of the decade it was more than three times bigger than it was in 1949. Later in history, these waves of immigration were somewhat slowed down, but they have never entirely stopped (Eisenstadt, 1989; Lissak and Horowitz, 1992).

"But the great demographic expansion was not only a quantitative one; it was connected with a great change in the demographic and socio - cultural composition of the immigrants This change of the demographic structure in terms of 'ethnic' origin has been often depicted as the most important single massive change which explains many of the crucial social processes in Israel"
(Eisenstadt, 1989:163).

Loyal to the prevailing melting pot ideology of the society, the first Israeli governments undertook the task of handling the absorption of these hundreds of thousands of

immigrants, as well as of the provision for development in the educational and cultural spheres. Unlike the United States, where the dominant ideology of cultural pluralism makes immigration absorption largely a personal affair, the melting pot ideology of Israel required a rather high degree of involvement on behalf of the government. As a result, immigration absorption and cultural integration in Israel were soon regarded as a premier responsibility of the government.

Accordingly, Israel's cultural policy was partly designed to bridge the cultural gap between veterans and new immigrants, and to blend disparate streams of ethnic culture into a national culture:

"Art has been regarded as an important agent in the melting process of the cultural crucible In the 1960s and 1970s, when the campaign to inculcate the language and to create a common culture was losing momentum, significant efforts were devoted to use the arts to strengthen social cohesion" (The Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993:1).

But the influence of this ethos of immigration absorption on Israel's cultural policy was not only ideological. Practically speaking, and paradoxically, it also resulted in the low priority given to the arts by the national government. Together with massive defense demands, the needs which arose from mass immigration have required the allocation of extensive resources to be used for collective tasks, thereby placing the arts very low among the government's budgetary priorities (Lissak and Horowitz, 1990; Michman 1973).

D) CONCLUSION

Cultural policy in Israel, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, was hardly determined by party lines or the party in power. The same structure of government involvement in the arts and the same trends in government involvement in the arts were maintained by the socialist Labor party and by the liberal-nationalistic Likud party. It is my conclusion, therefore, given everything that was described in this chapter, that the nature, as well as the content of government involvement in the arts in Israel is the result of the wider political culture that characterizes Israeli society, influencing the government's cultural policy regardless of the party in power. While some components of this political culture are 'responsible' for the high degree of support that the Israeli government provided to the arts, other components explain the high degrees of interference, as well as the indifference that is demonstrated by the government in the field of the arts.

In concluding our discussion about political culture and cultural policy, however, one question still remains somewhat open: Does the State of Israel really have a clear-cut cultural policy, or was everything that was described above nothing but a collection of arbitrary actions and activities taken by the government in this field ?

Not surprisingly, the answer to this question depends on who one asks. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture itself: "The status of culture in Israel may be attributed to an explicit national cultural policy" (1993:1). Joseph Michman, on the other hand, himself a former official of the Culture Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, talks about "the lack of an active cultural policy over a rather extended period of time" (1973:9).

Finally, according to Katz and Gurevitch:

"Cultural policy is rarely made explicit. As in other nations it sometimes seems that Israel is too busy - modernizing, absorbing immigrants, defending itself - to be occupied with the planning of culture and leisure [yet] there is no use evading the fact that the government is actively involved in cultural policy: it subsidizes theaters; it gives tax rebates to certain films; it designs the Independence Day celebrations; it does not concern itself with the high cost of books; it makes the public performances of Richard Strauss very difficult; and so on and so forth" (1973:41).

Whether this policy is explicit or implicit, the fact remains that in their desire to create a **democratic** society, a group of people with very strong **Jewish** and **Socialist** background have come to live in a country which **fight**s daily for its survival, yet manages to **absorb** an on-going stream of immigrants. It is out of these unique circumstances that one of the most interesting cultural policies in modern history has been created.

CHAPTER 8 - TOWARDS A MORE INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THEIR ARTS -
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

"Public discussion about government policy in the arts," write Feld et al, "is often marked by strong feelings than by rational thinking and testing" (1983:1). Thus one would expect that at least the academic discussion about this issue would be less intuitive and more thorough. But this has certainly not been the case. As suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, all too often, the academic discussion about government involvement in the arts is also somewhat biased, seeing government support of the arts as "a felicitous, if perplexing, privilege of democratic societies" (Myers, 1989:2). Cultural administrations in non-democratic societies, on the other hand, are perceived as if they are there only to regulate and deform their arts (Glaser, 1973). This biased point of view, I argued, is a result of the strong emphasis put by scholars of government involvement in the arts on the organizational structure of this involvement.

But democratic governments, history shows, do not only encourage and support their arts; they also constrain, harass and censor. When a society, even a democratic one, plays the patron, it is inclined to make demands. Non-democratic societies, on the other hand, do not differ from Western

societies in the principle of governmental subsidization of the arts; they only disagree in their definition of the role of art in society. This difference, I argued earlier in this dissertation, is deeply rooted in each society's political culture and dominant ideology.

As the journey through the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts reveals, art patronage is a living process. Focusing only on the organizational structure of government involvement in the arts, therefore, is not always sufficient for the understanding of this process. In fact, it is often misleading. Behind what seems to be a rather **supportive** organizational structure of government involvement in the art in Israel (ch. 4), there is a reality of constant government **interference** on behalf of the arts (ch.5), combined, as strange as it may sounds, with a rather high degree of government **indifference** towards the arts (ch. 6). It is a reality which, if looked for in the right places and with the right methods, can be found in each and every country in the world. Only the ratio between these three very important aspects of government involvement in the arts vary from one country to another, depending on each country's historical background and political culture (ch.7).

In other words, in studying government policies vis-a-vis the arts, it is all too tempting to focus on the

organizational structure of the relationships between governments and their arts. But this, as we have seen, does not always provide the entire picture. The inquiry into the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts makes the point that any analysis of cultural policy must be expanded to include not only the organizational structure of this involvement, but also the actual activities of the government in the field of arts, as well as the wider political culture within which these activities take place.

Moreover, the analysis of the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts enables us to conclude that, however one looks at it, culture is political. I quoted earlier in this dissertation author Thomas Mann who once said that "culture is everything that politics does not touch". Had this statement been true, this dissertation would have probably not been written, or at least would have been much shorter. But as the preceding chapters have shown, not only that "there can never be pure art for art's sake" (Balfe and Wyszomirski, 1985:VII), but neither can there be government support of the arts for support's sake, nor government interference in the arts for interference's sake. Even a high degree of government indifference towards the arts is, in today's world, a political statement. "The potential for government intervention in the arts," writes Becker, "gives every work of art a political dimension" (1982:188).

Accordingly, the study of government involvement in the arts must be always mindful of motivations. "Understanding of motivation," Weber wrote, "consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning" (1968:8). Placing Israel's cultural policy and activities in the wider context of Israel's political culture and historical background, we are enlightened as to what were the motives behind these policy and activities. As our data confirm, both government support and government interference in the arts in Israel are directed towards the maintenance of the dominant values, ideals, ethoi, and beliefs upon which Israeli society is based. Arts and culture, thus, provide a convenient field for state efforts to preserve its dominant ideology which is, in turn, reflected in the government's activity. A somewhat similar conclusion was reached by sociologist Michael Useem, writing about government patronage of science and arts in the United States:

"The national government has a major interest in maintaining both government legitimacy and dominant ideology ... it appears that this consideration may have been a major factor behind initial government intervention on behalf of the arts" (1976:127-133).

This, of course, leads us to the last argument raised in the introduction to this dissertation, that is, the way the state is conceptualized in social theory in general, and in the study of government involvement in the arts in particular. As the Israeli case of government involvement in the arts proves, the state is not a passive or unitary entity, at least not as

far as its involvement in the field of arts is concerned. It is an autonomous actor whose interests and motives must be carefully examined if one is to fully understand the relationships between governments and the arts.

Naturally, the framework of this dissertation permitted only an occasional development of historical details. Yet it is the broad historical perspective which is essential for our conclusion. Kings, princes, and popes supported their arts for purposes of glorification and nation-building from the very beginning of history (Cummings and Katz, 1987, Dorian, 1964). Similar purposes, as we have seen throughout this dissertation, facilitated the policy and activity of the Israeli government in the field of arts and culture. The study of government involvement in the arts, therefore, cannot be separated from the study of inherent ideologies and political cultures. Contrary to what many people (including artists and art researchers) would like to believe, arts and culture cannot be independent from the proclaimed social and political goals of the state.

It is to this more interpretive approach for analyzing governments involvement in their arts that this dissertation had hoped to contribute.

EPILOGUE

A few months before this dissertation was completed, but long after the data had been collected, a major structural change took place in Israel in regard to this dissertation's subject matter. After 45 years of being handled exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Culture (which is the heart of this study), the governmental responsibility for cultural and artistic affairs were transferred to a new Ministry of Communication, Science, and Arts. Naturally, it is much too early to assess the implications of this change on government involvement in the arts in Israel. It should be noted, however, that this structural change was not part of a new arts policy of the government. Instead, it was created to solve a specific political-coalition problem faced by the government at a specific moment, and not as an attempt to influence the country's arts and culture in any direction. Whether this development will bring a significant change to whatever is written in the preceding pages will remain to be seen.

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INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR THIS DISSERTATION

Bar-Briskman Aviva, Israel's Cultural Attache' in New York,
October 15, 1993.

Feller Dana, Former Secretary of the Knesset's Committee for
Education and Culture, October, 27, 1992.

Frost Joseph, Director of Culture Administration and former
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