Thematic Issue on the Religion of the Czech Underground under Communism Editorial

Zdeněk R. Nešpor – guest editor

https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2022.1

What is known as the Czech underground, a countercultural community of rock musicians, writers and artists, theorists of culture and society, and their followers and supporters, pushed underground during the rule of the communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s, is relatively well known. At least generally – or better, superficially. This community of great cultural and political significance was analyzed in both Czech[1] and foreign literature,[2] and its main characteristics also found their way into textbooks of history, literary and musical history, and general public knowledge. However, one aspect remained virtually neglected: the religion and religiosity of the Czech underground. Cultural historian Martin C. Putna in his monumental history of Czech Catholic literature – which has gradually spread far beyond both literature and the Catholic denomination – argues that "the reunion of the underground, Christianity and literature in the 1970s and 1980s is arguably the most surprising chapter in the history of Czech Catholic literature, even one of the most original chapters of Czech spiritual history in general ... The phenomenon of spiritual creation in the Czech underground of the normalization era is unique in its concrete form".[3] The author pointed this out as early as in the early 1990s and has held these views until the recent day,[4] but he remained almost alone. Broader knowledge of the Czech underground's religiosity is weak, if any. This issue is an attempt to remedy the significant omission.

[1] E.g. Josef Alan (ed.), *Alternativní kultura: Příběh české společnosti 1945–1989* [*Alternative Culture: The Story of the Czech Society 1945–1989*], Praha: Lidové noviny 2001; Marek Švehla, *Magor a jeho doba* [*Magor and His Era*], Praha: Torst 2017.

[2] E.g. Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism*, Cambridge (Mass): Harvard UP 2012; Trever Hagen, *Living in the Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground*, New York: Oxford UP 2019.

[3] Martin C. Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v kontextech 1945–1989* [*Czech Catholic Literature in Context 1945–1989*], Praha: Torst 2017, p. 727.

[4] Martin C. Putna, „Mnoho zemí v podzemí: Několik úvah o undergroundu a křesťanství" [„Many Grounds of the Underground: Some Reflections on the Underground and Christianity"], *Souvislosti* 4 (1, 1993): pp. 14–32; Martin C. Putna (ed.), *Ivan M. Jirous: Magorské modlitby* [*Ivan M. Jirous: Magor's Prayers*], Praha: Biblion 2021, pp. 261–290.

On the one hand, the omission is quite surprising. Even the most superficial student of the Czech underground cannot overlook the importance that religion and religious values had for (at least a part of) this movement. Religious songs were heard at underground festivals, and the iconic band The Plastic People of the Universe went through at least one explicitly religious period, culminating in the recording of *Passion* (1978). Underground theorist Ivan Martin Jirous, in his famous "Report on the Third Czech Musical Awakening" (1975), attributed the apocalyptic religiosity not only to the Plastic People and the personally connected DG 307 but also to other authors and performers. Moreover, former Protestant minister Svatopluk Karásek, whose original transformation of American spirituals became one of the most visible manifestations of religious involvement in modern Czech popular culture, joined the community in the first half of the 1970s. However, various elements and manifestations of religion were present not only at top events or in the works of certain religiously involved members of the underground community. Witnesses draw attention to various everyday religious activities or cases of "religion" of a kind among the formerly religiously untouched or churchly "non-musical" persons or communities.[5]

On the other hand, it is not so strange that almost no one has appropriately dealt with the religion of the Czech underground yet. It is easy to state the importance of religiosity for a part of the underground movement. However, it is far from easy to decipher its causes, concrete manifestations, and social consequences more deeply, especially when we are not faced with a single version of underground religiosity that depended on "official" Christianity. The rich and diverse terrain requires careful research, which has not yet taken place. A special, though certainly also not exhaustive example may be the religiosity of the playwright, dissident and later president Václav Havel,[6] who was part of the underground community for years and who even was an ideological leader of the Plastic People for a while (although in their somewhat weaker period). This issue is precisely the first attempt at such research on the religiosity of the Czech underground under the communist regime.

We must admit that our original plans were somehow broader. Relying on the opportunities of archival and oral historical research, we believed it would be possible to map the area of the reception of the underground in general and its religious components in particular. The field of reception should not include just the specific underground communities that Stárek and Kostúr already addressed[7] but also the "occasional", less engaged, or temporary followers and recipients, as well as various kinds of supporters and "parallel-runners". However, we overestimated the possibilities of such research, or rather how demanding personal engagement would be

[5] Many examples in František Stárek Čuňas and Jiří Kostúr, *Baráky: Souostroví svobody* [*Barracks: The Archipelago of Freedom*], Praha: Pulchra 2010, e.g. pp. 162, 164.

[6] Martin C. Putna, *Václav Havel: Duchovní portrét v rámu české kultury* [*Václav Havel: A Spiritual Portrait Framed by the Czech Culture*], Praha: Knihovna Václava Havla 2011, pp. 141–244. Somehow similar, also quite ambiguous subject would be the underground theorist Ivan Martin Jirous, already mentioned above; see Martin C. Putna (ed.), *Ivan M. Jirous*, pp. 261–290.

[7] Stárek Čuňas and Kostúr, *Baráky*, passim.

without special funding, and thus we gradually lost our potential collaborators. The pandemic of COVID-19 ended the rest, as virtually no research, neither archival, oral historical or sociological, was possible for more than a year. Even worse, many (potential) respondents died and we lost contact with others due to the epidemic. This (and other) part(s) of the topic is still waiting to be studied.

Despite the drawbacks and problems, we hope we have managed to gather enough information to make the first systematic attempt to describe and analyze the religiosity of the Czech underground and that we were able to grasp and present the topic at least relatively well. The reader shall expect a triple view of the topic, differing not only thematically but also methodologically (and generationally). The first article was written by musical historian Aleš Opekar, who also served as a rock and underground music organizer both under communism and after its fall. The author provides a general introduction to the topic of the Czech underground, important especially for foreign or less knowledgeable readers. He begins with the necessary mapping of the quite extensive, but at the same time, one-sided and in some respects problematic literature on the phenomenon. Then the study deals with the term underground itself, how it got into the Czech environment through popular music journalism, and how I. M. Jirous adapted it in a very particular sense. The author also explains the terms of (musical/cultural) alternative and grey zone. In the third part of his article, Opekar describes what other rock music, in addition to the underground, was played in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s to give the reader context, and in conclusion, he provides a reflection on the underground's overlaps with non-rock music and the period after 1989.

The second article was written by a middle-aged cultural historian and sociologist, Zdeněk R. Nešpor, whose "firsthand experience" pertains only to the very end of the underground under the communist regime, but who systematically devoted himself personally and professionally to this music and community from the first years after regime change. Nešpor studies the manifestations of (various types of) religion in underground lyrics, as well as in (temporarily) related musical genres. He first examines the religious, implicitly religious and social sources of interest of musicians and recipient communities in religion, while in the second part of his article, the author shows the types and ways of presenting religious content. Although much of it was derived from ecclesiastical Christianity (which does not mean that it corresponded to specific confessions or pious traditions), he also notes non-Christian forms and alternative spiritualities parallel to any organized religion. Although the article does not pay much attention to the reception of the underground religion and its communities, the author concludes that this phenomenon was among the key manifestations of modern self-oriented spirituality in Czech society.

Last but not least, an article by Monika Soukupová, a PhD candidate in cultural history and the youngest contributor to the issue, deals with the reception of the underground religiosity in a very specific environment – among Evangelical Christians. While both alternative musicians and active Christians had a common enemy in the Communist leadership, they differed significantly in their world-views and means

of resistance, as well as in their understanding of religion and (the forms of) piety. Through the analysis of a newly conducted oral historical material, the author shows that both communities (or somewhat narrower communities within both streams) acted in parallel, without deeper contacts, but even knowledge, and vice versa, with many barriers and mutual prejudices. Their efforts and interests did not meet because they went in discrepant directions and were aimed at different goals (although the situation may have differed in some specific groups of liberally oriented mainline Christians, especially young people).

The set of articles in no way exhausts the topic of religion in the Czech underground under communism. Instead, it collects the existing knowledge and opens up questions and space for further research. If the reader gets closer to this fascinating topic, which is essential also an international perspective, the thematic issue has fulfilled its task.

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Czech Underground from a Musical Historical Point of View*

Aleš Opekar

https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2022.2

Abstract: The first part of the article summarises and comments on the literature on the Czech music underground. It proves that professional research of the phenomenon was previously carried out by foreign authors, whose focus was mainly on the social and political contexts in Eastern Europe. Memoirs and published interviews predominated in the domestic reflection of the phenomenon. Theoretical studies, including monographic treatises, appear only on an ongoing basis. However, the underground is still more in the field of view of historians than musicologists. This article also traces the changes in understanding the "underground" category in the Czech environment. It leads to defining it compared to the "alternative scene" and "grey zone" categories, which gradually gained a specific significance in Czech public awareness in the 1970s and 1980s. The second part of the article places the Czech musical underground in the context of the general development of rock and popular music in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s.

Keywords: underground; alternative scene; grey zone; rock; Czech music; normalisation, music literature

Abstrakt: První část článku shrnuje a komentuje literaturu o českém hudebním undergroundu. Dokládá, že odborný výzkum fenoménu začali dříve realizovat zahraniční autoři, v jejichž centru pozornosti stály především společenské a politické souvislosti v kontextu východní Evropy. V domácí reflexi fenoménu zpočátku převažovaly memoáry a publikované rozhovory. Teprve průběžně se objevují teoretické studie, včetně monografických pojednání. Underground je však stále více v zorném poli historiků než muzikologů. Článek též sleduje proměny chápání kategorie „underground" v českém prostředí a ústí do jejího vymezení vůči kategoriím „alternativní scéna" a „šedá zóna", které v českém společenském povědomí 70. a 80. let 20. století postupně nabyly specifického významu. Druhá část článku zasazuje český hudební underground do kontextu obecného vývoje rockové a populární hudby v Československu 70. a 80. let.

Klíčová slova: underground; alternativní scéna; šedá zóna; rock; česká hudba; normalizace; literatura o hudbě

* This article was written with the financial support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic under the grant GA ČR 21-16304S "The development of popular music investigation in the Czech Lands in the context of Central European culture and politics since 1945".

Received: 20th September 2021
Accepted: 29th October 2021

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The Czech music underground attracted attention, especially abroad, mainly because of its social and political context.[1] The interest in this context often led to an extreme ignorance of the creative side of the phenomenon. This fact is not incomprehensible when considering that the Czech music underground is based on rock music in style and sound. The Czech rock scene grew out of mastering and transforming Anglo-American patterns. Foreign journalists and researchers were not interested in other Czech (or Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, etc.) rock music unless connected with a significant social and political context. Subjecting the Czech music underground to professional music analysis and criticism is the task of domestic researchers.

Underground literature

Martin Machovec[2] stated 20 years ago that "almost completely there is a lack of musicological evaluation of at least the most significant underground and 'proto-underground' musical activities". The following overview of publications on the topic will imply that the situation has not changed much. Apart from the unique period samizdat reflection before 1989[3] and the later publication of essential unofficial texts defining the phenomenon from within,[4] we find the first Czech publications seeking a retrospective of the unofficial music scene were memoirs.

Paradoxical as it is, foreign authors writing about Eastern European rock scenes touched upon the Czech music underground, much earlier. The Dutch historian Timothy Ryback covered Czechoslovak issues in several sections of his 1990 book *Rock Around the Bloc*[5]. He compares the advent of the Beatlemania in various Eastern European countries, noting the influence of Ginsberg and hippies, the success of Czech

[1] A personal memory can serve as an introduction: around the mid-1990s, I was approached by a Japanese journalist asking for a consultation on Plastic People of the Universe. I invited him to the office of the then Ústav pro hudební vědu AV ČR and answered questions about trials, censorship. and the lack of freedom in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. Towards the end, I asked which recordings of the band he had heard. He smiled awkwardly: "None." I was surprised by the answer, so I immediately offered to play him some. His next reaction took my breath away. The journalist apologized, saying he had to go and that it wasn't really that important.

[2] Josef Alan (ed.), *Alternativní kultura: Příběh české společnosti 1945–1989* [*Alternative Culture: The Story of Czech Society 1945–1989*], Praha: Lidové noviny 2001, p. 177; Martin Machovec, *Pohledy zevnitř: Česká undergroundová kultura v dokumentech a interpretacích* [*Views from the Inside: Czech Underground Culture in Documents and Interpretations*], Praha: Pistorius & Olšanská 2008, p. 123.

[3] Especially the 15 editions of the unofficial magazine Vokno, published between 1979 and 1989 by František "Čuňas" Stárek. Electronic versions of the magazine are available on www.vons.cz /vokno.

[4] See Ivan Jirous, *Magorův zápisník* [*Magor's Notebook*], Praha: Torst 1997, *passim*; Machovec, *Pohledy zevnitř*, *passim*; Martin Machovec et al., *„Hnědá kniha" o procesech s českým undergroundem* ["Brown Book" on the Processes with the Czech Underground,], Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2012, *passim*; and others.

[5] Timothy Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1990, *passim*.

bands like the Olympic and the Matadors, the happenings of Milan Knížák, and the way Karel Kryl's reflected on the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Ryback also comes to reflect the Czech underground. In a brief but devout way, he discusses the sequence of significant events and the increase in police restrictions leading up to the 1976 trial of the Plastic People of the Universe.

Four years after Ryback, Sabrina Petra Ramet, an American political scientist of English-Spanish descent, edited a similarly focused monograph, *Rocking the State*,[6] which extended to all socialist countries of the time except Albania and Romania. The chapter on Czechoslovakia, authored by the editor herself, gives a brief overview of the essential names of Czech (and very exceptionally Slovak) rock and again devotes more space to the political context, the happenings of the "Primitives" group, and in addition to the subchapter focused again on Plastic People of the Universe, she also names other underground bands: "DG 307, Umela hmota, Bile svetlo, the Hever, Vaseline, Extempore, and Stehlik..."[7] The conclusion of the chapter deals with the campaign against the new wave and punk, led by the Tribuna weekly magazine and the situation at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Ramet also quotes selected snippets of lyrics by Umělá hmota, DG 307, Plastic People and Stromboli in English.

Tony Mitchell, an Australian researcher in performance studies, did not seek exhaustive coverage of a particular area but selectively compared the situation of popular music in several distant places of the world outside the Anglo-American scene. The book *Popular Music and Local Identity*[8] contains, in addition to more general passages about non-Western popular cultures and specific views of the Australian, New Zealand, and Italian scenes, a chapter on the Czech Republic. Here, too, the social and political context is at the heart of the author's interest, as she compares, for example, the Olympic's media success with the underground work represented by Plastic People of the Universe. It maps the period up to the 1990s in quite some detail and focuses on the fates of the "eccentrics on the ground floor" – the bands and personalities of the Czech new wave of rock in the first half of the 1980s. The title of the chapter[9] refers to the content of the Czech book on this subject.[10]

The aforementioned foreign authors have done an honest job of seeking broader comparisons, which are valuable since no Czech or Slovak researcher has made a similar Central European comparison. However, their approach to individual countries, including Czechoslovakia, can be superficial and lacking knowledge of important broader contexts. Even in the themes of the Czech underground, recurrent familiar

[6] Sabrina Petra Ramet (ed.), *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia,* Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press 1994, p. 55–72.

[7] The correct spelling of some of those band names are: Umělá hmota, Bílé světlo, The Hever & Vazelína Band, Stehlík.

[8] Tony Mitchell, *Popular Music and Local Identity: Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceania,* London and New York: Leicester University Press 1996, p. 95–136.

[9] Mitchell, *Popular Music and Local Identity*, p. 119–122.

[10] Aleš Opekar and Josef Vlček (eds.), *Excentrici v přízemí: Nová vlna v Čechách první poloviny 80. let* [*Eccentrics on the Ground Floor: A New Wave in Bohemia in the First Half of the 1980s*], Praha: Panton 1989, *passim*.

stereotypes prevailed, focusing mainly on political contexts without regard to the very musical basis of the work.

Ryback revised some of his findings after about 30 years in the collective monograph *Popular music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*.[11] He recapitulated what led him to write the book, from which sources he drew in the second half of the 1980s, and how he worked with them. He highlighted situation reports and a snippy service, processed by Radio Free Europe, as the most important source.

At the same time, remembrance titles dominate Czech literature about the underground – the first ones by Mejla Hlavsa and Jan Pelc[12] and Mikoláš Chadima.[13] Other testimonial memoirs followed, and some of the authors did not shy away from fictional accounts: Ervín Hruška,[14] Ivan Hajniš,[15] Jiří Odvárka,[16] Josef Vondruška,[17] Josef Bobeš Rössler,[18] Otakar Alfréd Michl,[19] Ivo Pospíšil, Vladimír Jurásek,[20] Vladimír Hendrix Smetana,[21] Jaroslav Jeroným Neduha,[22] and in other sequels Chadima[23] and Hajniš.[24] The images of individual events and periods started to be composed of a mosaic of subjective memories, often based on an honest verification of factual data (Chadima). Jan Pelc's book interview with Mejla Hlavsa was expanded by a number of other underground horizons: Tomáš Weiss interviewed Jáchym Topol,[25] Renata Kalenská in-

[11] Jan Blüml, Yvetta Kajanová and Rüdiger Ritter (eds.), *Popular Music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*, Berlin: Peter Lang 2019, p. 13–20.

[12] Mejla Hlavsa and Jan Pelc, *Bez ohňů je underground* [*Without Fires It Is the Underground*], Praha: BFS 1992, 172 p.

[13] Mikoláš Chadima, *Alternativa: Svědectví o českém rock & rollu sedmdesátých let (od rekvalifikací k „nové vlně se starým obsahem")* [*The Alternative: Testimony to Czech Rock & Roll of the Seventies (from Retraining to "New Wave with Old Content")*], Brno: Host 1992, 416 p.

[14] Ervín Hruška, *Od odzemku a valašky k rocku a elektrické kytaře: Historie bigbítu a rocku na Valašskomeziříčsku* [*From Folk Odzemek Dance and Wallachian Ax to Rock and Electric Guitar: History of Big Beat and Rock in the Region of Valašské Meziříčí*], Egg: Ervín Hruška 1999, 183 p.

[15] Ivan Hajniš, *Legenda The Primitives Group: True Story About First Underground Band in East Europe*, Praha: Pragoline 2019, 136 p.

[16] Jiří Odvárka, *Auvajs, Mejlo: Zlatá léta šedesátá, jakož i čacké početí big beatu v Břevnově* [*Ow Mejla: The Golden Sixties as well as the Heroic Engendering of the Big Beat in Břevnov*], Praha: Primus 2003, 185 p.

[17] Josef Vondruška, *Chlastej a modli se* [*Get Drunk and Pray*], Praha: Torst 2005, 546 p.

[18] Josef Bobeš Rössler, *Obraz doby aneb Chaotické vzpomínky na život v českém undergroundu 70. let* [*Picture of the Time or Chaotic Memories of Life in the Czech Underground of the 70s*], Praha: Pulchra 2009, 331 p.

[19] Otakar Alfréd Michl, *Trable den co den* [*Troubles Every Day*], Praha: Pulchra 2012, 616 p.

[20] Ivo Pospíšil and Vladimír Jurásek, *Příliš pozdě zemřít mladý* [*Too Late to Die Young*], Praha: BiggBoss 2015, 328 p.

[21] Vladimír Hendrix Smetana, *Od dospívání k dozpívání* [*From Adolescence to the Moment I Stopped Singing*], Praha: Pulchra 2015, 192 p.

[22] Jaroslav Jeroným Neduha, *Životaběh* [*Life Course*], Praha: Galén 2016, 300 p.

[23] Mikoláš Chadima, *Alternativa II: Od „Nové" vlny se starým obsahem k Velké listopadové sametové revoluci* [*The Alternative II: From the "New" Wave with Old Content to the Great November Velvet Revolution*], Praha: Galén 2018, 669 p.

[24] Ivan Hajniš, *Legenda The Primitives Group: True Story About First Underground Band in East Europe*, *passim*.

[25] Jáchym Topol and Tomáš Weiss, *Nemůžu se zastavit* [*I can't Stop*], Praha: Portál 2000, 168 p.

terviewed Vratislav Brabenec,[26] Štěpán Hájek and Michal Plzák interviewed Svatopluk Karásek,[27] Jaroslav Riedel interviewed Paul Wilson in the book of his essays,[28] and Ivana Denchevová, František "Čuňas" Stárek, and Michal Stehlík interviewed other important figures of the scene.[29] Other interviews include the book *Baráky* by František "Čuňas" Stárek and Jiří Kostúr[30] and some narrative photographic publications by Abbé J. Libánský,[31] Jan Ságl[32] or Tomáš Cidlina.[33] Memoir literature and book interviews are still the most common type of printed literature on the Czech music underground.

Thus, for the first time, Jaroslav Riedel's "Biografická poznámka" [Biographical Note] in the book of the Plastic People of the Universe's lyrics[34] brings a sober historiographical treatise carried out in a distanced manner by someone who was not an interested or emotionally interested participant. After less than ten years, the same author completed his work on the topic with a monograph of the abovementioned core group.[35]

With the new millennium, other essential works have been created, expanding the journalistic scope into a broader context. Sociologist Josef Alan has collected his almanack with many contributions, some of which explore the music scene (especially the chapters by Martin Machovec and Josef Vlček).[36] Others are focused on unofficial literature, theatre, film, and fine arts. The academic horizons aimed at the literary side of the phenomenon were expanded by Martin Pilař[37] and again by Martin Machovec[38], who commented on reprinted documents from the 1970s and 1980s and repudiated the aforementioned theoretical study of the Alan-edited almanack. Machovec's book from 2019, written in English, includes a chapter "Exploring Modern Art: Czech Underground Rock Musicians",[39] analysing selected phenomena of music and lyrics from Plastic People, Milan Knížák, DG 307 and other examples.

[26] Renata Kalenská, *Evangelium podle Brabence* [*The Gospel according to Brabenec*], Praha: Torst 2010, 292 p.

[27] Svatopluk Karasek, Štěpán Hájek and Michal Plzák, *Víno tvé výborné: Rozhovory* [*Your Excellent Wine: Interviews*], Praha: Kalich 2010, 293 p.

[28] Paul Wilson, *Bohemian Rhapsodies*, Praha: Torst 2011, 520 p.

[29] Ivana Denčevová, František Stárek and Michal Stehlík, *Tváře undergroundu* [*Faces of the Underground*], Praha: Radioservis 2012, 238 p.

[30] František „Čuňas" Stárek and Jiří Kostúr, *Baráky – Souostroví svobody* [*Baráky – Archipelago of Freedom*], Praha: Pulchra 2010, 638 p.

[31] Abbé J. Libánský, *My underground*, Praha: Institut for culture-resistant 2004, 221 p.

[32] Jan Ságl, *Tanec na dvojitém ledě* [*Dancing on Double Ice*], Praha: Kant 2012, 537 p.

[33] Tomáš Cidlina, *Českolipská satisfakce – I Can't Get No* [*Satisfaction from Česká Lípa – I Can't Get No*], Česká Lípa: Rudolf Živec 2016, 398 p.

[34] Jaroslav Riedel, *The Plastic People of the Universe: Texty* [*The Plastic People of the Universe: Lyrics*], Praha: Maťa 1997, p. 15–23.

[35] Jaroslav Riedel, *Plastic People a český underground* [*The Plastic People and Czech Underground*], Praha: Galén 2016, *passim*.

[36] Alan, *Alternativní kultura,* p. 154–263.

[37] Martin Pilař, *Underground aneb Kapitoly o českém literárním undergroundu* [Underground or Chapters on the Czech Literary Underground], Brno: Host 2002, *passim*.

[38] Machovec, *Pohledy zevnitř*, p. 96–149.

[39] Martin Machovec, *Writing Underground: Reflections on Samizdat Literature in Totalitarian Czechoslovakia,* Praha*:* Karolinum 2019, p. 104–130.

In the last two decades, the Czech underground has also become an occasional subject of interest for students writing bachelor's and master's theses.

Historians have also taken the initiative, focusing on the history of recent decades. For them, musical themes are a secondary but essential context for describing the selected topic. Many creators or supporters of the underground have inevitably come under the radar of the authors of the book *Vraťte nám vlasy!*[40] about long hair as an expression of boys' taste and lifestyle in communist Czechoslovakia. In his book *Byl to jenom rock and roll?*[41], Miroslav Vaněk looks at rock music from a historical perspective, and we can find subchapters directly dedicated to the underground and alternative music. Both books draw not only from available book and magazine sources but also dive into sources including state archives and security forces archives and benefit from interviews of the Oral History Center, which is part of their parent Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences and brings many new findings and connections. The most abundant crop of texts on the topic has continuously been generated by researchers of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, established in 2007. We have already mentioned the book *Baráky*,[42] with interviews and reprinted police and samizdat documents and an afterword by Josef Alan. The institution's activities also led to several collective monographs edited by Ladislav Kudrna: *Reflexe undergroundu*,[43] *Podhoubí undergroundu*,[44] *Od mániček k undergroundu*.[45] As they are based on conference papers, the individual contributions differ in character and quality. On the other hand, many contributions are revealing as they demystify the legacy of key personalities, open up new debates, and broaden the view to include other genres (free jazz, hip hop and graffiti).

Extensive monographs were also written by Ladislav Kudrna and František Stárek Čuňas: *"Kapela"*[46] and *Kniha v barvě krve*.[47] In the former, the authors tried to capture how the police interventions against the free cultural activities of young people in the 1970s grew stricter, especially in connection with the national police action "Kapela"

[40] Filip Pospíšil and Petr Blažek, *Vraťte nám vlasy: První máničky, vlasatci a hippies v komunistickém Československu* [*Give us Back Our Hair: The First Long-haired Men and Hippies in Communist Czechoslovakia*], Praha: Academia 2010, *passim*.

[41] Miroslav Vaněk, *Byl to jenom rock'n'roll?: Hudební alternativa v komunistickém Československu 1956–1989* [*Was it Just Rock'n'roll?: Music Alternative in Communist Czechoslovakia 1956–1989*], Praha: Academia 2010, *passim*.

[42] Stárek and Kostur, *Baráky – Souostroví svobody* [*Baráky – Archipelago of Freedom*], *passim*.

[43] Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Reflexe undergroundu* [*Reflections of the Underground*], Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2016, *passim*.

[44] Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Podhoubí undergroundu* [*The Underground of the Underground*], Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2018, *passim*.

[45] Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Od mániček k undergroundu* [*From Long-Haired Men to the Underground*], Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2019, *passim*.

[46] Ladislav Kudrna and František Čuňas Stárek, *„Kapela": Pozadí akce, která stvořila Chartu 77* [*"The Band": Background of the Event That Created Charter 77*], Praha: Academia and Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2017, *passim*.

[47] Ladislav Kudrna and František Čuňas Stárek, *Kniha v barvě krve: Násilí komunistického režimu vůči undergroundu* [*Blood Colored Book: Communist Regime Violence Against the Underground*]. Praha: Academia and Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2020, *passim*.

[Band], aimed against key figures of the underground. The latter book describes the same conflicts in the broader time range from 1960 to 1989. In both cases, the research was based on studying a wide range of official records and reports from municipal, regional and national archives and private archives, thus bringing many new findings and contexts. Similarly, in the book *Podzemní symfonie Plastic People*,[48] Stárek and Valenta move from more generally known facts to a historical description, structured according to the perspectives of the studied sources from the underground community and dissent, as well as the archives of police and political authorities. Again, the interpretation does not discuss music as such. The level of detail of the discussion of social and political contexts is aimed at a much broader scope than the group's monograph (see, for example, the passages on various approaches to the character of Charter 77 and its development).

The sum of the writings is complemented by partial studies published in journals or on the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes website. For instance, Kudrna and Stárek described in detail the police intervention in Rudolfov in 1974, which, despite the wishes of communist politicians, kick-started the self-awareness of the beginnings of the Czech underground[49]. They also focused on events that indicated later underground attitudes as early as the 1960s.[50]

The latest very concentrated additions are monographs of the main representatives of the Czech underground: Riedel's study on Plastic People[51] and the comprehensive biography of Ivan Martin Jirous written by Marek Švehla.[52] Riedel's monograph is based, as much as possible, on the study of period documents, including band chronicles, police protocols or judgements and interviews, and it quotes these widely in the appropriate context. Reprinted documents de facto replace the absence of photographic accompaniment. The monograph includes the broader context of the scene in the form of essays and overviews of statistics concerning the files Aktual, DG 307, Plastic or singer-songwriters Svatopluk Karásek and Charlie Soukup, as well as other names and more general passages. In addition to a complex discography, the appendices also contain lists of all concerts and changes in the ensemble and, for example, a clear commentary on the four chronicles of Plastic People of the Universe. The overall character of the book is descriptive and, therefore, less evaluative. The overlap with the post-communist era of the 1990s is only fleeting. Švehla's

[48] František Čuňas Stárek and Martin Valenta, *Podzemní symfonie Plastic People* [*Underground Symphony of The Plastic People*], Praha: Argo and Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2018, *passim*.

[49] Ladislav Kudrna and František Stárek Čuňas, „Zásah, který změnil underground: Rudolfov, 30. březen 1974" ["An Intervention that Changed the Underground: Rudolfov, March 30, 1974"] [online], *Paměť a dějiny* (1, 2015), available online at <https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/pamet-dejiny/pad1501/027-041.pdf>, *passim*.

[50] Ladislav Kudrna and František Stárek Čuňas, „(Proto)underground: Několik poznámek k vývoji podzemního hnutí" ["(Proto)underground: Some Remarks on the Development of the Underground Movement"] [online], *Paměť a dějiny* (4, 2016), available online at <https://www.ustrcr.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PD_4_16_s03-15.pdf>, *passim*.

[51] Jaroslav Riedel, *Kritik bez konzervatoře: Rozhovor s Jiřím Černým* [*A Critic Without a Conservatory: Interview with Jiří Černý*], Praha: Galén 2006, *passim*.

[52] Marek Švehla, *Magor a jeho doba* [*Magor and His Time*], Praha: Torst 2017, *passim*.

monograph provides an excellent and detailed map in a journalistic form, focusing primarily on Jirous's life story. However, it provides a less accurate and apt depiction of the broader context of the period and Jirous's poetic work. Švehla also devotes less space to Jirous's life after 1989.

As for audio and audiovisual recordings, we can refer to a great deal of editorial work that makes them available to date. The preserved recordings from the Czech underground are available mainly thanks to the publishing houses Šafrán, Globus International or Globus Music, Guerilla Records or Galén.[53]

We can also add four extensive documentary series by the Czech Television to the range of audiovisual monuments[54]. Each episode was usually around 50–56 minutes long:

Alternativní kultura [Alternative Culture] (dir. Petr Slavík 1997–2006) consists of two seasons of 13 episodes each. The Czech musical underground is mainly covered in episodes 4–6 of the first season and some parts of the second season, dedicated to poetry.

Of the forty-two episodes of the cycle on the history of Czechoslovak rock music *Bigbít* (dir. Václav Křístek 2000), episodes 26 (focusing on the period of 1970–75) and 27 (period 1973–81) concern the underground. Episodes 28 and 29 deal with the alternative scene of the periods of 1969–78 and 1977–81, respectively. Episode 35 is about the Moravian alternative scene of the 1980s, and finally, episode 41 focuses on the underground of the 1980s.

The three-part cycle *Šedá zóna* [Grey Zone] (dir. Vladimír Merta 2014) explores the boundaries and overlaps between the unofficial and official activities and works in the Czechoslovak society of the 1970s and 1980s and, therefore, it often touches on the underground.

And finally, the extensive documentary series *Fenomén underground* [Phenomenon Underground] (dir. Břetislav Rychlík, Jana Chytilová, Jiří Fiedor and Václav Křístek 2014) divided his very deep dive into the issue into 40 episodes. Of these, 3 episodes form the "Prolog" [Prologue], 6 episodes fall under the section "Série Kořeny" [Series Roots], 4 episodes are created as "Série k 25. výročí pádu totality" [Series for the 25th anniversary of the fall of totalitarianism], 7 more episodes form "Série na téma kapely, svoboda a hodnoty undergroundu" [Series on the theme of the band, freedom and values of the underground]. The following 8 episodes include the section "Série na téma komunity a exilu" [Series on the theme of community and exile], 8 parts also include "Série na téma regiony a Slovensko" [Series on the theme of regions and Slovakia] and 4 episodes "Série na téma fenomény 80. let až po součas-

[53] See, for example, lists in the publications Machovec, *"Hnědá kniha"*, p. 501–502, or Riedel, *Plastic People a český underground*, p. 347–407. Sound recordings with the work of Pavel Zajíček were commented by Antonín Kocábek, „PZ v konzervách" ["PZ Canned"], *Uni* 31 (4, 2021): p. 18–21. An annotated and comprehensive overview of recordings is most recently published by Joe Yanosik, *A Consumer Guide to the Plastic People of the Universe*, New York: self-released 2021, *passim*.

[54] For a basic overview, see again Machovec, *"Hnědá kniha"*, p. 502–503, and Riedel, *Plastic People a český underground*, p. 370–375.

nost" [Series on the phenomenon of the 1980s to the present]. The TV documentary on the underground, initiated by František "Čuňas" Stárek and Břetislav Rychlík, repeated and commented extensively on known facts and mapped some less visible, primarily regional activities that would otherwise have been out of focus. Some of the works are monographic portraits of personalities (Milan Knížák and the ensemble Aktual, Svatopluk Karásek, Pavel Zajíček, Dino Vopálka and Plastic, and others).

From the previous review, it is clear that musicology stands aside from insider views. Would classically trained musicologists be put off by the external simplicity and occasional coarseness and vulgarity of the lyrics and contexts? Amateur enthusiast analysts, in turn, lack professional erudition and methodology. A more detailed musical characterisation of the music of Plastic People and DG 37 was attempted by the music publicist Jiří Černý.[55] However, it was a self-serving apologia, created as an opinion piece to help the musicians in the 1976 trial: He compares Ravel's Bolero to African music and the resounding repetition of the theme in the bass guitar and the escalation of tension by long repetitions. He attributes the use of the saxophone or viola to the influences of modern jazz and Frank Zappa. The half-spoken vocal performance is then connected with African-American talking blues and choral inputs in connection with the voice band of E. F. Burian or songs by Bertold Brecht. In the text, he did not avoid the term underground but introduced it in the spirit of Czech music journalism of the late 1960s in connection with anti-establishment attitudes in Anglo-Saxon countries. Černý himself later emphasised that he would have approached an independent treatise on the group quite differently.[56] However, this never happened because "he did not have in himself the standards for music that is both slick and at the same time actually simple [...] he didn't find [...] the time or energy to get into it."[57] The most comprehensive Czech insight into the musical creation of the Czech underground thus remains in the commentaries of programmes and recordings in Riedel's monograph (2016).

Recently, foreign authors have again provided exciting additions to the music of the Czech underground. New York freelance writer Joe Yanosik publishes detailed commentaries on the discographies of his favourite rock bands in his "A Consumer Guide to..." series. His long-term interest in Plastic People of the Universe and related ensembles has resulted in the latest book in this series.[58] It focuses on reviews and comments on over 80 albums sorted chronologically by recording date. Without any knowledge of Czech, using Google Translator and with the help of Czech friends, he managed to create a guidebook, useful especially for English-speaking readers. The insight into the music itself, which he describes as a magical brew of progressive rock, free jazz, the roots of European music, and psychedelia, remains at the forefront, while other information completes the historical context.

[55] Machovec, *"Hnědá kniha"*, p. 68–69.
[56] See Riedel, *Kritik bez konzervatoře*, p. 88.
[57] Riedel, *Kritik bez konzervatoře*, p. 89.
[58] Yanosik, *A Consumer Guide to the Plastic People of the Universe*, *passim*.

Sociologist of music and culture and trumpeter Trever Hagen, originally from Wisconsin, USA, worked for many years in European cities, including Prague and settled down at the University of Exeter in the UK. In *Living in the Merry Ghetto*[59] he summarised his previously published minor essays and studies into a fairly comprehensive treatise on the Czech musical underground. Unlike foreign authors from the 1990s, his work relies on a surprisingly thorough knowledge of Czech sources and realities, direct consultations with specific personalities of the scene, and the study of recordings. In addition to a basic summary of factual data, important for the international reader, he also brings his own views on the phenomenon, based in particular on the concept of "cultural ecology" by the music sociologist Tia DeNora and psychologist Eric Clarke, which can be briefly explained as the coherence of people, places, recordings, symbols, etc., which are collected or rejected for the "healthy ecology" of life.[60] That is why his book is also called "The Merry Ghetto" – Hagen rightly rejects the concept of the Czech underground as a conscious protest tied to a targeted connection with Czech dissent. Its conception also includes a correlation with the categories "alternative musicians" and "gray-zone", which have acquired a specific meaning in the Czech context and embark on a deeper characteristic of music aesthetics. It speaks of a specific "musicking", which can be understood as an abbreviated combination of the words "music-making" – similar to Czech music-making:[61]

... how musical practices (composing to lyrics, listening to records, playing with spirit, rehearsing without count- offs, adapting poems as lyrics, writing and thinking about music) were linked to aesthetic phenomena (out- of- tune, rough and ragged sounds, sing-song recitation, heavy bass lines, screamed vocals, raw, unmusical sounds) that provided models, through contrast and comparison structures, for learning dispositions (how to feel and know the establishment, living in dignity, historical commitment, rejection).

In the chapter Underground Is Life, Hagen describes the transition of the Czech underground into the post-1989 era and, with references to the U Skaláka festivals, talks about the renaissance of the underground. However, the post-revolutionary interest in the phenomenon is overestimated in the long run. It is more soberly commented on by authors in more recent smaller journalism, e.g. Vladimír Drápal in the monothematic issue of the April magazine UNI 2021:[62] "At that time [since the mid-1990s – author's note] commercial interest in the underground was already in decline [...]. The underground has returned to the periphery and the small clubs where he belongs and where a handful of loyal nomads are coming after him, who have refused to accept the market's invisible hand."

[59] Trever Hagen, *Living in the Merry Ghetto: The Music and Politics of the Czech Underground* [online], New York: Oxford University Press 2019, available online at https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190263850.001.0001/oso-9780190263850.

[60] Hagen, *Living in the Merry Ghetto*, p. 152.

[61] See Hagen, *Living in Merry Ghetto*, p. 78 and chapter "Creativity, Establishment, and the Self", p. 79–92.

[62] Vladimír Lábus Drápal, "Pavel Zajíček: Ostrov uprostřed pevniny" ["Pavel Zajíček: An Island in the Middle of the Mainland"], *Uni* 31 (4, 2021): p. 6.

Gradual stabilisation of the terms underground, alternative scene and grey zone in Czech music culture

When dealing with the underground, we operate with several expressions that have acquired a particular meaning within the Czech musical culture: underground, alternative (scene, music, rock), and grey zone. What is the history of their Czech perception?

The term underground first entered the Czech consciousness in music journalism, especially in the magazine *Melodie*.[63] In 1967, the word appeared only as part of the name of the Velvet Underground group, but between 1968–70, the word became a more widely used term in articles about American counterculture rock of the late 1960s. The missionary for the American music underground in our country was the music publicist Jaromír Tůma. In the first of the articles of this type, entitled "Underground ještě žije" [The Underground Still Lives], he asks: "What is the music that was born in the 'underground movement' of hippies and for which the name 'underground rock' or 'progressive rock' has now become established?"[64] From the beginning, the expression merged with the attributes "progressive" or "psychedelic" and was perceived as other similar stylistically genre designations, only with the added value of specific textual content or accompanying artistic phenomena within stage events. In the editorial section "Přehled světových hit parades" [List of world hit parades][65], it says, "... Arthur Brown [...] has been watching the friends of 'underground music' for a long time, albeit mainly because of the mask they put on and then light during the performance."

The artistic connection is also confirmed by Josef Kotek, whose degree of listener dedication was replaced by a sociological perspective with a characteristic generational and thus aesthetic distance: *Underground music" [...] it is not enough for it just to be heard, but it is also necessary in the context of it – with all that accompanies it, and that explains much of it [...]. And it is provoked by revealing the "underground" of the human being as much as possible and as exhibitionistically as possible to the anger of those affluent. Even in music [...].*[66]

The perception of the term underground and its correlation with other new terms of that time (psychedelic, progressive) is commented on in more detail by Jan Blüml.[67]

[63] Martin Valenta summarized the first survey of the entrance of the English terms underground, psychedelic, hippies or happening into Czech journalism in his article "The term underground in the media of the late 1960s", in Valenta, *Podhoubí undergroundu*, p. 82–120.

[64] Jaromír Tůma, „Podzemí ještě žije" ["The Underground Still Lives"], *Melodie* (6, 1968): p. 164.

[65] *Melodie* 6 (6, 1968): p. 294. The author is not listed, but it is clearly Jaromír Tůma again.

[66] Josef Kotek, "Underground music a její sociální otazníky" ["Underground Music and its Social Question Marks"], *Melodie* 7 (2, 1969): p. 37–40. The author evaluates his experience as a member of the older generation who participated in the festival in Essen, Germany. He also expressed his contradictory perceptions in the magazine *Hudební rozhledy* (See Josef Kotek, „Paradoxy z Essenu" ["Paradoxes from Essen"], *Hudební rozhledy* 21 (20, 1968) p. 630–631.

[67] Jan Blüml, *Progresivní rock* [*Progressive Rock*], Olomouc: Togga 2017, p. 150–151 and 160–161.

The term underground was profiled in *Melodie* as a designation of more demanding music, contrasted with the opposite, i.e. the consumer counterpart of popular music.

Tůma, this time under the abbreviation "jt", writes, for example, in the charts section that *"Bubblegum music is a kind of natural response to the increasingly demanding underground music, with which it shares an external appearance, or rather the instrumental cast of the interpreting groups."*[68]

At the same time, however, the view of underground as a fashionable label[69] and a sign of strong protest and political connotations was also growing. In November 1968, *Melodie* presented the column "Co vlastně chce podsvětí" [What the Underworld Actually Wants],[70] preceded by the phrase "*'The Underground' – is a term for some bands that have recently become very fashionable [...] It is a certain atmosphere of vague protest against contemporary society."* The column was also valuable in that it quoted in translation from the British magazine *Melody Maker* the words of John Peel of the British station BBC Radio 1, whom Tůma a few pages earlier described as an "'almost undergound' disc-jockey":

"Of course, everything stems from today's political situation. Everything is prepared, planned and drawn for us so that people just stay seated and do not have to think and decide for themselves [...] Everything is so shallow – I was terribly disappointed with how things turned out."

In the December issue of *Melodie*, Jaromír Tůma indirectly explains Peel's disappointment when he comments on the sales of the albums of the bands in the American top 30 with the words, "*The biggest market for a gramophone record in America today is the underground."*[71]

In any case, the phrase "underground music" became a household name in 1968–70, not only on the pages of the long-term only specialised monthly *Melodie* but also in more up-to-date periodicals of that time, which were only being published for a short time, such as *Pop Music Expres* or *Aktuality Melodie*. The expression also got into the advertising section[72], the "Jak já to slyším" [How I hear it] section and editorial discussions. In a discussion titled "Jam session kritiků" [Jam session of critics][73], Jaromír Tůma still defends the progressiveness of the phenomenon: *"The new, revolutionary one is being fought for by someone other [than the Beatles – author's note]. – e.g. underground music, engaged music on which we can have our opinions, whose goals may*

[68] See *Melodie* 21 (11, 1968): p. 326.

[69] For example Jaromír Tůma in *Melodie* 8 (11, 1970): p. 344 or Ondřej Konrád in *Aktuality Melodie* 1 (8. 12. 1969, 25): p. 2. Both mockingly commented on the Czech performance of the Polish band Breakout, which states on the posters that it is "prwy zespól polski grajaci w style undergorund" [first Polish band playing underground].

[70] *Melodie* 6 (11, 1968): p. 333. The column is signed with an "m", so it is probably the collective authorship of the magazine's editorial board.

[71] *Melodie* 6 (1968, 12): p. 361, section "Overview of world hit parades", signed "jt".

[72] For example, *Melodie* 6 (1968, 12): p. 384 and the like in many other editions it is written: "I will record two tracks: everything from the field of rock 'n 'roll, R+B, Beat, Psychedelic, Soul and Underground. I will send the list of LPs."

[73] *Melodie* 7 (1969, 1): p. 24.

be debatable, but it is what paves the way," while Josef Kotek perceives it as incompatible with the domestic environment: *"I think that underground music is a fact that is quite justified and necessary in the West. But that other influences will probably interfere with our practice after all."*

Along with the commentaries on Anglo-American reality, Czech journalism is beginning to reveal the inspiration for the Czech scene, initially in a purely musical sense. In *Aktuality Melodie* 1969, Tůma praises the Czech band Blue Effect's songs, which "are really exceptionally high quality and surprisingly stylish and resemble the highly appreciated music of American underground bands"[74]. Petr Dorůžka states that the Czech Tom Cats "played taken over from underground groups,"[75] or Jiří Havelka comments on Framus Five that "the original soul sphere of activity is beginning to shift to the white blues and perhaps even further – somewhere to underground music".[76] Moreover, Honza Hrůza, in his review of the Primitives Group's Bird Feast concert, refers to the expression again only in terms of the inspiration of the song repertoire.[77] Although his review faithfully describes the artistic, scenic, and happening accompanying phenomena of the concert (several metric cents of feathers, a feather girl in a display case, giant ethylene balloons, and live birds), he perceives them more as a curiosity than as an artistically equal part of the performance.

Jaromír Tůma's intoxication with the new expression led him to an exaggerated remark about the 2nd Czechoslovak Beat Festival in December 1968 as an event that was "under the sign of underground music".[78] In one of his other sentences, he even talks about expression as a term and does not perceive its content only from a musical point of view: "The term underground is, however, questionable in our case, because it cannot be associated only with music, but above all with the textual side of the compositions, which is suppressed in our groups."

The theoretical grasp of the term underground, its setting in a broader artistic context and especially in the new social context of Czechoslovakia after August 1968 was made by Ivan Jirous.

Jirous had been publishing reviews and essays since 1966, but initially exclusively in the magazine *Výtvarná práce* [Fine Art Work] and thus on fine art topics. It was not until 1968 that he first touched on music in the essay "Mesaliance, či zásnuby mezi beatovou hudbou a výtvarným uměním?" [Mesaliance, or the Engagement Between Beat Music and Fine Arts?].[79] He praises the example of the interconnection of both creative spheres in the Primitives Group, to whose art team he belongs to a large ex-

[74] *Aktuality Melodie* 1 (27. 1. 1969, 2): p. 4.
[75] *Aktuality Melodie* 1 (12. 5. 1969, 10): p. 5.
[76] *Aktuality Melodie* 1 (13. 10. 1969, 21): p. 3.
[77] "The repertoire again consisted of the compositions of Mothers of Invention, Doors, Fug,s and other equally well-known American underground bands" – see *Pop Music Expres* 2 (1969 2): p. 3.
[78] *Melodie* 7 (1969, 2): p. 48.
[79] See Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 151–155. In the essay, he disapprovingly quotes from journal *Mladý svět* Jiří Černý, who "saw in emphasizing the external side of things" one of the dangers of our beat music, and Jaroslav Pacovský, who even ridicules the effort for audiovisual synthesis by comparing it to themes of devils and hell in paintings of Josef Lada or in fairy-tales.

tent: the stylised background of the scene for the performance was painted by Jirous's sister Zorka Ságlová, her husband and Jirous's classmate Jan Ságl photographed portraits, and their other contemporary from his native town Humpolec, painter Dušan Kadlec, created the gilded death masks of musicians.

Jirous sharply opposed renowned music publicists who, in contemporary reviews, e.g. at the 1st Czechoslovak Beat Festival in Prague 1967, celebrated mainly brilliant rock bands, whose advantage is in their maturity and chemistry, and perceived the artistic accompaniment of concerts more as a crutch, justifying a lower musical quality.[80] A year later, the author repeated a similar reflection on the 2nd Czechoslovak Beat Festival 1968, published again in *Výtvarná práce*. It is a repeated apologia of the Primitives Group concept and, as if in return, sharp mocking criticism of those who received awards at the festival, especially Petr Novák with the group George & Beatovens.[81] The word underground does not appear in these articles. For Jirous, it first appears in the article "The Primitives Group – the Czech face of the underground", published in the magazine "*Sešity pro literaturu a diskusi*" [Workbooks for Literature and Discussion] in April 1969.[82]

Here Jirous also explains the perception of the difference between the concepts of psychedelic and underground:[83]

"The essence of psychedelic music is to induce extraordinary mental states through music, light play, incitement to aggressive states, etc.; the consumption of drugs is not necessary to achieve the desired effect."

"The underground movement (I draw information about it mainly from R. R. Rygulla's afterword to the anthology FUCK YOU!, Darmstadt 1968) is primarily a reaction to the commercialism and perfection of the environment in which it was created. Rygulla explicitly points out that the phenomenon of the underground is typical of the US, because its prerequisite is an absolutely perfect and self-regulating society.

The representatives of the underground recognised that nothing could change within legality, and corresponding to mass socialisation and conformism by extremely individualistic actions that are anti-consumer and anti-civilisational. It goes without saying that an important role in the compositions of underground groups is played by the lyrics of songs, which are sharply critical of the reality of American society.

While the American protagonists of the underground undoubtedly belong to the intellectual class, the Czech version of it has a significantly different mycelium. The Primitives Group, which represents the Czech form of the underground, is not composed of intellectuals but of people born 'from below', as is the majority of the Czech beat. This

[80] Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 153.

[81] Jirous quotes the American band Jefferson Airplane, who said of themselves, "The stage is our bed and the audience is our partner. We don't entertain them, we make love to them" and he recommends to Petr Novák a paraphrase in an altered version "We don't entertain them, we masturbate in front of them" (Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 159).

[82] *Sešity pro literaturu a diskusi* 4 (1969, 30): p. 49–50. Also in Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 692–696.

[83] Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 692–693.

essentially eliminates the implementation of Ed Sanders' demand for an "all-out attack on culture" – and also the second sting of the underground, escalated against the society of consumerism and commerce, is of course unthinkable in our circumstances. In addition, The Primitives Group interprets the repertoire of English and American psychedelic groups, so the perception of the content of the lyrics cannot directly affect the tone of the production. If nevertheless, we can consider this group to be representatives of the underground movement, it is mainly because it is impossible to fully agree with Rygull's assertion about the exclusive attachment of the underground to the US environment. If one assumption of the underground in our country – a perfectly functioning consumer society – is only in the bud, if it is possible to talk about its existence at all, why did The Primitives Group choose The Grateful Dead, The Mothers of Invention and The Fugs to interpret from a confusing line of bands? In the concept of Primitives, an equally important component of psychedelic music and the underground is emphasised – namely, a kind of revolution of feeling, creating and inhabiting its own world, based largely on emotions and instinct, a society established away from it, whether immaculately functioning or chaotic and unsatisfying even basic human needs. In the case of Primitives, we could probably speak of mental involvement, ether than political, but it is precisely this cultural area that rejects such divisions, or more precisely: it does not care."

In his first treatise on the underground, Ivan Jirous does not differ in principle from the perception of music journalists. He only applies the knowledge to a Czech group. The main feature of the American underground – an open protest against an overly rigid social order – adapts the Czech environment to the level of feeling, emotion, and instinct. A more noticeable shift in the Czech understanding of the underground is expressed in a concise and colloquial form in a short documentary, *Plastic People of the Universe*,[84] directed by a student of the FAMU film faculty César de Ferrari, under the supervision of Otakar Vávra in 1970. Jirous no longer bases his thesis on the Primitives Group, which disbanded in 1969, but on the Plastic People of the Universe, founded in October 1968 and briefly operating as a professional group under the PKS agency. The documentary found the band in a period when they had to return their instruments and gear after unsuccessful recordings,[85] and Ivan Jirous, as its artistic director, arranged for the musicians to work in the woods near Humpolec and play at local events in order to earn funds for the new gear. Jirous characterised the music of the ensemble as psychedelic, which, in addition to their rock style, also includes light and artistic components. Jirous characterised the creative underground attitude in which the abovementioned shift from the quoted article occurred. This time, he accepted the thesis of Ed Sanders from the American group The Fugs about an all-out

[84] *Plastic People of the Universe* [online], *YouTube*.com, Studio FAMU, dir. César de Ferrari, 1970, January 2015, accessed April 2021, available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeCQP5gaxy0.

[85] Retraining exams were one of the manifestations of the so-called normalization after the Soviet occupation in August 1968 – artists were repeatedly tested not only for musical skills, but especially in terms of political opinions and attitudes.

attack on culture directed against established society as valid for Czechoslovak conditions. These began to change inexorably during the 1970s. Like other representatives of free thought, rock bands started to be controlled, influenced, restricted, banned, and weaned from the possibilities of normal operation in the spirit of the established so-called normalisation cultural policy.

Jirous elaborated the same ideas in great detail in the Report on the Third Czech Musical Revival, published in 1975.[86] The concept of the underground in the conditions of communist Czechoslovakia extends to more general positions:

"Underground is not tied to a particular art direction or style, although in music, for example, it manifests itself mainly in a rock form. The underground is the spiritual position of intellectuals and artists who consciously critically define themselves against the world in which they live. It is a declaration of struggle against the establishment. It is a movement that works largely with artistic means, but whose representatives realise that art is not and should not be the ultimate goal of artists' efforts."

Jirous characterised the goal of the underground in the West as destroying the establishment. In contrast, he believed the goal of the underground in our country was to create a second culture, utterly independent of official communication channels, social appreciation, and the hierarchy of values of the establishment. Since 1973, Ivan Jirous and the Plastic People of the Universe started being associated with other supporters of a similar approach to the possibilities of self-realisation within communist society. The culmination of their few activities, in addition to recordings, was mainly three editions of festivals of the second culture. As a result, islands of free thought and action began to crop up throughout the country, experiencing more or fewer problems with the authorities or even the police.

Let's summarize that the underground in Czechoslovakia of the 1970s and 1980s refers to the activity of a diverse community of people who, as a result of censorship and bans, had given up on creating and consuming culture offered and mediated by official institutions and the media and were trying to create their own mechanisms and platforms of cultural and social life.

The core of the Czech underground, associated with Ivan Jirous, was radical in its opinions and evaluations and closed to a large extent.[87] The activities of people who did not want to submit to the establishment humbly, but did not want to give up on the possibility of official employment at any cost or did not have the opportunity to be in contact with the already existing underground activities, had much wider limits

[86] „Zpráva o třetím českém hudebním obrození", see Jirous, *Magorův zápisník*, p. 1971–1978.

[87] His distance from Jirous's conception of the underground, whose representatives "respect nothing but themselves and their opinions", was expressed in 1975 by the artist Milan Knížák, whose ensemble Aktual otherwise naturally fit into the underground context. In a "Letter to all who know the circle around Jirous and also me", entitled "The Avant-Garde as Terror", he states, among other things: "I am happy that these people do not have power, [...], if they came to power, I would be (and probably not only me) sentenced to life imprisonment" (Alan, *Alternativní kultura*, p. 542).

in this period. During the second half of the 1970s, the musical expression of some musical ensembles, especially when they participated in events organised by the Jazz Section of the Union of Musicians[88], began to be referred to as alternative. The pioneer of this term was the music publicist Josef Vlček. He expressed his basic thesis, defining its content and scope, in a 21-point text "Úkoly české alternativní hudby" [Tasks of Czech Alternative Music], published as an editorial to the program of the 9th Prague Jazz Days at the beginning of November 1979.[89]

Vlček defined that "alternative music is a current that seeks to create distinctive music beyond the commercial and aesthetic dictates of the media." He sharply contrasted it with the character of normalising pop culture: "the artistic norms of our media in the entertainment industry are a badly disguised cloak of self-interest, hypocrisy, corruption, narrow-mindedness, conservatism..." He elevated the pursuit of originality, spontaneity, quirkiness and sincerity above technical "prowess, perfection or proximity to modern jazz or classical music." It encouraged musicians to record their own on tapes or cassettes instead of gramophone records, the production of which was controlled by state labels and inaccessible to most alternative musicians.

We can see that the theses of the alternative scene overlap in many ways with Jirous's conception of the underground, especially with its absolute contempt for the establishment and its cultural consequences, as well as with the elevation of authenticity and sincerity above mere musical skills. However, Vlček distanced himself from the underground in the last point of his thesis, while at the same time not declaring a cultural revolution but only accusing the regime of the current state: "Alternative music is not an underground, voluntarily isolating from reality. Alternative music will not change the world, or even just our culture; it is not the cause of its future changes, but the consequence of its crisis."

In this period, the understanding of the terms "amateur" and "professional" also changed. The phrase "amateur musician" and "amateur music" began to be perceived as a free musician whose work does not have to be subject to agency or party requirements. Paradoxically, "professional" began to be identified with terms such as subordinate, sold out, and obsequious. Many musicians of the alternative scene were employed in easier jobs such as night watchman, stoker and the like so that they could direct all their creative energy into their musical creation, performed on an amateur basis. Similarly, the term "commercial" was understood very pejoratively, and the opposite was the positively perceived expression "non-commercial." At that time, the lucrative gainful activity of quality music was simply given up in our country.

Groups or singer-songwriters of the alternative scene developed an unprecedented activity at that time in terms of recording and distributing homemade au-

[88] For larger context of Jazz Section activities see Vladimír Kouřil, *Jazzová sekce v čase nečase 1971–1987* [*Jazz Section in Time of Non-time 1971–1987*], Praha: Torst 1999, *passim*, and Karel Srp, *Výjimečné stavy: Povolání Jazzová sekce* [*States of Emergency: Profession Jazz Section*], Praha: Pragma 1994, *passim*, or web pages https://jazzova-sekce.cz/nas-pribeh/.

[89] The text is available online at https://jazzova-sekce.cz/storage/ostatni-publikace/9PJD-Scena-alternativni-hudby.pdf.

dio recordings, including their own packaging, especially on demo tapes. Due to the much greater frequency of these activities compared to the musical underground, the functioning of the alternative scene fulfilled some attributes of the second, parallel culture more than the underground itself. However, the boundaries between the underground and the alternative scene were very loose and permeable, and many bands such as "Psí vojáci" [Dog Soldiers] or "Garáž" [Garage] were seen as part of both spheres.

In his later retrospective view of the alternative scene in 2001,[90] Josef Vlček ultimately included the Czech music underground itself. The title of his chapter, "Alternative Musical Scenes", thus expresses a broader category, within which the musical underground is one radical variant. The creators of a multi-part documentary series of the same name on Czech Television (1997–2001)[91] also signed up for the alternative culture connection. They also understand the cycle "about foreign and Czech art on the edge and beyond it" very broadly, both in terms of artistic and social activities and the degree of communication with official institutions and the media. The meaning and scope of the terms alternative, alternative music or scene have been widely clarified and specified by authors such as Mikuláš Chadima,[92] Pavla Jonssonová[93], and Jana Petrová[94].

The alternative scene or music in Czechoslovakia of the 1970s and 1980s can therefore be defined as the activities of a diverse community of people who, within the framework of censorship and prohibitions, tried to use the possibilities of creating and consuming culture, offered and mediated by official institutions and media, but not at the cost of major concessions and loss of control over the result. If they failed in this, they looked for other opportunities and platforms for cultural and social life, including those on the border of legality.

The category of the grey zone occupies an even wider and more ambiguous space. Several subjective explanations are heard in the three-part documentary of the same name by Czech Television. For example, in the first part of the cycle, the Slovak archaeologist and politician Ladislav Snopko characterised it succinctly as "official people in unofficial situations". The singer-songwriter Jaromír Nohavica called it

[90] Alan, *Alternativní kultura*, p. 201–263.

[91] *Alternativní kultura* [*Alternative Culture*], two series, thirteen parts, Česká televize, dir. Petr Slavík, 1997–2006.

[92] See memoirs of Chadima, *Alternativa*, *passim*, and Chadima, *Alternativa I, passim*. See also his chapter in on alternative scene in a book on Czech subcultures *Kmeny 0* (Vladimír 518 et al., *Kmeny 0* [*Tribes 0*], Praha: BIGGBOSS and Yinachi 2013, p. 368–401), where a brief treatise on the underground was written by Josef Rauvolf (p. 110–135).

[93] Pavla Jonssonová, *Devět z české hudební alternativy osmdesátých let* [*Nine of the Czech Musical Alternatives of the 1980s*], Praha: Karolinum 2019, passim. In addition to references to sources, the content of underground and alternative categories is also compared on the basis of her own experience and findings from many of her own interviews with musicians.

[94] Jana Petrová, *Zapomenutá generace osmdesátých let 20. století: Nezávislé aktivity a samizdat na Plzeňsku* [*The Forgotten Generation of the 1980s: Independent Activities and Samizdat in the Pilsen region*], Plzeň: Jana Petrová 2009, *passim*. The author adapts the general theoretical basis to the local conditions of the region.

"the space between the underground and collaborationism" in the second part. In the third part of the cycle, Jan Rejžek expressed this in a similar way, describing the category by analogy to playing with the Bolshevik on the edge of the possible. In this work, however, more derogatory analogies appear as well. The singer-songwriter Jan Burian identifies the grey zone with the petty bourgeoisie, and the documentarist Miloš Kroupa likens it to an imaginary treaty with the Bolsheviks, according to which the people of the grey zone will be free only in private, but everything public will be a lie.

Trever Hagen[95] quotes Josef Škvorecký's article from 1986,[96] where the Czech writer characterises the grey zone kindly as

"the conspiracy of normal people who stand between the fanaticism of the orthodox, the cynicism of the pragmatic on the one side, and the abnormal moral courage of the dissidents on the other. They have no organisation unless human decency is an organising principle. They [make] really existing socialism livable."

A separate essay on the category's content was written in September 1989 by Jiřina Šiklová.[97] She refers to a samizdat article from 1988, whose authors described historians who remained "in the structure" but did not lose contact with former colleagues who were expelled during the purges after 1968. Šiklová herself delimits the grey zone much more broadly. First, it defines two innumerable distinct and socially active groups of people – the socialist establishment, made up of paid officials, security forces and so on, on the one hand, and a circle of dissidents on the other. Among them, she sees two large groups – the silent majority, which is primarily consumer-oriented and not interested in politics, and the grey zone, made up of qualified, professionally erudite people who "are employed in the structure in places roughly corresponding to their qualifications, are not in a 'ghetto', they want to keep the small benefits, which the regime provides to those who are in the norm. At the same time, they try to do nothing, do no harm to anyone."[98]

The grey zone cannot be precisely defined, and in fact, this expression is rarely used in music journalism or historiography. Let us, therefore, settle for a general definition of the grey zone as a very broad sphere of activity of a diverse community of people in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. Its members do not want to build a career at the cost of collaborating with a regime they disagree with, but they also do not want to expose themselves to the danger that any visible activity runs against the assumptions of the official regime bodies and institutions would cause.

[95] Hagen, *Living in Merry Ghetto,* p. 53.

[96] Josef Škvorecký, „Hippness at Noon: Communism´s Crusade against Jazz and Rock in Czechoslovakia, *The New Republic* (December 17, 1986): p. 17–25.

[97] Jiřina Šiklová, "Šedá zóna a budoucnost disentu v Československu" ["The Gray Zone and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia"], *Reportér* (2, 1990, supplementum): p. 140ff.

[98] Šiklová, "Šedá zóna a budoucnost disentu v Československu", p. 143.

The place of the underground in the development of Czech rock music

The primary musical and genre affiliation of the Czech underground is undoubtedly rock.[99] The development of Czech rock music in the 1950s–1960s and 1980s–1990s could be seen as innovation through foreign impulses and a gradual adaptation and assimilation within the natural stylistic-genre tension and Czechisation. However, a much broader view of the 1970s needs to be applied.

The situation in Czechoslovakia, which arose in the early 1970s, can be characterised as the disintegration of the rock movement. It certainly had subjective causes (the inclination of many performers towards the financially more prosperous mainstream of popular music, the effort of others to find employment abroad, the too rapid growth of demands on interpretive and sound quality, etc.). However, there were mainly objective causes (a fundamental change in the cultural-political atmosphere after August 1968, resulting in sharpened ideological criteria, strict requirements for band names in Czech and Czech lyrics, short hair of musicians and questioning the functions of rock music in society in general).

Objective causes amplified and multiplied the aforementioned subjective motives. The following stratification of Czech rock music can thus be traced in five isolated, internally even more stylistically differentiated lines of opinion, determined by the attitude to the new social reality after August 1968: 1. a complete transition to popular music mainstream, 2. a partial inclination to the popular music mainstream, 3. a mainstream rock line, 4. an alternative scene, 5. an underground.

1. An extensive stream was represented by singers and instrumentalists who completely abandoned the context of rock music at that time and moved to the less controversial and relatively trouble-free sphere of mainstream modern popular music, which they greatly revived with their interpretive and sometimes creative contribution. Most of them, especially solo singers, remained in the pop sphere: Hana Zagorová, Marie Rottrová, Petr Spálený, Karel Černoch, Pavel Novák, Petr Novák, Martha and Tena Elefteriadu or Pavel Fořt, Jan Obermayer and others. Some, especially instrumentalists, working in the accompanying groups of mainstream singers, returned to rock in the 2nd half of the 1970s: Slávek Janda, Vladimír Kulhánek, Jan Kubík, Pavel Váně, Zdeněk Kluka, singers such as Michal Prokop. Several originally rock singers found refuge in the lucrative sphere of domestic and especially foreign bars (Viktor Sodoma, temporarily also Jiří Korn or Petr Rezek).

2. The second stream was represented by ensembles or soloists who retained the stylistic orientation from their previous work but moved the overall expression and concept closer to a less flexible and less distinct position of the middle stream of modern popular music: for example, the Olympic (groping in search of a concept,

[99] The following passages are an abridged version of the middle part of a three-part review series on the development of Czech rock music, published by in 1990: Aleš Opekar, "Základní vývojové tendence v české rockové hudbě, 2. část: 70. léta" [Basic Tendencies in the Development of Czech Rock Music, part 2: the 1970s], *Hudební rozhledy* (12, 1990): p. 567–570.

especially on the fourth album from 1973) or Pavel Bobek and Karel Kahovec, who more closely adhered to gradually commercialised country music with Czech lyrics.

3. The third line was created by bands trying to maintain the continuity of authentic rock development even in changed difficult conditions. Several LPs also played a positive role here, completing the last period of the work of some influential groups of the previous decade: *Barnodaj* by the Progress Organisation 1971, *Město Er* by the Framus Five 1971, *Kuře v hodinkách* by Flamengo 1972. In the last two albums, thanks to its cooperation with Czech poet Josef Kainar, Czech rock has merged with Czech poetry and, by extension, with Czech folk songs, especially by the principle of the musical grasp of verses, consistently respecting the content and mood of the lyrics, and the recitative character of the singing. The former singer and author of the bands Blue Effect and Flamengo Vladimír Mišík came the farthest in this direction, who also began to set to music older poems by Josef Kainar and other poets (Václav Hrabě, František Gellner). While, for example, Pavel Chrastina's lyrics for the Olympic were still largely captive to their music, subordinated to the rhythmic models adopted, and thus revealed, especially in phrasing, the influence of English, this period brought an important step forward – an approach from the opposite side: rock music accommodated the Czech lyrics and rhythmically and expressively adapted more to the character of the Czech language. This orientation was supported by occasional collaborations between rock musicians, folk singer-songwriters, and folk-rock ensembles such as the C&K Vocal and the Marsyas.

Other stylistic focuses that resulted in the primary rock development line of the 1970s were art-rock (Collegium Musicum, Progres 2, Modrý efekt, Synkopy, Abraxas), jazz-rock (Jazz Q, Energit, cooperation of the M.efekt and Jazz Orchestra of Czechoslovak Radio, Impuls, Bohemia, Mahagon, Prague Big Band of Milan Svoboda, Pražský výběr Michaela Kocába and hard rock, prevalent especially at country dances (Orient, Benefit, Marquis John, Adepti, Boomerang, Koule, Katapult). New bands, formed in 1971–3 on an amateur basis, were based on the hard rock or blues-rock repertoire and found it challenging to find their own style (Abraam, Inrou, Feeling Free, Expansion).

Since the beginning of the 70s, the Hanspaulka blues scene in Prague was born in relatively autarkic, subcultural conditions, the centre of which was the restaurant "U Tyšerů". Especially the Žízeň band gradually gave rise to satellite formations, which became an integral part of the Prague rock scene (Žlutej Pes, Yo Yo Band, Nahlas, Bluesberry, Krausberry, Hlava B).

This third trend of the period also includes a wave of rock'n'roll revivalism that occurred at the end of the 1970s (Transit with Miki Volek, Gram and later Cadillac with Pavel Sedláček, Classic Rock'n'roll Band and later also Matěj Čech with his band).

4. The fourth stream, which illustrates the situation in Czech rock music of the 70s, was the alternative scene. It was formed as an inevitable reaction of the minority but tastefully defined layers of younger musicians and listeners to the change in the cultural-political and organisational conditions. The alternative scene was created by amateur ensembles, inclined to their own distinctive concept, usually without direct

responses to hard rock or blues, but with the ambition to experiment with various forms of rock, folk, jazz and non-traditional sound sources. They created their own musical culture as an alternative to popular music, accepted and offered by the mass media, even at the cost of losing prospects for wider social application, including professionalisation. An alternative scene can be talked about since 1972 when the bands Extempore and Stehlík were formed. Three years later, the Elektrobus ensemble joined them, and in 1976 Extempore was joined by its later leader, saxophonist Mikuláš Chadima. In 1977–79 the bands Stehlík and Elektrobus disbanded and, with other musicians, regrouped into the formations Kilhets, Švehlík and Amalgam.

From the various initial foreign musical influences, it is possible to generalise the common denominator in the work of Frank Zappa, but some ensembles (F.O.K., Extempore) initially tended more towards folk music expression. The musical character of the alternative scene was most often based on a more complex irregular rhythm, over which an experimental guitar sound was built. The compositions mostly reached larger dimensions, especially in instrumental passages, which prevailed over the use of singing (Stehlík, Švehlík). The stylistic dispersion of the scene was not limited in any way. Therefore free rock with industrial inclinations, tending towards performance (Kilhets), as well as music inspired by Japanese and Indian traditions and Zen philosophy (Amalgam, Relaxace), could appear here. Orthodox rock'n'roll ensembles (Classic Rock'n'roll Band) were thus connected with the alternative scene, and the first ensembles were influenced by punk and the new wave (Zikkurat, Antitma 16).

The alternative scene was closely connected with the activities of the Jazz Section of the Union of Musicians[100], which also offered it the most concert opportunities at its Prague Jazz Days[101]. The circle of alternative bands from the 1970s disintegrated as a scene between 1981 and 1982, largely in connection with the culmination of restrictive measures and pressures of state and police authorities towards the Jazz Section. Its activists were later charged and convicted on the pretext of illicit economic activity. However, many personalities emerging from the alternative scenes (Alexandr Hajdovský, Mikoláš Chadima, Pavel Richter) continuously devoted themselves to home studio recording and occasional performances, which continued to be perceived as an alternative.

5. The fifth stream, which concludes the overview of the stratification of the Czech rock scene of the 1970s, is the underground. It originated as a feeling of belonging to the predominantly musically understood meaning of the expression in the second half of the 60s. Later, however, it brought together creators who decided to operate entirely outside the official social structures due to totalitarian cultural-political conditions and circumstances. The creators were thus constantly exposed to repressive pressures from state and security authorities, and many of them were senselessly pun-

[100] In Czech "Jazzová sekce Svazu hudebníků". For more information see footnote 66.

[101] In Czech "Pražské jazzové dny", organised from 1974 to 1979. The 10th edition, scheduled for September 1980, was completely banned at the last minute.

ished by the courts. The phenomenon of the Czech underground thus acquired the character of conscious life and spiritual attitude.

Of the foreign musical influences, the strongest initial impulses were given by the creation of American psychedelic groups, British rhythm & blues groups, the American underground of the 1960s (Velvet Underground, Mothers of Invention, Fugs, Captain Beefheart and others) and by extension, the ideas of Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary. However, Plastic People of the Universe soon developed their own distinctive style, based on the non-melodic, distinctly declamatory treatment of lyrics and contrasting melodic interplays with the characteristic use of the saxophone. This style, which coincidentally was similar to the abovementioned Vladimír Mišík's setting of poetic Czech lyrics to music, was later imitated by many other domestic ensembles of the underground scene. From 1969 to 1970, the Plastic People group gained professional status. However, in 1971 and 1973, the band did not meet the "normalisation" agency requirements (appearance changes, including long hair, censorship of lyrics, shifting English names to Czech ones, political awareness...). As a result, it started to operate permanently only outside the state-permitted possibilities. They were the only ones from the underground scene to continuously record demos released abroad on gramophone records (the most famous is *Egon Bondy's Happy Heart Club Banned* with recordings from 1973–75 with poems by Egon Bondy).

In 1973, the scene was expanded by DG 307, Umělá hmota and Bílé světlo. As other representatives, we can name Aktual (founded by artist Milan Knížák in Mariánské Lázně in 1967, with inspiring happening use of non-traditional and purely non-musical instruments), the Sen noci svatojánské band, Sanhedrin, Dr. Prostěradlo Band, Hever & Vaselína Band, Old Teenagers (later Classic Rock'n'roll Band). Several times, the ensembles of this scene met at the Festivals of the Second Culture (in Czech "Festival druhé kultury"), initiated by Ivan Jirous: 1st September 1974 at Postupice near Benešov, 21st February 1976 at Bojanovice near Prague and 1st October 1977 at Hrádeček (Václav Havel's cottage).

The general view of the period of the 1970s and the 1980s testifies to the disproportionate growth and expansion of the so-called middle stream (mainstream) of popular music, which gradually became completely alienated from rock impulses, from which it initially drew its viability. As a result, it lost its internal developmental potency.

On the other hand, the orthodox rock itself was completely pushed out of the mass media and condemned to peripheral subsistence. On gramophone records, it was released sporadically and unsystematically. Nevertheless, the 3rd Czechoslovak Beat Festival in Prague's Lucerna in April 1971 was still organised with difficulty. Foreign participation from Hungary (Omega) and Poland (Czeslaw Niemen) heralded the cult of these national scenes, to which a part of domestic rock fans clung for some time.

The leading cause of the crisis of our popular music in the 70s was the normalisation line of party cultural policy, according to which popular music was politically abused in the so-called crisis years of 1968–69 and thus became a co-bearer of ideas and moods of the social processes of that time. Resolution of the Government of

Czechoslovakia on the situation in entertainment music No. 63/1975[102] completed the centralisation measures, strict registration of artists and control of the contents of their work. The first legislative manifestation of this line was already expressed in Government Resolution No. 212 of 1972, which recommended the reconstruction of the existing agency system and the start of retraining procedures. The retraining system, insensitive to the essence of musical manifestations of subcultural provenance, disrupted the natural continuity of rock development. It caused the disintegration of many formations, meant that many musicians chose to move to the commercial shores of popular music and, finally, pushed part of the scene into an unofficial, sometimes even underground position. The alternative and underground scenes had a limited, specialised audience, communicating with their music on a subcultural basis with the unmistakable participation of costume, artistic elements, theatrical elements, performances, etc. (long hair, blue jeans, visual and action accessories of concerts). The relatively isolated and sometimes outwardly intolerant way of existence of the individual, above-described lines of opinion resulted in insufficient mutual inspiration and confrontation between the individual stream, causing a deepening of the overall lagging behind global development of modern popular music, which was reflected especially in the decreasing quality and increasing rigidity of the domestic mainstream of pop music. The misconception that mainstream popular music could do without contact with other domestic subcultural impulses (i.e., at that time, mainly new forms of rock) was most clearly reflected in the absolute conservatism of the mass media.

Pluralistic structures in the production, organising and journalistic front were gradually liquidated and replaced by the monopolisation of state and party institutions (Supraphon and Panton; "Pražské kulturní středisko" (PKS) and regional cultural centres; the only specialised magazine on popular music *Melodie*, next to the slightly younger *Gramorevue*, which, however, primarily defended the interests of the publisher – Supraphon; decisive control influence of national committees, their commissions and inspectors...). It was only in 1976–77 that specialised programs about popular music appeared on radio and television with a more or less interesting dramaturgy, into which rock music also penetrated (e.g. "Větrník", "Toulky", "Písničky pod rentgenem", "Hitšaráda").

However, in the given conditions, difficult due to increasing repressive pressures, enthusiastic activities were born at the same time, trying to substitute some of the functions of the dismantled platforms despite the obstacles. As an example, we can mention Miloš Čuřík's programs "Labyrint" in clubs and cultural houses like Cíl, Invalidovna, Rokoska, in which, in addition to spoken word, films and recorded music, unconventional rock bands also got the opportunity to perform. Čuřík's shows of amateur groups, organised within the framework of the methodical centre he built, became an attractive part of the Prague Jazz Days. Their organiser – the Jazz Section of the Union of Musicians – gradually arrived at a more general and broad conception

[102] See e.g. Antonín Matzner, Ivan Poledňák and Igor Wasserberger (eds.), *Encyklopedie jazzu a moderní populární hudby* [*Encyclopedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music*], část věcná [factual volume], Praha: Editio Supraphon 1983, p. 274.

of jazz culture. They built a broad and professional platform as a refuge for diverse, unconventional and socially not preferred spheres of culture (setting up ensembles, consultancy, lectures, exhibitions, regular festivals and shows, and the internal magazine *Jazz Bulletin*, in which the space devoted to rock music grew). Hidden censorship pressure and information blockade from the Anglo-American world contributed to stabilising the importance of spoken journalism in the form of so-called listening discotheques (anti-discotheques by Jiří Černý, later also programmes by Josef Vlček, Jan Rejžek or Petr Dorůžka).

Some clashes of the creative rock front with the bodies and instruments of political power led spontaneously to strengthening the process of forming an active and conscious political opposition. The exemplary trial of underground musicians in 1976 (Plastic People, DG 307, some folk singer-songwriters) played a unifying role, provoking a wave of solidarity and protests by some free-thinking representatives of the cultural front, the intelligentsia and other citizens, and thus became a decisive impulse for the establishment of Charter 77 and related civic initiatives.

A new generation of underground groups arose in the 1980s not only in Prague (Psí vojáci, Národní třída, Hally Belly) but also in various Czech regions: Žatec (É Ucho Debil Accord Band, Orchestr Bissext), Sokolov (Beatový družstvo), Vsetín (Posádková hudba Marného Slávy), Valašské Meziříčí (Slepé střevo), Brno (Odvážní Bobříci, Ještě jsme se nedohodli, Pro pocit jistoty). Some followed the example of older underground ensembles of the 70s, others became part of punk and the new wave of the rock scene. During the 1980s, the communist regime changed its strategy towards rock music, which it began to tolerate, but tried to continue to control it (see, for example, the Rockfest festivals 1986–89). Underground artists, however, remained out of the way of official employment until the Velvet Revolution in November 1989.

Overlaps beyond the rock style and normalisation era

Artistic, literary and theatrical activities were part of the Czechoslovak underground, and we can also extend the view of the musical side of the phenomenon beyond the explicit rock sphere. From the beginning of the 70s, folk singer-songwriters such as Svatopluk Karásek, Charlie Soukup, or Dáša Vokatá were an integral part of events otherwise focused predominantly on rock. The singer-songwriter Vlastimil Třešňák became a part of the underground apartment theatre performances. Other singer-songwriters worked in the alternative scene (Oldřich Janota) or the grey zone (Vladimír Merta). Some modern jazz groups, especially the Free Jazz Trio from Olomouc, were introduced into the underground context by Jan Blüml.[103]

Chanson singers created their own limited spaces in case of emergency, although in their case, it was rather a grey zone, as discussed above.[104] Fans of contemporary

[103] See Kudrna, *Od mániček k undergroundu*, p. 162–167.

[104] More detailed circumstances are described by Ilona Borská, *Opravna duší – založena 1969* [*Repair of Souls – Established 1969*], Praha: Asociace hudebních umělců a vědců 1994, *passim*.

classical music also gathered in apartments or cellars. Composers Marek Kopelent, Zbyněk Vostřák, Jan Klusák, Miroslav Kabeláč and the musicologists Vladimír Lébl and Eduard Herzog listened to new Czech compositions or other avant-garde music, not available elsewhere and discussed it. In 1978 the first performance of Marek Kopelent's composition since the onset of normalisation took place, and, as reported by Petr Kofroň[105], "the Czech musical semi-dissent came in large numbers". Some of the composers were members of the Prague Group of New Music (Pražské skupiny Nové hudby) at the time of the Prague Spring (Prazskí Jaro) (1967–68), and after 1989 they became part of one of the domestic associations for contemporary music – the music association Ateliér 90.

To what extent can we talk about the underground even after 1989? On the one hand, they may see themselves as underground adherents of skinhead culture and other extremist groups that defy the law and must hide from police punishment. However, such an approach is not entirely in line with the former theses of John Peel or Jirous's source R. Rygulla from the late 1960s and, of course, not even in accordance with Jirous's concept, adapted to local conditions since the 1970s. Musicians from the underground of the 1970s could perform and travel abroad freely from the 1990s onwards, and Plastic People became almost a government band during Václav Havel's presidency. In the following periods, their situation returned to conditions reminiscent of the underground, but the hallmark of an artist who had merit in the past does not belong to the current underground. As such, have the traits characteristic of the underground passed on to newer provocative genres, which have started exploring new directions or will do so in the future? After the rock underground, it was more of an electronic dance scene with its illegal techno parties, the first steps of Czechoslovak hip-hoppers and night sprayers, the Internet culture, building its time on community platforms and servers, and in a way, any bunch that despises the media offered by the establishment, and publishes and distributes its own creations via the Internet or anything to which it has free access. The rock underground of the 1970s and 1980s is already history.

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[105] Petr Kofroň, "Skladatel, který si udržel vnitřní integritu" ["Composer Who Maintained His Inner Integrity"], *Lidové noviny* 28. 4. 2012, p. 12.

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Religion in the Lyrics of the Czech Underground

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https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2022.3

Abstract: The study analyses various types of religion manifested in the lyrics of Czech underground musicians in the 1970s and 1980s. The author primarily examines the religious, implicitly religious, and social sources of musicians and the recipient communities in religion. In the second part of the study, he focuses on the types and ways of presenting religious content. Although much of it was derived from ecclesiastical Christianity (which does not mean that it corresponded to specific confessions or religious traditions), he also notes non-Christian and alternative spiritualities parallel to any organised religion. Although the article does not pay much attention to the reception of the underground religion and its communities, the author concludes that this phenomenon was among the key manifestations of modern self-oriented spirituality in Czech society.

Keywords: religion; music; underground music; religious lyrics; religion and Communism; Czechoslovakia – 20th century

Abstrakt: Studie analyzuje různé typy religiozity manifestované v písňových textech českých undergroundových hudebníků v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech 20. století. Autor nejprve zkoumá náboženské, implicitně náboženské a sociální zdroje náboženských zájmů hudebníků i recipientských komunit, aby v druhé části studie obrátil pozornost k typům a formám prezentace náboženských obsahů. Třebaže většina z nich vycházela z církevního křesťanství (což ovšem nemuselo znamenat, že odpovídaly konkrétní konfesi nebo duchovní tradici), připomíná rovněž mimokřesťanské a alternativní spirituality bez vazeb k jakékoli organizované religiozitě. Článek sice nevěnuje větší pozornost recepci undergroundové religiosity a příslušným komunitám, autor však presto ukazuje, že tento fenomén patřil mezi nejdůležitější projevy moderní osobní spirituality v české společnosti.

Klíčová slova: náboženství; hudba; underground; náboženské texty písní; náboženství a komunismus; Československo – 20. století

Received: 20th April 2021
Accepted: 29th October 2021

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Although there are cases of Christian rock music (and they are on the rise),[1] in the first decades of its existence, rock music carried rather anti-religious overtones, and the social revolt of rockers (and even more so, the representatives of underground music) went sharply against established religiosity.[2] On the other hand, representatives of the churches often dismissed rock as "the Devil's music" and did not miss a single opportunity to warn against it.[3] While in the free societies of the Western world, these hostile attitudes were revised or suppressed over time (although they never completely disappeared), they lasted a very long time in totalitarian Czechoslovakia.[4] Rock music and its external attributes (long hair, clothing, noise, rejection of social norms) remained a symbol of the corruption of the modern world for many church leaders. In contrast, rock musicians were barely attracted by the traditionalist middle-class churches that had to adapt and succumb to the domination of the communist regime. Although both had a common enemy in the regime, they were often unable to find their way to each other.[5]

The quoted text and others show the complicated and long (if at all successful) way to mutual understanding, convergence, and eventual cooperation between Czech rock/underground musicians and revolting youth on the one side, and religious communities and their leaders on the other. However, mutual distance and misunderstanding did not necessarily mean complete neglect. Either because (the adored) Western rock began to contain religious themes and local musicians followed in its footsteps, or because these themes were, independently of the churches, perceived as riotous, political, and at the same time personally (existentially) significant. Religion, religious experiences and callings, which will be overviewed in this study, were not limited to ecclesiastical Christianity, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. Even if the mainstream traditions served as fundamental sources, many of their forms and fragments were de-traditionalised. This entire "cultural heritage" was significantly supplemented with new and alternative religious forms, taken from the occult milieu

[1] E.g. Steve Turner, *Hungry for Heaven: Rock'n'Roll and the Search for Redemption,* Downers Grove: InterVarsity 1995, passim; Cliton Heylin, *Trouble in Mind: Bob Dylan's Gospel Years,* New York: Lesser Gods 2017, passim.

[2] Glenn C. Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock'n'roll Changed America,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2003, passim; Alex Di Blasi and Robert McParland (eds.), *Finding God in the Devil's Music: Critical Essays on Rock and Religion,* Jefferson: McFarland & Co. 2019, passim.

[3] Bob Larson, *Rock & the Church,* S. l.: Creation House 1971, passim; Arthur Lyons, *Satan Wants You: The Cult of Devil Worship in America,* New York: Mysterious Press 1988, passim.

[4] Miroslav Marván, „O rockové hudbě nepopulárně" ["Unpopularly about the Rock Music"], *Život v Kristu* 11 (5, 1993): p. 11–12; Pavel Šupol, *Křesťan a hudba* [*Christians and Music*], Praha: Kartuziánské nakladatelství 2010, pp. 39–44; for a general overview cf. Miroslav Vaněk, *Byl to jenom rock'n'roll? : Hudební alternativa v komunistickém Československu 1956–1989* [*Was it Just Rock'n'Roll? Musical Alternative in the Communist Czechoslovakia, 1959–1989*], Praha: Academia 2010, passim.

[5] Martin C. Putna, „Mnoho zemí v podzemí: Několik úvah o undergroundu a křesťanství" ["Many Grounds of the Underground: Some Remarks on Underground and Christianity"], *Souvislosti* 1 (4, 1993), p. 14–32; Zdeněk R. Nešpor, „Prolegomena ke studiu religiozity českého undergroundu" [„Introduction to the Study of Czech Underground's Religiosity"], in: Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Hvězdná hodina undergroundu: Underground a Československo v letech 1976–81,* Praha: ÚSTR 2020, p. 144–164.

and (often idealised) Eastern religiosity. This paper aims to cover all the mentioned forms of religion and religiosity, although often just in an overview.

Recent research shows that despite the strong anticlerical repressions of the Communist regime, Czech religion was quite broad, multi-layered and multifocal in the 1980s.[6] Traditional churches (regardless of their inner diversity) were just one category of players, and the religious revival witnessed by society was filled with alternative sources. Sociologist Jiřina Šiklová mentioned the rise of the so-called Young Christians: "they consider themselves Christians even though it often does not meet the usual criteria... Many of them do not know the difference between the Old and New Testaments, have never read one or the other, do not know what the Gospels are, do not know the content and interpretation of the Holy Mass, do not know the meaning of the Eucharist, or they cannot explain the difference between a Catholic, a Protestant or an Orthodox. For many, Christianity even merges with animism, belief in astrology, mysticism, and parapsychology."[7] It was more common for young Christians and other alternatives to intermingle with rock musicians/listeners than in other cases.

Although we certainly do not want to claim that religious elements and motifs formed the predominant part of Czech rock lyrics and values associated with this music and lifestyle, we should not forget their existence. In the era of late state socialism, characterised by a low degree of political faith and tacit social agreement on the division of power, many youths looked for a spiritual escape, and some of them found it in a combination of alternative/countercultural music, and religion and religious symbols (rather than in church attendance or even membership). If this was true about a significant part of society at the end of the communist regime in the 1980s (although it did not last long after its fall in the 1990s), a decade earlier, it characterised at least the avant-garde and revolting (small) circles associated with the underground. According to Jan Princ, "we made a makeshift altar with candles [in the cellar], and we always did spiritual exercises there on Sunday morning [...] During the day, we sat, drank, sang and played theatre, did anything, but always in the morning, whoever wanted voluntarily, so we went into that cellar, [where there was] an altar with candlelight, [...] and we held hands and gathered strength for the next week [...] And it went so far that those boys who had nothing to do with any church or Christianity they even began preparing for baptism."[8]

If we agree with Martin Machovec that "the remarkable cultural hybrid, which the Czech underground culture of the 1970s and 1980s was, was created precisely on the basis of a certain collaboration, or even the coexistence of a number of [publicly

[6] Zdeněk R. Nešpor, „Der Wandel der tschechischen (Nicht-)Religiosität im 20. Jahrhundert im Lichte soziologischer Forschungen," *Historisches Jahrbuch* (129, 2009), p. 501–532; David Václavík, *Náboženství a moderní česká společnost* [*Religion and Modern Czech Society*], Praha: Grada 2009, pp. 115–129.

[7] Jiřina Šiklová, „Mládež v ČSSR a náboženství" [*Czechoslovakian Youth and Religion*], *Svědectví* 79 (20, 1986): pp. 513–520.

[8] František Stárek Čuňas and Jiří Kostúr, *Baráky: Souostroví svobody* [*Barraks: The Archipelago of Freedom*], Praha: Pulchra 2010, pp. 162, 164.

muzzled] intellectuals and artists with rock 'primitives'",[9] religion played a role in this partnership and its fundaments. One can even encounter the extreme claim that "the Czech musical underground was a distinctly religious, convulsively Christian phenomenon."[10] Even if we do not go that far, we must pay attention to religiosity and religious elements in (rock) underground lyrics.

One more introductory comment is needed: If we understand religion quite broadly in this study, we must narrow the other side of our focus, the underground. Due to scope restrictions and other limits, the study will be limited to (persecuted) independent cultural activities under the Communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s.[11] Although underground was a fundamentally multidimensional and multi-genre phenomenon (including writing, theatre, recitation of poetry, happenings, land art, and many other art forms[12]), we will concentrate on its musical component. However, this focus allows us to see connections across musical genres, especially between rock and folk music (musicians, performances, and recipients). Despite these limitations, we cannot provide an in-depth overview of all the cases as the study does not aim to provide a detailed analysis of specific authors and performers. We would instead emphasise the general tendencies and variety of the use of religious elements in Czech underground lyrics.

Sources of underground religion

If the Czech underground was primarily a countercultural phenomenon[13] and if the official and other established forms of culture were significantly anti-religious, it was inevitable that the underground community became religious or was at least more positively oriented towards religion. The ideological expression of the underground

[9] Martin Machovec, „Podzemí a underground: Postavení undergroundové komunity v české společnosti 70. a 80. let a specifické hodnoty undergroundové kultury" [„The Undeground: The Place of the Underground Community in the Czech Society of the 1970s and 80s and the Specific Values of the Underground Culture], *Paměť a dějiny* (9, 2015): p. 7.

[10] Jiří Suk, „Fenomén underground" ["The Phenomenon of the Underground"], *Paměť a dějiny* (9, 2015): pp. 134–135.

[11] Similarly Josef Alan, „Alternativní kultura jako sociologické téma" ["Alternative Culture as a Sociological Theme"], in: Josef Alan (ed.), *Alternativní kultura: Příběh české společnosti 1945–1989*, Praha: Lidové noviny 2001, pp. 9–59; Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2012, passim; Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Od mániček k undergroundu* [*From Long-haired Men to Underground*], Praha: ÚSTR 2019, passim; Ladislav Kudrna (ed.), *Hvězdná hodina undergroundu: Underground a Československo v letech 1976–81* [*Underground's Finest Hour: Underground and Czechoslovakia 1976–81*], Praha: ÚSTR 2020, pp. 24–27.

[12] Cf. Jaroslav Riedel, *Plastic People a český underground* [*The Plastic People and Czech Underground*], Praha: Galén 2016, passim; Michal Přibáň, et al., *Český literární samizdat: 1949–1989* [*Czech Literary Samizdat, 1949–1989*], Praha: ÚSTR 2018, *passim*; see also an anthology made in the 1980s: Horna Pigment [Ivan Lamper], *Cs. underground IA – IIB* [samizdat], Praha: Mozková mrtvice 1984–85, *passim*.

[13] See e.g. Alan, „Alternativní kultura...", pp. 43–48.

was "counter-values", an alternative to the values of the mainstream culture, considered by its performers and recipients to be more significant, more profound, and fuller than others. They included values from existing religious traditions, especially from various interpretations of Christianity. This tendency was present even in the lyrics of the highly riotous (rather exclusive) music group Aktual, led by an artist and performer Milan Knížák, between 1967–73. Together with a concentrated attack on the established culture, it also offered a sort of a solution to an existential crisis, referring to religious values:

My bláznivý apoštolové
My spasíme svět
My převrácení hitlerové
Zasadíme květ

My bláznivý apoštolové
Rozbouráme zeď
My bujně snící vandalové
Naočkujem sněť

My bláznivý apoštolové
Řeknem dneska teď
My přiblblí kreténové
Ukřižujem svět

My bláznivý apoštolové
Poručíme leť
My opilci a narkomani
Rozkmitáme svět

My bláznivý apoštolové
Příští svět je náš
My bláznivý apoštolové
My sme mesiáš

(My blázniví apoštolové/Foolish Apostles)[14]

[14] All the lyrics are quoted from samizdat sources, especially Horna Pigment, *Cs. underground IA – IIB*, *passim*; the texts were collated by post-1989 editions including Milan Knížák, *Písně kapely Aktual* [*Songs of Aktual Band*], Praha: Maťa 2003, *passim*; Ivan Martin Jirous, *Magorova summa* [*Magor's Summa*], Praha: Torst 1998, *passim*; Svatopluk Karásek, *Vrata dokořán: Texty písní a básně* [*Gates are Open: Lyrics and Poems*], Praha: Kalich 2010, *passim*; The Plastic People of the Universe, *Texty* [*Lyrics*], Praha: Maťa 1997, *passim*; Karel Soukup, *Radio*, Praha: Torst 1997, *passim*; Pavel Zajíček, *DG 307: Texty z let 1973–1990* [*DG 307: Lyrics from 1973–1990*], Praha: Vokno 1990, *passim*. Nevertheless, it is clear that certain lyrics occure in multiple variants; for the purposes of this article, the textual differences are not essential.

According to Machovec, "ignorance, rawness, 'barbarism' and contempt for established cultural values ... naturally eventually grows into a new positive ... Paradoxically, a new, even collectively acceptable hope is born out of absolute hopelessness."[15] This hope, which centred on the underground community, not the individual or even humanity as a whole, naturally called for a kind of cleansing cut, which would ground the underground in opposition to the contemporary decay of values and perhaps even a sense of redemption (the Messiah bringing the crucifixion). However, it only related to the established forms of Christianity vaguely and somewhat metaphorically. On the other hand, their systemic negation did not avoid the institutional forms of faith either. It ended outwardly quite surprisingly, but internally quite logically (albeit rhetorically provocatively) with ethical imperatives:

To všechno je lepší než válka
To všechno je lepší než válka
To všechno je lepší než válka
V tomhle světě máme všechno co jen můžem mít
Bláznit, lítat, potápět se, válet se či dřít
A proto
MRDEJ A NEVÁLČI

(Mrdej a neválči/Fuck and Don't Fight)

Ethical and even religious references do not need to indicate a lived faith, which is quite unclear in the case of Aktual. As many times before in the history of art and literature, the references might have been employed simply because they were generally understandable – and had a roaring potential. However, even such use refers to a vicarious role of religion, because otherwise it would be meaningless. Nevertheless, Aktual's influence remained only marginal due to its exclusive nature and inability to create a wider and longer lasting community and the extreme character of its expression. The same could have also applied to the psychedelic and underground music attempts of the late 1960s (Primitives Group, Plastic People of the Universe). However, the strict communist repression against the musicians and the ideological leadership of Ivan Martin Jirous, who created the ideology of Czech "second culture"[16] (the most important ideological text was Jirous' Report on the Third Czech Musical Awakening[17]), led to another end. The community around the Plastic People absorbed (some of) the marginalised intellectuals, including theologians and religious studies scholars who became influential in the relatively liberal second half of the 1960s or more liberal

[15] Martin Machovec, „Šestnáct autorů českého literárního podzemí (1948–1989)" ["Sixteen Authors of the Czech Literary Underground (1948–1989)"], *Literární archiv PNP* (25, 1991): p. 52.

[16] Cf. Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, pp. 72–114.

[17] Published as samizdat in 1975 and as Jan Kabala [Ivan M. Jirous], „Zpráva z českého hudebního podzemí" [= Zpráva o třetím českém hudebním obrození] ["A Message from Czech Musical Underground"], *Svědectví* 51 (13, 1976): p. 571–586.

church communities (both of which could, of course, intermingle), who did not want to lose at least some of their influence. An example of the former is the lay Catholic intellectual, philosopher and essayist Jiří Němec; an example of the second would be Svatopluk Karásek, a protestant pastor banned from clerical work. Both strengthened the religiosity of the underground community significantly. Sometimes, pure coincidence played a role. Němec met not only with Jirous, who gradually became the leading "underground theorist", but also with the frontman of the Plastic People, Mejla Hlavsa, who later also became his son-in-law. In addition, Němec's wife (and Jirous' mistress) Dana Němcová and their large apartment in Prague Ječná Street became an informal social and information centre for the community, having a vital role in the communication between what were initially quite incongruous personalities and ideologies. The underground community thus became an environment in which religious intellectuals who had lost their (public, academic) audiences could discuss and partially implement their church reformist or even evangelical intentions, which could no longer be presented elsewhere in the 1970s.

Karásek wrote homonymous Czech lyrics to American spirituals, through which he emphasised the parallels between the contemporary world and the biblical message. His style and performance (single man playing acoustic guitar) made him more of a folk singer, which he also admitted himself,[18] but political bans drove him from the folk scene (and the Protestant church pulpit) to the underground, where he found a surprisingly warm reception.[19] Among other actualisations of biblical stories (e.g. Abraham's dispute with God over the fates of Sodom and Gomorrah in Kázání o zkáze/Sermon on Destruction, disobedience of pharaoh's command in Báby/Midwives, or Peter's denial in Vy silní ve víře/You Who Are Strong in Faith), Karásek emphasised personal responsibility and the primacy of God's call, instead of the world according to the Barmen theses. At the same time, he warned against the temptations and pressure of the world and evil.

Sejmou ti podobu sejmou
Sejmou ti podobu sejmou
Tvář tvou zmažou ti hlínou
Chtěj mít jen masku posmrtnou
Sejmou ti podobu sejmou

Sejmou tvou bustu sejmou
Sejmou tvou bustu sejmou
Čas už hází proti skále

[18] Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Děkuji za bolest: Náboženské prvky v české folkové hudbě 60.–80. let* [*Thank You For the Pain: Religious Motifs in the Czech Folk Music of the 1960s to 80s*], Brno: CDK 2006, pp. 226–231; Martin C. Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v kontextech 1945–1989* [*Czech Catholic Literature in Context, 1945–1989*], Praha: Torst 2017, pp. 785–791.

[19] Svatopluk Karásek, *Víno tvé výborné: Rozhovory – Štěpán Hájek – Michal Plzák* [*Your Excellent Wine: Interviews – Štěpán Hájek – Michal Plzák*], Praha: Kalich 2000, pp. 88–89.

Ty tvý hlavy sádrový
Sejmou ti podobu, sejmou

Say no to the devil, say no
Say no to the devil, say no
Devil is this evil
He won't treat nobody right
Say no to the devil, say no

Sejmou tvý obrazy sejmou
Sejmou tvý obrazy sejmou
Svezou je na velkou louku
Shořej v moři ohnivým
Sejmou tvý obrazy sejmou

Pak se pod zdí prázdnou sejdou
Koho teď tak karty sejmou
Teď padlo jim žaludský eso
Tak ho hned do rámu daj
Sejmou nám karty sejmou

Sejmou ti otisky, sejmou
Sejmou ti otisky, sejmou
Pak teprve poznáš ďábla
V škebli se ti rozsvítí
Sejmou ti otisky sejmou

Say no to the devil, say no
Say no to the devil, say no
Devil is this evil
He won't treat nobody right
Say no to the devil, say no

(Řekni ďáblovi ne/Say No to the Devil)

Actualising the proclamation of the Gospel to the unchurched modern man naturally involved a critique of the current socio-political situation, not just the Marxist ideology's strict rejection of the Christian faith but, above all, a life neglecting the fundamental humanist (originally Christian) values. This criticism also often pointed at visible church structures (e.g. songs Vy silní ve víře/ You Who Are Strong in Faith, Synodní rado/For the Synod Council), and this sounded even more honest from the mouth of a former pastor, whose loss of support from the "ecclesiastical powers" (the leadership of the Protestant Church of the Czech Brethren) did not deprive him of

faith, even after he lost the state's approval to work as a cleric. This won him more followers, and Karásek becamean informal religious teacher for the underground community, although he ostensibly rejected this position.

The rejection of the social and mostly even political conformation of official Christianity together with a claim for "true religion" was not solely the prerogative of Karásek in the underground. Other spiritual seekers also longed for religion, but not the church. This was the case of Pavel Zajíček, Vlastimil Třešňák, or Charlie Soukup. Vratislav Brabenec, a former student of Protestant theology, stated explicitly that he was interested in a religious message, but "I am trying to discuss Jesus' words [...] in my own way and look for what Jesus actually wanted to say. I think the current church does not understand him, it is moving away from Christ."[20] When Soukup referred to the biblical Cain, he did not need the church for anything and even implicitly accused it of inaction.

Včera jsem zabil svýho bratra
Od těch dob říkají mi Kain
Jidášem nazvala mě chátra
Tehdy když visel mladej pán

Jak tě mám rád
Má krásná Vltavo
Nechám si zdát
O Noemovi, o krutém boji,
Krvavých jatkách na neviňátkách
Na kříži visí pán

Už nebaví mě mávat mečem
Tak jsem vynalez' střelnej prach
V ohni že lidi strašně ječej
Topím v plynovejch komorách

Jak tě mám rád
Má krásná Vltavo
Nechám si zdát
O černém moru, lidském hororu,
O svatých válkách, uťatých lebkách
V plamenech hoří Jan

Ve světle nukleární pravdy
Poznáte, že mě poslal Bůh

[20] Petruška Šustrová, „Dvěstědvojka celej život..." [An interview with Vratislav Brabenec], *Revolver revue* 30 (1995): p. 62.

A podle jedné smlouvy
Vrátíte nesplacenej dluh

Jak tě mám rád
Má krásná Vltavo
Nechám si zdát
O světě v troskách, vězeňských kobkách,
O neutronu, rudém teroru
Magor zas‘ sedí sám

Ve světle nukleární pravdy
Vrátíte nesplacenej dluh

(Kain/Cain)

Soukup also rejected any rituals or community other than a "minute of non-spirit" – "come together and realise how stupid we are, that we can't think of anything at all. Let the misery resound. Not to try to defeat the right away, for example, by reading the psalm, which an honest man can do by himself; together we should only realise the inner emptiness."[21]

At the same time, however, the essence of religion was not questioned, not even by the critics of established "bourgeois" churches. On the contrary, religious values were seen as an ideal for which there was no substitute. Underground "truth-seekers" did not understand modern philosophical substitutes for religion (and they did not even tolerate them), as Jirous wrote in a programme poem critically reflecting the intellectual efforts of Egon Bondy (Zbyněk Fišer), in other cases considered an intellectual guru of the underground:

Pročpak mu říkáš vole
ontologické pole?
Tolik jsi zblbnul z láhve
že se bojíš říct Jahve?

(Proč mu říkáš vole/Dude, why do you call him; collection Magorovy labutí písně)

Bondy naturally did not answer, but in such a case, he could repeat the last verses of his earlier poem (K večeru/In the evening): I am in fact a left Marxist ("nikdo o mně neví/že jsem marxist levý"), intellectually more profound and straightforward than the nominal Marxists from the Communist Party. However, such an attitude was far from acceptable among the underground's spiritual seekers.

[21] Karásek, *Víno tvé výborné*, p. 128.

However, the religious seeking of the Czech underground was by no means limited to Christianity, churchly or not. In virtually all the communities that took religion seriously, there were at least partial attempts to understand Buddhism and other Far Eastern religious traditions, the religion of American Indians, and Western esoterism. Brothers Jáchym and Filip Topol and specific lyrics of the group Psí vojáci in the 1980s are well-known examples. "As we grew older, other religions emerged, Buddhism, Zen, yoga, the whole East came to us,"[22] which resulted from the (rather superficial) import of American counterculture and an expression of the older Czech inclination to spiritual alternatives.[23] However, such attempts have not led to a systematic interest in non-Christian spirituality in the long run. Instead, they only strengthened and thematically broadened the unchurched character of the originally Christian/Western ones.

Variety of underground lyrics

Ecclesiastically (re-)anchored underground members, or those spiritual seekers who found their way to traditional churches, could rely on their interpretation of official church teachings and consistent religious practice. Even that was quite wide. As Martin Fendrych recalled, "we thought that Jesus was with us, that he went with us to the pub, to concerts, to school, that he was with us when we prayed, when we stole our parents' cars, when the cops came after us, when we fucked. He was with each and every one of us. He might fight with us, but he definitely loved us."[24] A fundamental reliance on God, a combination of an awareness of man's sinfulness and God's forgiveness, often leading to a mystical approach to God, was to be found mainly among Catholic authors.[25] In the poetry of Fanda Pánek and sometimes Ivan Martin Jirous,[26] but especially in the lyrics of Dáša Vokatá, Christian God acquired the features of a partner, and sexual love served as an expression or symbol of eternal love like in a baroque metaphor.

Půjdu za tebou
Cestou zázraků
Půjdu za tebou
Polem bodláků

[22] Martin Fendrych, „Žijte složitě: Zpochybněná generace" [„Live Intrincately: The Questioned Generation"], *Vokno* 9 (1991): p. 113.

[23] Cf. Stanislav Balík, Lukáš Fasora, Jiří Hanuš and Marek Vlha, *Český antiklerikalismus: Zdroje, témata a podoba českého antiklerikalismu v letech 1848–1938* [*Czech Anti-Clericalism: Sources, Themes, and the Shape of Czech Anti-Clericalism, 1848–1938*], Praha: Argo 2015, pp. 382–392.

[24] Fendrych, „Žijte složitě," p. 113.

[25] Putna, *Česká katolická literatura,* pp. 725–797.

[26] Martin C. Putna (ed.), *Ivan M. Jirous: Magorské modlitby* [*Ivan M. Jirous: Magor's Prayers*], Praha: Biblion 2021, pp. 33–90.

Půjdu za tebou
Na cestu se dám
Půjdu za tebou
Abys nešel sám

Hvězdy nám září nad hlavou
Svou svatozáří sálavou
nás hřejí strážní andělé
I naši duši raněnou
I naše tělo zemdlelé
Než ztuhne hrůzou na posled
Zahřejou strážní andělé

Půjdu za tebou
Cestou zázraků
Půjdu za tebou
Polem bodláků
Půjdu za tebou
Na cestu se dám
Půjdu za tebou
Abys nešel sám

Tvá cesta plná kamení
Změní se v řeku oblázků
Protože věříš na lásku
Zaslechneš boží znamení
Není už cesty nazpátek
Mlčí lesy křížů
Řvou hory oprátek
Ošlehán ohněm
Zmrazen tmou
Jdeš do betléma za hvězdou
S růžencem slzí na vlásku

Větve se mazlí ve květu
Vzduch voní jarem zas a zas
Od Betléma až k Tibetu
Člověk je zrozen pro úžas
Slunce zas vklouzne do klásků
To pole, které spálil mráz
Vábí na letní procházku
A kdyby se náhle setmělo
Otřásl námi noční chlad

Přitisknem tělo na tělo
A spolehnem se na lásku

(Půjdu za tebou/Following You)

However, such attitudes were undoubtedly in the minority. Most underground members had to find their own ways to religion and God. While Zajíček's early poetics (written for the DG 307 and less often for the Plastic People) was full of nihilism close to Knížák, later on, the nihilism in the field of religion became a mere means of purification. "He became a chiliastic preacher, appealing in a language – in which, despite all the slang, neologisms, and anxious effort to speak as his beak grew, is to feel the lessons of reading the New Testament – to all of us who chose to create and live in underground so that we do not lose courage and humanity."[27] With his lyrics, Zajíček mainly criticised the pseudo-religious modernist "enlightened humanism," which he clearly considered a sign of inordinate human pride.

Čemu se podobáš
Ve svý velikosti
Seš dotek
Hvězda
Nebo zbytek kostí
Čemu se podobáš
Ve svý velikosti
Seš spasitel
Zvláštnost
Nebo plamen
Čemu se podobáš
Ve svý velikosti
Seš pravda
Bůh
Nebo tuna ješitnosti
Čemu se podobáš
Ve svý velikosti
Hovnu hovnu hovnu hovnu
Hovnu hovnu hovnu hovnu

(Podoba/Face)

This was not just a criticism. Zajíček also showed the way out, often inspired by early Christianity. The (ideal) religion was again seen in opposition to the corrupted world, though churches were uncompromisingly linked with the latter.

[27] Kabala [= Jirous], „Zpráva...“ p. 577, cf. p. 584.

Sv. Pavel
Celý život stíhán
Sv. Štěpán
Ukamenován
Jan Křtitel
Sťat
Ježíš
Ukřižován

Seká tobě někdo do hlavy
Seš snad hříčkou popravy
Máš nedostatek potravy
Obavy vo svý zdraví
Bořej se ti kostí základy
Připravujou proti tobě úklady
Mlátí ti někdo šutrem do hlavy?

Čeho se tedy bojíš?

Však ty víš!

Seš zakrnělej
Zbabělej živočich
Hlavně že seš
Prasácky dobře veleživ!

Sv. Pavel
Celý život stíhán
Sv. Štěpán
Ukamenován
Jan Křtitel
Sťat
Ježíš
Ukřižován

(Sv./St.)

At the end of the 1970s, Zajíček's lyrics moved further towards subjectivism. "They have turned into the testimony of a man whose fear of the pressure of an alienated and abused word leads to an ever-forgiveness of expression, to resignation not only to appeal in the political, religious or moral sense, but also to any 'disputes with the world'. The individual texts become the records of a fragment of a story, a shadow of existence and a dream; they are full of gloomy symbols and para-

bles."[28] The "prophetic" certainty of salvation and perhaps religiosity in general has disappeared, but only in order to make space for a pessimistic vision of extinction, projected onto decadent images.

Marný je putování k vrcholům
Když kořeny zarůstaj do bahna
Marná je šíleně jasná představa
Když v oku se odráží hrob

Stojíme nad propastí
Jedna noha hnije v pasti

Svůj popel vznášíš do hor
Abys ve svejch dlaních přines oheň
Osamělý vrcholy nabízej nejkratší cestu
Zastavení před smrtelným skokem

Stojíme nad propastí
Jedna noha hnije v pasti

Stvořil sis záhrobí do svýho žití
Tělo je ohořelej kmen napadenej snětí
Slzy sou chorobou
Slaným nánosem na srdci

Stojíme nad propastí
Jedna noha hnije v pasti

Neohlížej se dozadu stojí tam temná minulost
Temno se vplížilo i do tvýho přítomna
Vrůstáš do skleněný mohyly jak kalnej
Zvěstovatel smrti

Stojíme nad propastí
Jedna noha hnije v pasti

(Zvěstovatel smrti/Herald of Death)

A similar trajectory of eventually unsuccessful religious search can be traced for the most important Czech underground representative, the Plastic People of the Universe

[28] *Slovník českých spisovatelů od roku 1945 II.* [*Dictionary of Czech Writers since 1945, part II.*], Praha: Brána and Knižní klub 1998, p. 693 [entry by M. Machovec].

band.[29] Its way from psychedelic music through the decadent and ironic (and certainly irreligious) poetry of Egon Bondy to religious lyrics might be seen as rather coincidental. However, it was well understandable in light of the above-mentioned similar attempts for religious seeking. In the case of the Plastic People, it was also somewhat paradoxical. The group leader Mejla Hlavsa sought to depoliticise the group's repertoire, and writing music for the passion, which another band member, Brabenec, had originally made for the church choir, seemed like a good idea.[30] The outchurched Christian Brabenec himself found it a good idea, too, fitting in with the spiritual mood of the band and underground in general: "Mejla [Hlavsa] was a crazy Catholic, Jirous a Catholic peasant from Vysočina, so I didn't impose myself with that [Christian topic] there."[31]

Thanks to Brabenec, the group, which earlier fostered nihilism and uncertain religiosity at best, found its firm point in biblical Christianity. However strange (and hardly acceptable for any traditional churchmen) in performance, the album Pašijové hry velikonoční/The Passion (1978) followed the story of Jesus' passion literally and reverently, making its mark at the same time as one of the best (if not just the best) recordings of the band's history.

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?
Podej mi kalich hořkosti ode mne

Ale je-li to vůle Tvá, ne jak já chci,
Ale jak Ty chceš.
To jste nevydrželi ani hodinu bdít se mnou?

Otče, podej mi kalich hořkosti ode mne
Ale vůle Tvá, ne jak já chci, ale jak Ty chceš
Nevydrželi bdít ani hodinu

Petře, dřív než kohout zakokrhá,
Zapřeš mne, zapřeš
Ty jsi ta skála, otče, nevydrželi bdít ani hodinu

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?

Šimone, Jakube, Tomáši, Ondřeji,
Nespěte, jen hodinu bděte se mnou
Počkejte, teď je ten čas, ta hodina
Šimone, Jakube, Tomáši, Ondřeji

[29] For a comprehensive history see František Stárek Čuňas and Martin Valenta, *Podzemní symfonie Plastic People* [*The Underground Symphony of the Plastic People*], Praha: Argo and ÚSTR 2018, *passim*; see also Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, *passim*; Riedel, *Plastic People*, *passim*.

[30] Riedel, *Plastic People*, p. 224.

[31] Petr Placák, *Kádrový dotazník* [*Personal Data Questionnaire*], Praha: Babylon 2001, p. 77.

Otče, podej mi kalich hořkosti ode mne
Ale ne jak já chci, jak Ty chceš
Nevydrželi bdít ani hodinu

Vím, vím, písma se naplnila
O moje roucho trhajelos‘

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?

Golgota, místo popravčí
Ještě kus cesty nes Šimone jeho kříž
Golgota, místo popravčí
Ještě kus cesty nes Šimone jeho kříž

Vykoupení, smrt, smrt, vykoupení
Smrt, vykoupení, smrt
Jak je psáno a říkají proroci

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?

Golgota, místo popravčí
Jsi-li syn boží, sestup z kříže,
Sbory andělů ať tě snesou

Volej Boha, pomůže synovi
Nebo písmo chceš naplnit?
Sestup a uvěříme

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?

Jako lotra jali jste mne
Učil jsem v chrámě, nejali jste mne
Ten dav, jako lotra vedou mne,
S lotry ukřižují

Otče, podej mi kalich hořkosti ode mne
Ale ne jak já chci, ale jak Ty chceš

Otče, pročs jim neodpustil?

(Otče/Father)

Religious (or at least existential) interests remained essential for the Plastic People for the next several years, although they gradually lost their Christian character. From the pious, if not "fully orthodox" Passions, the poetics of the group led through transcendence in the poetry of Ladislav Klíma (Jak bude po smrti/How It Will Be After Death, 1979) to a more distinctive, albeit perhaps less successful album Co znamená vésti koně (Leading Horses, 1981), also written by Brabenec. The album provides an absurd intertextual game leading to a kind of (unchurched) spiritual message of hope, and Brabenec himself started to identify closer with Judaism than Christianity.[32]

Jsem sám Osip a hostinská a hospoda jeho
Sám utrápení a utracení všeho
A jeho bába svíčková umodlená a usouložená
Božízní po životě v ráji v háji
V báni budeš sedět a truchlit
Tak se pusť háčku nebo zalovím
A píchnu a říznu
A pusť krev za odpuštění našich hříšků brácho
Pomodli se ať neupadnem v pokušení
Tě tady zmalovat
Těmadle rukama jsem vychoval dvanáct pacholků a nosil vodu do rozžhavený hlavy mološí
Matičky vlasti a tobě rostou kozlí rohy nevděčníku
Amen pravím tobě
Nebude více zatvrzelosti a zlosti
Nebude nebe nebude tebe nebude
Vozíš se dlouho na ocase mé trpělivosti
A stín tvůj jako stín můj
Vrahu hvězdo anděli strážný čerte a potomku
Zlořečím a proklínám tě a ty se držíš
Válíme se oba v bahně i v mracích
Pláčeme oba nad sebou stejně
Ty víc ne já víc ty lépe
Ne já lépe sedíme spolu v cele i u řeky
S nadějí na neshledání na návrat na cestu
K á d á

(Osip, nebo Modlitba za Osipa Mandelštama/Osip,
or Prayer for Osip Mandelstam)

[32] Vratislav Brabenec and Renata Kalenská, *Evangelium podle Brabence* [*Gospel According to Brabenec*], Praha: Torst 2010, p. 44.

Although many of these symbols and metaphors came from a Christian background, something like this was entirely unacceptable for most (contemporary) religionists.

On the contrary, "easy" church religion was often the core target of Brabenec's provocative efforts, trying to incite people "to live wisely"[33] and manifesting this (religious? existential?) wisdom through the love of one's neighbour and an ecological balance – or human values that constantly referred to their religious basis. However, while Karásek and the Christian-oriented underground representatives did so through biblical parallels, Brabenec reached deeper into subjective (fear of) existential experiences similar to Zajíček in his late period. Czech underground – not only in these cases – found hope in the transcendence of this world, just as it found it socially in overcoming the interests and needs of the individual, in a kind of self-sacrifice.

If the Marxist ideologues accused rock artists of hidden religious aims, that "the super-revolutionary practice of rock music, beatniks, free 'artistic' improvisations in happenings [is] very close to the mysticism ... of religious consciousness,"[34] in the case of the Czech underground one cannot but agree. Unlike them, however, we do not have to see anything negative in that. Nevertheless, we cannot overestimate or generalise it either. The later production of the Plastic People of the Universe (in which Brabenec no longer participated due to his exile) went in a different direction and left out religious motifs and elements almost entirely. This was not an exception – quite on the contrary, for many underground artists and performers, the religious search was only a temporary or partial source of inspiration, which they eventually abandoned.

Conclusion

The length of this article and the current state of knowledge do not allow us to examine all the various sources and forms of religiosity in the Czech underground's lyrics. The rather extensive cultural-historical research is in its very beginnings. However, even the mentioned and described forms show the considerable breadth and significance of the manifestations of religion, both private and communitarian, within the underground counterculture. It also shows that the underground was predominantly limited to unchurched, somewhat idealised Christianity, a mystical or apocalyptic rejection of ordinary conformist society, whether it lived under communist or capitalist rules, and the churches that had adapted to it.

Cultural historian Martin C. Putna believes that the reason for this affinity for religion in the Czech underground – or at least one of the sources – was the exis-

[33] Machovec, "Šestnáct autorů...", pp. 56–57.

[34] Jevgenij Georgijevič Jakovlev, *Umění v zrcadle světových náboženství* [*Art in the Mirror of the Religions of the World*], Praha: Panorama 1983, p. 268.

tence of a Catholic countercultural milieu. Following the underappreciated Catholic Romanticism and especially the apocalyptic pamphlets of Léon Bloy, an influential centre of radical Catholic conservatism was established around Josef Florian in Stará Říše in the interwar period, with a far-reaching significance. According to Putna, "this is ... a form of Christianity that can be attractive to the underground: Christianity in its martyr-apocalyptic beginning, Christianity in various historical twists and turns of minority, protest and persecution. The form in which the underground recognises how its own situation resembles that of Christians in such periods and communities."[35]

However, one must ask whether this is more than just wishful thinking. It is doubtful that the (majority of) underground artists and performers knew the Catholic counterculture of Florian's cycle at the beginning, and although some of them later established direct personal ties to the "survivors" of Stará Říše, both personal and ideological, the influence cannot be overestimated. The underground interest in Christianity and other religious sources did not necessarily need such mediation, nor did it manifest just in radical Catholic traditionalism, mysticism or eschatology. Instead, this interest seems to have been based on the traditional grounding of Western culture and cultural values within the Christian tradition, which seemed to be the (only) real alternative to communist ideology. The Protestants had their Bible, and no one else needed to know anything about Florian to realise the closeness of early Christianity and the persecuted underground communities in their anti-social struggles. Putna himself later broadened his interpretation and contextualised it more widely,[36] though some of his new ideas about "moronic prayers" are also rather dubious.

It seems more fundamental to draw attention to the mentioned "normal" cultural values. In its consistent public reminder of the cultural (often religious) values that were paid lip service to but, in practice, were abandoned, the Czech underground was very close to Czech folk music (and its social milieu),[37] although their verbalisation and performance acquired utterly different forms. If we accept this analogy, we do not have to look for personal or ideological connections between marginal countercultural groups (although such ties may have formed later). It is quite sufficient to assume that the social and cultural conditions of the underground community's existence directly implied its (often temporary and non-institutionalised) interest in religion. The absence of institutional ties – both to the established churches and the marginalised communities of the "bourgeois churches'" opponents – led personal ideological creativity, albeit often caused by mere ignorance. Such a "bric-à-brac Christianity", extraordinarily rich but hardly disciplinable in various religious images, experiences and communities, was an essential aspect of the phenomenon of the Czech underground in the 1970s and 1980s.

[35] Putna, *Česká katolická literatura,* p. 736.
[36] Putna (ed.), *Ivan M. Jirous: Magorské modlitby,* pp. 261–290.
[37] See Nešpor, *Děkuji za bolest*, pp. 228–248.

At the same time, it is very close and attractive to the postmodern spiritual quests of contemporary society.[38]

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[38] Cf. Stephen Hunt, *Religion and Everyday Life*, London and New York: Routledge 2005, *passim*.

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Between the Scylla of Bowing to the Regime and the Charybdis of Frontline Clash: Evangelicals and the Underground in Czechoslovakia During the Normalisation

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https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2022.4

Abstract: Under the so-called normalisation, the community of underground artists was not the only source of an alternate lifestyle to state-mandated behaviour in Czechoslovakia. Many Evangelical communities provided young people with an equally different vision for living, albeit much less radical. The study aims to reveal what forms of contact took place between the two milieux, principally drawing upon interviews conducted by the author with seven figures active in various Evangelical-oriented communities during the period mentioned above. The interviews recorded these people's attitudes on the church's social engagement, allowing respondents to judge the actions of their parent churches under the domination of state power that was hostile to religious congregations and reflect on their own positions concerning the communist regime. The article further explores the multi-layered relationship of respondents to the dissent, which provides valuable insights into the ambivalence of the Czechoslovak Evangelical clergy towards various forms of anti-regime resistance. The paper concludes with a description of specific, selected interactions between the Evangelical and underground milieux and an explanation of possible reasons why there was no significant connection between the two alternatives during the examined period.

Keywords: Evangelicalism; Underground; Normalisation Period; Communism; Czechoslovakia

Abstrakt: Mnohá evangelikální společenství, stejně jako komunita undergroundových umělců, poskytovaly mladým lidem v normalizačním Československu alternativu k životnímu stylu, který nabízela státní moc. Cílem studie je poodhalit, jaké formy kontaktu probíhaly mezi těmito dvěma milieux. Autorka uskutečnila rozhovory se sedmi osobnostmi, které v období normalizace v Československu aktivně působily v rozličných evangelikálně orientovaných komunitách, přičemž dokumentuje postoj těchto osob k tématu sociální angažovanosti církve, nechává rovněž respondenty zhodnotit působení jejich mateřské církve pod nadvládou církvím nepřátelské státní moci i reflektovat jejich vlastní pozice ve vztahu ke komunistickému režimu. V centru pozornosti je též mnohavrstevnatý vztah respondentů k disentu, jenž poskytuje cenné informace o ambivalentním postoji československých evangelikálních duchovních k nejrůznějším formám protirežimního boje. Studie vrcholí popisem vybraných konkrétních prolnutí evangelikálního a undergroundového milieu, a rovněž objasněním možných důvodů, proč ve zkoumaném období nedošlo k výraznějšímu propojení těchto dvou alternativ.

Klíčová slova: Evangelikalismus; underground; normalizace; komunismus; Československo

Received: 20th April 2021
Accepted: 29th October 2021

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Some Evangelical communities, though by no means all of them, provided one of the few living forms of religiosity during the so-called normalisation period in the 1970s and 1980s. They proved especially attractive to a considerable number of young people. Dan Drápal, the former vicar of the Evangelical-oriented Holešovice congregation of the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren, the so-called Maniny congregation, says the heyday of his community was in the 1980s in the context of the limited opportunities offered by the former socialist state. "Nothing offered by the official ideology was competition for us. It didn't actually offer anything. The last avowed Communists lost the rest of their influence in 1969, and most of them were expelled from the party. 'The party and the government' didn't even try to rouse any enthusiasm in anything in the people. It was simply the time of 'goulash socialism' when state power entered into an unspoken and unwritten agreement with citizens: 'You don't stick your nose in public affairs, don't get out of line, make sure you don't get involved in prohibited activities, don't criticise us, and we won't ask you to do too much work, and we will provide you with a relatively decent standard of living. (...)' Most people understood this unwritten agreement well. It was particularly well understood by the older generation. However, the younger generation rebelled against it, seeking various forms of nonconformism. There is no point in hiding the fact that while for some, drugs or rock and roll were the way, for some others, it was the Maniny congregation."[1] Rock and roll, or more precisely the milieu of underground artists, was indeed an enticing alternative to the official culture, and it found many adherents among youth. The existence of two stark alternatives to the official doctrine, rooted in largely disparate values, raises a question: to what extent did these unofficial cultures intertwine, what characterised these encounters, if there were any, and how did the Evangelical leaders view the underground?

Methodology

The primary sources, and thus the main foundation of this paper, are the written and oral statements from seven Evangelical figures. Interviews with five of them (Dan Drápal, Petr Macek, Pavel Černý, Josef Červeňák[2], and Miloš Šolc) were conducted in a semi-structured form. The other two respondents (Daniel Raus[3] and Daniel Fajfr) were interviewed by correspondence because of the deteriorating epidemiological situation in the Czech Republic. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to respondents for approval. The written memoirs of the respondents and an unpublished interview with Petr Macek, conducted by Jindřich Pospíšil, provided

[1] Dan Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Jak to všechno začalo* [*History of Christian Fellowship Prague: How It All Began*], Praha: Sbor Křesťanské společenství Praha 2008, p. 18–19.

[2] Josef Červeňák was interviewed both face-to-face and by correspondence.

[3] Although Daniel Raus is the only respondent who is not a cleric and he lived in Slovakia during the period of normalisation, his comments are relevant for the present study as he was, as an Evangelical, actively involved in the artistic sphere, publishing samizdat material.

additional source material. The respondents are individuals who were active in the church during the normalisation period – Daniel Raus in Slovakia, and others in today's Czech Republic. The selection includes members of the Church of the Brethren, the Evangelical Methodist Church, the Baptist Union in the Czech Republic, and the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren.

Dan Drápal (* 1949) graduated from the Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty. In 1977 he obtained the state approval to minister and began working as a vicar in the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren (PCCB) congregation in Prague 7 – Holešovice. The Evangelical-oriented church withdrew from the PCCB in 1990 and became the basis for establishing the new church, Christian Fellowships. Drápal was also present at the birth of the Christian Mission Society in 1989 and was one of the driving forces behind the new Czech Study Bible.

Pavel Černý (* 1949) graduated from the Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty. He obtained the state approval to minister in 1974 and subsequently joined the Church of the Brethren congregation in Benátky nad Jizerou as a preacher. He was a long-term member and chairman of the Council of the Church of the Brethren, and the vice-chairman and chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. He currently works as a teacher of practical theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague.

Petr Macek (* 1944) graduated from the Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty and completed postgraduate studies in Switzerland and the USA. In 1973–90, he worked as a preacher in the Baptist Union in the Czech Republic, Prague 4 – Pankrác. He currently teaches systematic theology at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University.

Daniel Raus (* 1957) graduated from the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava. He spent the period of normalisation in the Church of the Brethren in Slovakia, where he published books and musical recordings on a samizdat basis. After the revolution, he became a Bratislava correspondent for the Czech broadcast of the Svobodná Evropa station and later as an editor for the Czech Radio.

Daniel Fajfr (* 1952) graduated from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Czech Technical University and the International Baptist Theological Seminary. He was the leading figure of the Ústí nad Labem Christian music group, which operated in Czechoslovakia in 1977–88. From 1988 to 1996, he was a preacher of the Church of the Brethren in Ústí nad Labem.

Josef Červeňák (* 1949) graduated from the Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty and then worked in several congregations of the Evangelical Methodist Church as a regular preacher. From 1989 to 2010, he acted as the superintendent of the same church. In addition to his preaching activities, he is currently a volunteer in the Center for the Visually Impaired of the Diaconia PCCB.

Miloš Šolc Jr. (* 1942) graduated from the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Czech Technical University. During the years 1971–76, he worked in the congregation of the Baptist Union in the Czech Republic in Zlín and in 1976–81 in Kroměříž. He spent the years 1981–94 in exile in Toronto, where he focused mainly on activities targeting young Christians. He then returned to the Czech Republic, working as a BJB preacher in the Vinohrady congregation.

The individual churches have differed and continue to differ to a certain extent in their theological emphases, and some of the mentioned churchmen do not currently refer to themselves as Evangelicals because they believe that Evangelicalism, especially in America, has been discredited by the prosperity movement and similar emphasis on the material success of the believer in this world. Nevertheless, despite the more recent understanding of the term, the respondents have been categorised as Evangelicals in this paper since each adheres to the theological emphases and values on which Evangelicalism was built.

Evangelicalism

The roots of Evangelicalism can be traced to the revival movements of the 17th–19th centuries, which sought to reform Protestant Christianity in Europe and North America. Evangelicalism refers to the pietistic movement emphasising the renewal of existing Protestant churches through individuals and the so-called collegia pietatis – informal communities where Bible study, prayer and pious inner life were developed. The movement carried out extensive missionary and educational activities with the outside world.[4] Another theological source is the revivalist movement, which underlined conversion and subsequent "sanctification", which it understands as "developing the qualities of the Christian life" and the subjective experience of Christian faith and the individual's personal relationship with God.[5] Filipi also highlights the importance of the missionary and Evangelistic aspects of the movement.[6] The Methodist emphasis on the active appropriation of salvation by consecrated life also significantly influenced the formation of Evangelicalism – a morally pure Christian life became the norm for Evangelicals.[7]

Theologically, the Evangelical thinker Olson defines the movement as follows: "Evangelicalism is a free association of mostly Protestant Christians of many orthodox (trinity) denominations, independent churches and non-church organisations. Its members profess faith in the supernatural, the Bible as an unsurpassed authority in all matters of faith and practice, and Jesus Christ as the only Lord, God and Savior. Evangelicals believe in the sinfulness of mankind and in the salvation that Jesus Christ has won through his suffering, death and resurrection, the need for personal repentance and faith (conversion) for complete salvation, the importance of pious life and growth in holiness and discipleship, the urgency of preaching the gospel and transforming society. They await the return of Jesus Christ, who will come to judge the world and establish God's final and complete government."[8]

Vojtíšek expanded this list of characteristics to include a close religious community in the church, which leads to the involvement of members in effective cooperation, for example, in creating para-church activities (e.g. volunteering across denominations). According to Vojtíšek, Evangelical communities have an egalitarian and laic character; the laity takes part, for example, in preaching and pastoral care.[9]

[4] Zdeněk Vojtíšek, „Evangelikalismus – protestantské křesťanství přizpůsobené situaci náboženského pluralismu" [„Evangelicalism – Protestant Christianity Adapted to the Situation of Religious Pluralism"], *Lidé města/Urban people* 16 (1, 2014): p. 27.

[5] Vojtíšek, „Evangelikalismus...", p. 29.

[6] Pavel Filipi, *Křesťanstvo: historie, statistika, charakteristika křesťanských církví* [*Christendom: History, Statistics, Characteristics of Christian Churches*], Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2012, p. 156.

[7] Vojtíšek, „Evangelikalismus...", p. 34.

[8] Roger E. Olson, *Příběh evangelikální teologie* [*The Story of Evangelical Theology*], Praha: Návrat domů 2012, p. 13.

[9] Zdeněk Vojtíšek, E*ncyklopedie náboženských směrů a hnutí v České republice: Náboženství, církve, sekty, duchovní společenství* [*Encyclopedia of Religions and Religious Movements of the Czech Republic: Religions, Churches, Cults, Spiritual Communities*], Praha: Portál 2004, p. 79.

A brief account of churches in communist Czechoslovakia

Shortly after coming to power in 1949, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia passed ecclesiastical laws that effectively subordinated the churches to the state – both in the economic field and through the requirement that all clergy obtain state approval to practice their profession. Government officials could revoke this approval if the clergy broke the prescribed rules.

The state's efforts to repress the church were directed primarily at the Catholic Church. The thorn in the side of the regime was "the number of its believers, its supranational character, hierarchy extending beyond the power of the people's democratic states, the intellectual ability of its representatives (...) and the extensive assets at its disposal."[10] The 1950s and 1960s were a period when (not only) the Catholic Church was paralysed by state attacks on all areas of its religious life. There were monstrous trials of religious leaders, men's orders were liquidated, women's orders were restricted, bishops were interned, capitular vicars chosen by the communist regime were installed in place of dead bishops, diplomatic relations with the Holy See were severed, theological faculties were removed from university associations, and theological schools and seminaries were closed. The official church survived beyond the walls of the churches to which it was restricted. Many Catholic believers were imprisoned and tortured to death.[11]

However, repression by the state did not only impact the Roman Catholic Church. The Greek Catholic Church was dissolved by the state in 1950 and forcibly merged with the Orthodox Church. It was not restored until 1968. In 1951, many religious communities with the status of associations were dissolved. Members of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church also did not avoid persecution, even though the regime regarded the church as progressive in the late 1940s and contemplated making it a national church, completely subordinate to the state. However, the regime later abandoned this idea.[12] The Seventh-day Adventist Church was banned in 1952 (but re-admitted in 1956), and church members were persecuted for observing the Sabbath, which affected members' involvement in schooling, work, and military service. Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted as a sect because of their pacifism, concomitant refusal of military service, and extensive missionary activities.[13] The Czech Brethren Evangelical Church showed an ambivalent relationship towards the regime, which varied over time. In the 1950s, its representative, Josef Lukl Hromádka, sought dialogue with the state authorities. However, in the following decade, a group of laypeople and clergy called the New Orientation was formed, which focused on "organising

[10] Jan Synek, *Svobodni v nesvobodě: Náboženský život ve věznicích v období komunistického režimu* [*Free in the Unfreedom: Religious Life in Prisons During the Communist Regime*], Vyšehrad: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, Praha 2013, p. 21.

[11] Stanislav Balík and Jiří Hanuš, *Katolická církev v Československu 1945–1989* [*The Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia 1945–1989*], Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2007, p. 40–41.

[12] Synek, *Svobodni v nesvobodě*, p. 30–31.

[13] Synek, *Svobodni v nesvobodě*, p. 31–38.

meetings of its members and issuing various declarations, memoranda, resolutions and letters directed against the practices of the StB and church secretaries, against atheism, against the monopoly position of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, church laws, against the interruption of diplomatic relations with Israel, Soviet occupation, discrediting innocent people, arrests, political purges after 1970, etc."[14]

In the context of the relative society-wide liberalisation in 1968, the situation also improved for the churches. Bishops were allowed to retake office, women's orders were allowed to expand some of their activities, the publishing of the church press was renewed, the teaching of religion was revitalised, and the Greek Catholic Church was renewed, to name a few.[15]

However, the liberal approach did not last long. The advent of normalisation entailed a partial return to radical anti-church policy, which included, for example, tightening the rules for granting state approvals, banning men's monastic activities, dispelling existing communities, and making it more difficult for children to attend religious classes. The "numerus clausus" was re-implemented among accepted theologians, and the laity was no longer allowed to study theology.[16] However, unlike the anti-religious measures adopted at the start of the communist regime, the state did not succeed in paralysing the functioning of the churches – educational and spiritual centres were established within the Catholic Church, where theology, philosophy or church history was clandestinely taught. These activities were organised by monks as well as members of the underground church, which created an alternative church structure through secret priestly and episcopal ordinations, often without papal consent.[17]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, non-Catholic churches engaged in lively debates about the extent to which they would submit to the regime's dictates and the extent to which they would attempt to operate authentically, thus risking state prohibition. In general, non-Catholic churches, both traditional and Evangelical, resigned to open opposition to the regime (within the PCCB, the Church leadership rejected New Orientation anti-regime activities after August 1968)[18]. They tried to keep a low profile. Illegal activities, whether they involved smuggling literature from the West, illegal seminars with foreign speakers, or unannounced Evangelistic gatherings, took place behind the walls of the apartments of individual believers. Religious life in Czechoslovakia was liberalised further in the second half of the 1980s – within the Catholic

[14] Peter Dinuš, *Českobratrská církev evangelická v agenturním rozpracování StB* [*Protestant Church of Czech Brethren in the Agency Analysis of State Security*], Praha: Úřad vyšetřování zločinů komunismu SKPV 2004, p. 11.

[15] Balík and Hanuš, *Katolická církev...*, p. 44–45.

[16] Zdeněk Demel, *Pod dohledem církevních tajemníků: Omezování činnosti katolické církve v Československu 1945–1989 na příkladu Jihočeského regionu* [*Under the Supervision of Church Secretaries: Restrictions on the Activities of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia 1945–1989 on the Example of South Bohemian Region*], Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 2008, p. 131.

[17] Petr Koura et al., *Diktatura versus naděje: Pronásledování římskokatolické církve v Československu v letech 1948–1989* [*Dictatorship versus Hope: The Persecution of the Roman Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia in 1948–1989*], Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů 2014, 139 p.

[18] Demel, *Pod dohledem církevních tajemníků*, p. 134–136.

Church, this was represented by a 1985 pilgrimage of hundreds of thousands in Velehrad, with significant cooperation by the underground.[19] In non-Catholic churches, it included opportunities to organise mass interdenominational conferences.[20]

Socially Engaged Church?

The interviewed Evangelicals agreed that the church should not, under any circumstances, operate in isolation. Instead, they were convinced it should be socially engaged in some way. Macek strongly rejects the notion that any Christian community embedded in society could be apolitical because "any attitude, even a denial of responsibility for public affairs, is already political."[21] He thus sees the church as "an alternative polis that shows the outside world that things can be done differently than normal."[22]

However, what form of social or political engagement of the church did the respondents see as appropriate? Červeňák stresses that the church must always be open to people of all kinds of political persuasions, and it must not become a church of one party.[23] Černý warns against a model in which the church engages in politics as a whole because "'political diaconia'[24] requires a deep knowledge of the problem and political life, which the church often does not have."[25] At the same time, he questions the existence of genuinely Christian political parties, preferring to involve individuals in a wide range of political parties: "I do not believe that there are Christian political parties. I think that the church should not work as a political party, and I prefer to see Christians in different political parties doing a good job there than if the church were to get into a political party and operate through that party, because a political party is not a church and it cannot be a church."[26]

Drápal, in the second volume of his trilogy *History of the Christian Community Prague*, in a chapter entitled "The Triple Temptation of the Church", clarifies his attitude to the social, cultural and political engagement of the church. "The main task of the church is to preach the gospel and praise the Lord. (...) If the gospel we preach is to be effective and credible, it must be accompanied by certain attitudes – such as social sensitivity. The gospel we preach will hardly sound true if we eat well and preach to hungry people, moreover, if we do not notice their hunger. Thus, although the church's main mission is to preach the gospel, the church also has what some call

[19] Balík and Hanuš, *Katolická církev...*, p. 56.
[20] Dan Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu* [*History of Christian Fellowship Prague: Years of Growth*], Praha: Sbor Křesťanské společenství Praha 2009, p. 27–28.
[21] Interview with Petr Macek.
[22] Interview with Petr Macek.
[23] Correspondence with Josef Červeňák.
[24] Political diaconia refers to a situation in which the church actively intervenes in human rights issues and systematically engages in the socio-political sphere.
[25] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[26] Interview with Pavel Černý.

a 'cultural mandate', a 'social mandate' or a 'political mandate'. In other words, the gospel has certain consequences or, perhaps, you could say, side effects. Inevitably, they include sensitivity to sufferers, the sick and the disadvantaged. That's not all. The living gospel fully extends to various areas of life. The basic task of the church is not to combat illiteracy. However, because God's Word in its material form – scripture – is absolutely essential to us, the responsible Evangelist will always strive to expand its acquaintance – and therefore fight illiteracy as far as possible."[27] So what does Drápal see as the temptation of the church? "The temptation of the church is that instead of focusing on its main task, the preaching of the gospel, it focuses primarily on one of its other mandates, which, while part of its life, should not become key."[28]

These preachers' remarks imply a demand that the church should not be ghettoised but participate in the public life of society. As a whole, it is intended to offer an alternative to the damaged world, but through individuals, it intends to penetrate and transform the secular system. However, the church's social engagement must not overshadow its primary task of gaining followers for Christ.

Cornered Church?

Churches, whether in open societies or under the repression of totalitarian regimes, are defined by their social presence, especially their interactions with believers, even though the broader social context will shape the nature of this presence. The respondents reflected upon this day-to-day, for want of a better word, real position of their parent churches concerning social engagement under the pressure of a hostile authoritarian regime during normalisation.

Drápal sharply criticises the position of Evangelical churches towards the communist regime. He perceives Evangelical churches in contrast to the more "heroic" Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren as frightened and "embarrassingly state-forming"[29] while reproaching Evangelicals for their professed apoliticism. Evangelical Christians, in his view, were "always socially and value-conservative, and therefore essentially non-dangerous to the regime."[30] He believes that if the communist regime had not been strongly anti-church, it would probably have found support among Evangelical churches. Drápal, however, does not idealise either of his parent churches, and he fully realises that not all members were anti-regime warriors. "The traditional members of the churches (and this was also true of the traditional members of the Holešovice congregation) mostly did not like the regime. However, they did not want to risk the difficulties that would provoke some direct conflict. In fact, they were not much different from their fellow citizens. (...) I don't feel entitled to speak out against church leaders. However, the

[27] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 50–51.
[28] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 51.
[29] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[30] Interview with Dan Drápal.

fact that all professors were listed as State Security agents sheds some light on the church's ability to be truly authentic."[31]

Both Macek and Šolc, like Drápal, sharply criticised the attitude of the leaders of their church, the Baptist Union in the Czech Republic, towards the regime. They view the church's defensive position in the period of normalisation as a result of the harsh persecution of Baptists in the 1950s. Šolc sees the forced expulsion of charged and imprisoned preachers from the church, which was ordered by delegates in the early 1950s, as a watershed moment –interference with the church's integrity, which negatively affected Baptists for the rest of their church life under the communist regime. Macek draws a line from the trauma of Baptist church leaders in the 1950s to their attitude toward Charter 77: "The Baptists were persecuted [in the 1950s] and the leaders did not support their members, who were persecuted and then imprisoned on the basis of fabricated charges. They probably did so because they were afraid, but they defended themselves by not wanting to meddle in politics. At the time of normalisation, Baptists were some of the first to distance themselves, not on demand, but on their own, from the Charter, without even knowing what the pamphlet was. I witnessed that directly at the preaching meeting. I was a budding preacher and I took the Charter with me, I wanted to read snippets there, but this was by no means possible. They distanced themselves from the Charter and were not troubled by the fact that they did not know what they were actually distancing themselves from. Their argument was that they didn't know who signed it at all."[32]

Fajfr condemns the leadership of his parent Church of the Brethren for the lack of courage to speak out against oppression by state power as well. "Some bravely resisted offers of collaboration, some succumbed, some even went to prison. Many preachers have lost their state approvals. Nevertheless, I was sometimes disappointed with the excessive loyalty of the church's leaders to the state power."[33] A much milder evaluation of his parent church's position is offered by Raus, who notes that "the Church of Brethren as a whole has always regarded communism as a bad system. Therefore, it has always been in greater or lesser opposition. But this opposition has not always been necessarily a political struggle. (...) In Slovakia, in the late 1980's, a new generation emerged which wanted to go its own way. On the one hand, we respected Czech dissidents, but we felt embarrassed about the personal lives of some of them. We had a theory that there was a political and moral front in the fight against communism. We wanted to be on the moral one. It sounds naïve today, but we meant it."[34]

Although respondents tend to evaluate the reaction of church leaders (though not exclusively) in rather negative terms and accuse the Christian Evangelical community of passivity, fear, and cowardice, such an evaluation does not mean that individual communities and their members had entirely submitted to the dictates of state power.

[31] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[32] Interview with Petr Macek.
[33] Correspondence with Daniel Fajfr.
[34] Correspondence with Daniel Raus.

Fighting for Autonomy

All the interviewed figures were involved in church activities that had been on the margins of legality until the normalisation when they became entirely illegal. The most frequent activities included organising congregational events that took place outside a church building (homegroups, spiritual training camps in cottages, trips with youth or illegal pastoral care in houses of believers), participation in the import, transcription and subsequent dissemination of Christian literature from the West and keeping up with foreign missionary organisations or providing food aid to poorer Eastern bloc countries.

Červeňák points out that the illegal literature he helped distribute was purely spiritual and not political in nature. He recounts his involvement in the distribution of literature as follows: "It was a meeting with people who brought Christian literature in Czech or Slovak, which was not allowed in our country. If someone was caught in such an activity (or was accused of it), he lost his state approval or was even charged. I knew that, but I felt it was necessary to put such literature in people's hands. It was not 'subversionist' literature (they call it a subversion of the republic and the socialist establishment). I knew I'd be in big trouble if it 'snapped'."[35] Červeňák considered the dissemination of spiritual texts among community members to be equally important and did not hesitate to take the risk of conflict with the state church secretary in this matter. "When the secretary didn't like something, he called me and made it clear what was wrong. For example, I could not write and copy 'congregational letters'. In Jihlava, he allowed me only the most necessary announcement about the holding of, say, holiday services. In Bratislava, he just told me he wouldn't let me do it at all. So I wrote it on a typewriter – eight copies each. I changed every set of eight copies a little bit."[36]

In the view of Fajfr, the community in which he worked antagonised the authorities primarily through its evangelistic activity: "We did not act against the regime. We put great emphasis on personal evangelisation. Many people, especially young people, from atheistic families converted, which meant a loss of state approval."[37] Drápal also risked losing state approval to keep in touch with an American para-church organisation, the Navigators, which focused on personal evangelisation. The organisation sent its representatives beyond the Iron Curtain to teach local Christians in secret seminars on personal evangelisation and the spiritual growth of newly converted Christians. The Maniny congregation maintained contact with the Navigators for several years and accepted bible studies from them to work with newly converted Christians.[38]

[35] Interview with Josef Červeňák.
[36] Interview with Josef Červeňák.
[37] Correspondence with Daniel Fajfr.
[38] Dan Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Jak to všechno začalo* [*History of Christian Fellowship Prague: How It All Began*], Praha: Sbor Křesťanské společenství Praha 2008, p. 44–45.

Černý personally participated in various illegal church activities – whether it was the distribution of literature from Western Europe, illegal pastoral care in the houses of believers or the secret organisation of summer camps for youth. However, he sharply criticises the Union of Resolved Pentecostal Christians, which following the abolition of religious associations, was absorbed into the Church of Brethren[39] between 1951 and 1963 for their carelessness and risky actions that threatened the preachers of their home church. "Those who lived an intense spiritual life to their liking often did not respect the rules of the church that they were part of and organised, for example, illegal gatherings wherever they wanted. For us, it is now perfectly natural that Christians meet in their own houses, but at that time, the assemblies in believers' houses were considered by the state security as a dangerous violation of the law, as an anti-state conspiracy. Even then, there were preaching stations that officially met in houses but had to have approval – it had to be legalised. Whereas when someone invited 20 people into their living room and held a meeting there, even when a foreign guest came to the meeting, it was already a big problem. The preacher was in trouble, and he could have lost his approval, and so on."[40]

Šolc recalls how in his youth, he was shaped by his father's[41] courage to break the rules imposed by the state administration when it came, for example, to contacts with believers from abroad. "In 1960–61, my father had been a preacher for three years – a group of American students from California came here. They were studying in Vienna for one semester at the time and came to visit us. On Sunday morning, approximately forty young Americans who had come from a Baptist university, including students of theology, appeared in our prayer room. Father gave their professor and assistant the opportunity to give their regards. Under totalitarianism, this was completely unacceptable. Then about twenty students visited our apartment, along with twenty-five of our youths. That was unimaginable."[42] Such experiences have confirmed Šolc's conviction that it is necessary to fight for the church's autonomy. "I spoke at a conference in the 1970s and pleaded with the brothers to convey that we were humiliated by the way the Ministry cuts the list of candidates and that only those who were approved by the state would have been accepted. Then a colleague came forward (his father was also in prison) and stood up against me, saying that according to the Holy Scripture, we should respect the authorities. In terms of submission to state power, under totalitarianism, and this is very important, the church was very divided. I also said that we didn't even need the Central Council of our church because we were a congregational church and we lived in congregations, but then one hero told me that these words were too bold. Then I realised that I saw the situation differently from the others."[43]

[39] At that time, the church was called The Unity of the Czech Brethren.
[40] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[41] Miloš Šolc Sr. (1911–2007) was an important Baptist preacher and successful tennis player.
[42] Interview with Miloš Šolc.
[43] Interview with Miloš Šolc.

As can be seen from the above examples, all the cited examples of Evangelicals' illegal activities mainly concerned the church's evangelistic, pastoral or social work. The need to be active in these areas motivated respondents to transgress the regime's rules. Their intention was not confrontation but to make the Christian community as authentic as possible since some government demands were perceived as interfering too much with the church autonomy, which Evangelicals viewed as more legitimate.

Church and Political Resistance

Although interviewed Evangelicals naturally focused their attention primarily on the ministration of their communities, their religious preoccupation does not mean that they disregarded political or philosophical issues. In their careers, the interviewed personalities were more or less influenced by intellectual concepts of anti-regime fighters and by encounters with them.

Drápal was often exposed to dissident literature and even participated in its reproduction. "I rewrote books for one samizdat edition, the Špalek edition, whose books were then published via samizdat. I typed relatively quickly, so it was quite financially attractive for me. They didn't pay more than what you'd get elsewhere; if I had worked for a state organisation, I would have probably gotten a little more, but it still paid off for me. When the children were little, I remember that when we put them to sleep for two hours, I wrote on the machine for that time, always in eight copies. For as long as I can remember, I rewrote books by Božena Komárková, an Evangelical, dissident and law professor, or dramas by Egon Bondy. I don't remember any more works, but those things were very interesting. It was brought to me by a boy who studied theology with me."[44] However, the works of dissidents gradually became less significant in Drápal's life in favour of theological literature as the Maniny congregation grew because Drápal did not come from an Evangelical or charismatically-oriented environment and therefore devoted his energy primarily to educating himself in a completely new spiritual area for him.

Among the respondents, Raus had the closest relationship to the literary works of dissidents. He respectfully recalls the texts that strongly influenced him during normalisation. "I even had a photocopy of Havel's Power of the Powerless, which I constantly lent to my friends – it was a great rarity. And when Havel's Letters to Olga got to me, I was completely stunned. A fantastic book at the time."[45]

Philosophical or politically-oriented works held significantly less appeal to Černý, who preferred, despite his knowledge of the work of religious dissidents from the faculty of theology, to study bibliology and theology. "I knew well, for example, Professor Hejdánek. I knew, of course, Professor Trojan; Miloš Rejchrt, who was my colleague at the faculty; Jan Kozlík, who was also a signer of Charter 77, and a few oth-

[44] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[45] Interview with Daniel Raus.

ers, but some of these philosophical approaches were not entirely close to me, I was fully captivated by biblical theology. Bibliology and theology interested me more than some of these philosophical views of society. I read some of them, of course, but I think that it somehow did not fulfil me. I was much more satisfied, for example, by Professor Jan Heller's lectures or a Church history course by Amedeo Molnár."[46]

The Comenius Protestant Theological Faculty was an important space where future preachers encountered a wide range of theological-political views among their classmates and teachers, thus fundamentally shaping their own political views. As to why this did not necessarily manifest as open political conflict, Černý explains in the following recount: "As a student of theology, I knew both sides well – I was in contact with the New Orientation in the Protestant Church, I probably knew how they were thinking – some of them were my faculty classmates. The New Orientation went into open conflict [with the regime], and the clerics usually quickly lost their state approval to minister and began to be employed in a civilian profession, often working here in Prague as heaters in boiler rooms. I accept that it was an important way; many of them were Chartists, and for their bravery, I respected them, and I respect them even today, but there was also a second way, which, by the way, was also held by some professors at the Faculty of Theology who said: 'We can't have such limited eschatology. It's not possible for all priests to begin working as heaters in boiler rooms. We need someone in the church to serve within those limitations of totalitarianism. Our eschatology has to be more long term. If you have the patience and courage to do so, then try to serve in the conditions in which the church lives with those limits that have been set.'"[47] The possibility of launching into open conflict with the regime proved a cruder, more appealing option for Černý, but it remained undesirable, and he sought a more sophisticated path that would be more useful to the church.

Apoliticism also characterised Drápal's position towards the regime following his conversion, as evidenced by his own account: "The fact is that I, like other Evangelicals, also avoided political engagement. At that time, we were part of the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren, and it seemed to me, and I think, not only did it seem, but that it was also the case, that for some priests, the so-called New Orientation was a little more important than the gospel. I didn't feel that way, but I never got away from those who were politically involved, and I don't think I did anything to hurt them, and I never kissed that regime's ass, which the leaders of those little [Evangelical] churches did, and it was embarrassing. And sometimes they didn't have to, or at least I don't think they did."[48] Drápal had actively participated in the student movement in 1968–69. Moreover, he had organised student strikes in 1968 and saw himself as one of the people who prevented the "consolidation" of the movement in the first half of 1969.[49] However, after his rebirth in 1978 and in connection with the congregation's

[46] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[47] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[48] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[49] Dan Drápal, *Církev a budoucí pronásledování* [*The Church and Future Persecution*], Sedlčany: Altak 1993, p. 7.

growth since the early 1980s, he reassessed his priorities in favour of working in the church. Drápal was convinced that the church's main task "is not to engage in dissent, but to preach the gospel. I didn't see these two things as standing against each other. I respected my colleagues who were involved in dissent at that time, and I respect them nowadays as well. But it is still true that the gospel is for eternity, whereas dissent, however respectable, is only temporary."[50] Thus, the vicar led a congregation "between the Scylla of bowing to the regime, which unfortunately was demonstrated by representatives of some smaller Evangelical churches, and the Charybdis of the frontline clash, which was chosen by dissidents."[51]

The premises of the Holešovice congregation was one of the places where the so-called "Chatting meeting"[52] took place – it was a meeting of intellectuals, especially philosophers, theologians or economists, which took place from 1968 to 1981. Its origins can be traced back to a Protestant seminary in Jircháře, from where it was moved to the apartments of individual intellectuals until it finally settled in the Holešovice congregation. Drápal recalls: "For several years, we were reading – and commenting on – Nietzsche's 'Zarathustrustra'; then we moved on to Exupéry's Citadel. (...) In addition to reading the texts, all possible things were discussed. (...) The Chatting meeting used to take place every Friday night. I don't know exactly when it started, but it definitely ended after 10 p.m., sometimes before midnight, so we could catch the last trams. A lot of tea was drunk, and a lot of cigarettes were smoked as well. Cigarette smoke was strongly smelled in the room where we used to meet until Sunday evening."[53]

"Intellectual pleasure"[54] was Drápal's primary motivation for attending these meetings. In the early 1980s, however, the membership of the Maniny congregation began to expand.[55] Consequently, intensive care of the community became a priority for Drápal, and he had to distance himself from the dissidents: "Then [after the end of the aforementioned meetings in 1981], I was neutral towards dissidents in the sense that I did not speak against them. I was oriented in a different way, but I did not condemn them; at the same time, I was careful not to get involved in anything unnecessarily because the congregation had enough problems with the State Security anyway. If someone wanted me to sign an anti-charter, I wouldn't have done it, but I didn't rush into actions that might jeopardise what I thought was more important."[56]

In contrast, the Anabaptism of Macek, with its social emphasis and nonviolent struggle against social iniquities, provided a more overt framework for political engagement. Macek tried to revive these ideas in his Na Topolce congregation[57], whose

[50] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 49–50.
[51] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 50.
[52] "Kecanda" in original.
[53] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Jak to všechno začalo*, p. 19.
[54] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[55] Drápal, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 7.
[56] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[57] The Na Topolce congregation separated from the Baptist Union in the Czech Republic on December 31, 2019, and subsequently became part of the Baptist Churches Fellowship.

position towards the regime in the context of the Baptist Union was perceived as quite specific: "The Na Topolce congregation was an absolute exception. In other congregations, there was no dissent, no underground, just shut up and keep up. 'The most important thing is that nothing happens to us; what we do is right, we do it for the Lord Jesus, and we do not care about the rest of it.' That's what Baptism looked like. I was focused on the 16th century Anabaptists, whose beginnings were completely different. That was resistance to the regime, no matter what it takes."[58]

Passivity was not an option for Macek and his wife, Harriet. With the cooperation of U.S. Embassy staff, they mediated contacts between some Chartists and foreign countries. "People who were interested in Chartists at the American Embassy held occasional social evenings, to which we and other people were invited. Dissidents used to go there. This is where not only the talks took place, but also the transmission of important documents."[59]

Despite sympathising with the Chartists and characterising the Charter as "a manifesto that could not be disagreed with,"[60] Macek did not sign the document. His decision was motivated by both "strategic" and family reasons – "Firstly, [dissidents] advised me so because we had access to those embassies. My wife and I could also function as a kind of liaison. Those who signed the Charter often lost their approval. We didn't want that because it would have been very unpleasant for my wife's parents. They suffered very greatly, but in the end, they accepted that their daughter – they were middle class – had gone to communist Czechoslovakia. It helped them that they could see it as a mission. Of course, a missionary does not need state approval for a mission, but they would probably take it badly if we lost this position – the approval. The reactions of people who have lost their state approval to our actions have convinced us that these people completely understood us. Miloš Rejchrt, for example, specifically advised us that it would have been better for both sides."[61] However, the risk of losing state approval did not deter Macek from providing the Na Topolce congregation's premises for the needs of the Underground University.[62] This illegal educational initiative offered an evening study of Czech studies to intellectuals who were undesirable to the regime.[63]

Just as Drápal provided the premises of his congregation to the intellectual debates of dissidents, Macek was also engaged in meetings of intellectuals who did not have the opportunity to speak officially. With a few exceptions, the meetings did not take place on the church grounds but in the apartments of fellow believers or their friends.

[58] Interview with Petr Macek.
[59] Interview with Petr Macek.
[60] Interview with Petr Macek.
[61] Interview with Petr Macek.
[62] E.g. Karoline von Graevenitz, *"Podzemní univerzita" pražských bohemistů: ukázka paralelní kultury v normalizovaném Československu* [*"Underground University" of Prague students of Czech Studies: An Example of Parallel Culture in „Normalized" Czechoslovakia*], Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2009, passim.
[63] In 1990, the study group was incorporated into the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University, with the students´examinations from the pre-revolutionary period being recognized.

It was a meeting of the so-called "Thirties". The event, involving approximately 10 to 25 people, took place regularly once a month and was "an opportunity for people who were no longer part of a youth association but still wanted to meet."[64] The lecture topics were selected according to the focus of the speakers – some theological, others rather political, since both religious and non-religious dissidents were among the regular participants.[65]

The priests of the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren offered another venue of free discussion, the so-called Libštáty. These meetings held in the parishes of individual participants were attended by Macek and, once, by Drápal (the only regular visitors from another denomination). "It was originally a place where you could find anything; someone was always talking about theological issues. Even the worship was there. The main thing was to talk about 'church and politics'. Later we invited guest speakers – for example, Zdeněk Kratochvíl[66]. Sometimes [professors] Hejdánek, Balabán or Trojan came, but usually one of us presented his own topic, Sváťa Karásek sang some new songs. We cooked goulash and bought drinks. The evening started with something small, and the main program was always on Monday. Worship took place at nine, then one or two lectures, and finally, we talked about church-political matters until we left. We discussed our personal experiences with state secretaries and State Security officers. Each of us told stories about what we experienced... Sometimes we played sports in the afternoon."[67]

The respondents, therefore, not only sought spaces suitable for free discussion where the voices of persecuted religious and non-religious intellectuals were heard but also actively participated in the creation of these spaces themselves. Respondents largely conformed to the ideas formulated by the dissent in the text of Charter 77 but saw their mission almost exclusively in church work, to which they directed their time, energy, and courage to transgress state-imposed rules. Although some respondents were in close contact with dissidents and were often even friends – to a greater or lesser extent, they knew the literary philosophical-political production of dissents – they lived in seclusion, far from political events. Evangelicals respected and admired the dissidents' uncompromising attitudes toward the regime, despite their discomfit with the dissidents' nonconformist lifestyle. However, their primary responsibility for running their church communities precluded them from possible participation in illicit activities. Evangelical Christians felt it necessary to transgress the regime's prohibitions, especially when they believed that the church's ability to participate in evangelistic or pastoral work was excessively impaired. Evangelical personalities did not want to interfere in politics as such, even though they found the regime unpalatable. Nor did they intend to draw attention to themselves by expressing

[64] Interview with Petr Macek.

[65] Petr Macek, Jan Hrabina and Jindřich Pospíšil, *Dva krátké rozhovory o době normalizace související s baptistickým sborem Na Topolce* [*Two Short Interviews About the Period of Normalization Related to the Na Topolce Baptist Church*], Praha 2005, p. 9.

[66] Famous Czech philosopher.

[67] Macek, Hrabina and Pospíšil, *Dva krátké rozhovory*..., p. 10.

political beliefs that could threaten their activities in the church. Political activism was a risk that Evangelical authorities were rarely willing to take. Evangelical communities had become too self-contained to intervene more significantly in society outside Evangelical communities. If Evangelicals were opposed to the regime, desperate for autonomy, but largely refusing to engage politically, the question arises as to whether they had a greater, more discernible affinity with underground devotees than with dissidents.

Church and Rock'n'roll

Since his student years, Drápal had had a very intense friendly relationship with the Evangelical priest and underground musician Sváťa Karásek, with whom he even lived for six months in Hvozdnice, where Karásek hosted wild parties before he became a member of the underground scene. Although Drápal had a very warm relationship with Karásek, as evidenced by the fact that he named his son after Karásek's son Šimon, and he knew the member of the band The Plastic People of the Universe, Vratislav Brabenec, very well as he shared a room with him at the faculty dormitories, Drápal did not show much interest in underground music. He also did not participate in concerts or parties of the community and had no strong attachment to music as such, except for the chansons that appealed to him. He is currently working his way into rock music thanks to his son Benjamín, who is a Christian rock musician.[68]

The figure of Karásek is a common thread among several of the interviewed clerics. Macek was also very close to him, claiming that he and his wife Harriet influenced Karásek's musical work to some extent. "When they [State Security] finally gave me my passport back, they even let me go to Switzerland to study, and that was just when Karásek was working there, so I was in constant contact with him. At the faculty I met both Sváťa Karásek and Vratislav Brabenec. Sváťa Karásek and I were friends. We actually influenced his songs a little bit. We had recordings of spirituals, which he translated into Czech."[69] The Maceks were also in close contact with Michael Kocáb, whose recordings Harriet Macek illegally exported abroad. Macek's preference for both musical and philosophical work was shaped by his visit to America, where he experienced the reverberations of the Beat Generation. The period introduced him to folk music, his love of which endures to this day. Červeňák was also familiar with Karásek's work, and he found the confessional and evangelistic potential in his songs: "Music is a confession to me. Karásek's Wedding at Cana, for example, is an amazing confession. I had some songs on tapes – I also lent it to bus drivers who drove me, they liked to hear it, but it didn't work for everyone."[70]

Černý, however, preferred purely Christian music to underground music. If he met underground artists, it was usually on church grounds. "I was mostly focused on

[68] Interview with Dan Drápal.
[69] Interview with Petr Macek.
[70] Interview with Josef Červeňák.

classical music. I knew very little about underground music, but I knew some protest songs. I liked listening to Bohdan Mikolášek and some singer-songwriters – I also knew Hutka and Kalandra. It was nice to hear the protest songs, but I didn't go to Plastic People concerts. I like to listen to good rock music, but there wasn't a lot of Christian rock music back then. I was more in search of Christian music, after all. So I knew a few of those songwriters, and I liked protest songs. Even those that came from the West – I grew up on the Spirituals. There is also sometimes such a gentle protest. I didn't systematically listen to underground music, only occasionally when I heard some songs somewhere. Some of them played in churches sometimes. That's how I heard Hutka and Kalandra, but I didn't really look into them."[71]

The Faculty of Theology also served, in Černý's view, as an additional locus of anti-regime resistance. "I experienced Palach Week at the Protestant Faculty when we invited the Spirituál Kvintet and Bohdan Mikolášek to perform. Mikolášek sang a wonderful song about the commemoration of Palach, as that day was Palach's anniversary.[72] The day after the retaliation began, the seminary director was fired, and four students who invited Bohdan Mikolášek and Spirituál Kvintet were also in trouble. Spirituál Kvintet were not allowed to perform publicly for six months because they joined Mikolášek when he sang about Palach. They also sang '*We Shall Overcome*' and several other such songs, and it was already considered defiance."[73]

In terms of culture, the most active of the interviewed Evangelicals was Raus, who spent the period of normalisation in Slovakia, where he participated in the community of folk singers. According to Raus, members of this alternative group, whether religious or not, were "an island of freedom, a palette of colours in a grey socialist reality."[74] Raus reflects on the essence of art and believes that "art has always violated various taboos and transcends conventions. Communism was a very rigorous system. That's why communists hated art. Comrades hated long hair and miniskirts. They didn't like jazz, rock, or independent poetry. Moreover, they couldn't stand any originality. They spread fear because they themselves lived in fear. The greatest works often go upstream."[75] Thus, based on his own beliefs, he decided to refuse to compromise with the regime in his artistic work. "I knew I would never publish anything officially because I wasn't willing to compromise. So I ended up with a few samizdats – such as *Windmills*[76] and *Song*[77] – and a few tapes of my songs. A year ago, when *Windmills* came out, a man I'd never met before came to the launch. He introduced himself to me and said that he had led a group of women who, on typewriter machines, reproduced books under the Bolsheviks – among them *Windmills*. The

[71] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[72] This incident took place on January 17, 1972, Bohdan Mikolášek sang the song "Silence" ("Ticho" in original).
[73] Interview with Pavel Černý.
[74] Interview with Daniel Raus.
[75] Interview with Daniel Raus.
[76] "Větrné Mlýny" in original.
[77] "Píseň" in original.

meeting had amazing charm. I don't judge people who decided to compromise with the regime, but it was not my way."[78]

While Fajfr admired underground artists for their "impenetrability" and desire for freedom and tolerated their authentic violations of conventions or vulgarity used in underground music,[79] Šolc offered a more reserved appraisal. "I am so entrenched in the Lord Jesus that I just can't accept every, albeit well-intentioned, song. Because I'm very, very well-set. I respect that everyone has a different profession. When someone is honest and is a brother in Christ as well, he enriches me with his attitude. On the other hand, I'm too sensitive when someone crosses the line that I believe they're given. I just have to say no. I'm afraid sometimes a person loses his bearings."[80]

Červeňák expressed a more neutral relationship with underground work: "I met some of them [members of the underground] on some church or ecumenical activities, but we did not talk about it together. I viewed them as free believers who serve according to their beliefs and knowledge. Well, may God bless them in this. I just don't see it as a way for myself."[81]

The statements of the Evangelicals indicate that their affiliation with the underground milieu ranged from intense friendship and admiration to indifference. In general, the Evangelical clergy respected underground creators and dissidents and had no fundamental reservations about their production, especially appreciating the work that had a Christian basis. Evangelicals shared sympathy for art critical of regime values but remained separate from underground culture.

Conclusion

The members of the underground and Evangelical communities shared common values – an existential desire for freedom and an authentic existence without interference from the state apparatus. Furthermore, they perceived themselves as an alternative to the lifestyle promoted by the state, put spiritual values above materialism and consumerism, and sought to live according to their own autonomous value system while creating communities of mutual solidarity. Their orientation to the West, albeit for divergent reasons, was a thorn in the side of the state as well. Though neither underground nor Evangelicals primarily considered themselves human rights activists, they formed communities that they perceived as more effectively respecting these rights.

Nevertheless, these two communities have not been closely linked despite these many overlapping concerns. Their mutual isolation can be explained in the beliefs that distinguished the communities. While members of the underground decided to reject all cooperation with the establishment radically and were willing to bear the

[78] Interview with Daniel Raus.
[79] Interview with Daniel Fajfr.
[80] Interview with Miloš Šolc.
[81] Interview with Josef Červeňák.

consequences of losing the ability to operate in any way in the official sphere, Evangelicals with stronger ties to family and each other were acutely aware of what they risked in more open defiance. They understood their role in the church as a mission, taking responsibility for the spiritual care of God-entrusted believers – this responsibility became a priority that ruled out any social engagement that was seen as useful but not primary. What differed diametrically was the view of both communities on the importance of art in the lives of the individual and society. Underground artists understood art as a unique entity, a phenomenon that has value in itself, but Evangelical Christians tended to view it only as a means (albeit a means that can evoke powerful emotions) – whether it is for worshipping God or for evangelistic activities. These divergent conceptualisations of the nature of art delineated distinct boundaries that circumscribed each respective culture and separated them from the establishment. In the case of the underground devotees, this need arose when the personal freedom of man and the possibility of expressing oneself authentically in the world were threatened. In contrast, Evangelical communities parted ways with the official sphere when the church's missionary activities were threatened. Therefore, the underground was primarily focused on being in the present, while the church, on the contrary, was mostly concerned with the future that lies beyond the borders of this world.

Underground	**Shared characteristics**	**Evangelical communities**
The process of free creation is a priority	Desire for freedom	The responsibility for the spiritual care of believers is a priority
The willingness to give up social status	The need for authenticity	Endeavour to retain the state approval
Art has value in itself	Criticism of material values and consumerism	Art is only a means
Separation from the official sphere is necessary if the freedom of man in this world is threatened	Emphasis on spiritual values	Illegality is only possible if the missionary activities of the church are compromised
Relation to the present is primary	Autonomous value system	Relation to the future is primary
	Mutual togetherness, solidarity	
	Egalitarian element – no emphasis on origin, education	
	Attachment to the West	
	Resistance to the regime, at the same time, the absence of the need to destroy the establishment	
	Not taking responsibility for human rights issues	

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On Blasphemy

Ondřej Havelka

The author of the monograph, Yvonne Sherwood, has been working at prestigious British universities for three decades and has written several very successful books, with the most recent one, published in the popular Oxford edition of A Very Short Introduction, dealing with – as the title reveals – blasphemy. In an increasingly secularised world, the author believes that blasphemy should essentially be obsolete and might seem to have lost its provocative sparkle. Despite this, she claims that blasphemy is on the rise and not a month goes by without the global media reporting on some sort of blasphemy with a significant impact on society. One of the most notorious examples was the 2015 massacre of the editors of the French magazine Charlie Hebdo when blasphemy against the prophet Muhammad provoked an unexpectedly extreme reaction that turned into the murder of editors and random passers-by.

In six chapters, the book offers a global analysis of blasphemy across various religions and cultural contexts. Sherwood opens the subject with the meaning of the very word blasphemy, which is "offensive/hurtful/slanderous speech" from the Greek βλασφημία, originally concerning the gods. The concept was then spread to the world by Christianity. However, how to recognize what is not yet blasphemy and what undoubtedly is in today's world? Furthermore, if it is, how can we approach it from the position of law, ethics, and religious ethics? The author uses the example of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. The Romans not only ended the life of the condemned or inconvenient by crucifixion but also deliberately ridiculed them by various positions, accessories, revealing their genitals, etc. Jesus of Nazareth – or Christ for Christians – was ridiculed by the crown of thorns and the inscription "King of the Jews". This was meant not only to end his life but also to ridicule and destroy his reputation and potential following. In the subsequent history, however, the depiction of the crucifixion of Christ has been used by believers, non-believers, artists, and politicians alike both in a Christian sense and as deliberate blasphemy, and it has often been unclear which side the work represents. The author lists some well-known and (in our region) lesser-known cases.

What society considers blasphemy has changed dramatically over time. Some works, now seen as inoffensive, were extremely blasphemous a few decades ago, and conversely, what was once considered normal now causes outbursts of anger and violence. It is here, in my opinion, that the contribution and extraordinary power of the monograph are fully revealed. The fact that what people were condemned for

decades ago and executed for centuries ago is quite common nowadays is relatively well established. However, things that one could write or say just ten years ago, for example, in relation to religious, ethnic, sexual or other minorities, are now often blasphemy and may be enough for condemnation in another decade. Blasphemy changes over time and is strongly dependent on the social and legal context and events.

As one of the earliest accounts of severe punishment for blasphemy against God or the leader of the people, the author quotes the Old Testament texts of Exodus (22:27) and Leviticus (24:14), where a person is sentenced to be stoned for blasphemy. She mentions Socrates, who was convicted of blasphemy against the gods, and Jesus of Nazareth, also convicted of blasphemy. At this point, she includes Plato and his famous dialogue Euthyphro into the composition of her book for a deeper insight. She then takes the reader into the present and shows concrete examples of people who are still being imprisoned and executed for blasphemy nowadays. Often, it is not only blasphemy against God in very rigorously religious countries, but contemporary blasphemy, often targeting a leading politician, as in the case of the conviction of three members of the protest group Pussy Riot in Russia.

In the following sections of this very readable monograph, the author discusses some well-known blasphemy cases in contemporary society and tries to look at them from different sides and stimulating points of view. The chapter entitled "Blasphemy and Religion" is a kind of the book's heart. In this chapter, Sherwood asks whether blasphemy is possible in relation to non-theistic religions since the standard British dictionary definition of the word states that blasphemy is blasphemy against God. Can one talk about blasphemy with a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or a believer in a traditional African religion such as Vodun or Bwiti? Is the concept of blasphemy typically Christian, built on the foundations of Greek philosophy? Can it even be transferred to other religions, or is it something so foreign that it makes no sense in religions and cultures outside of Christianity? These are the questions to which Ivonne Sherwood seeks and brings her thoughtful answers in the central chapter of her monograph. Blasphemy relates, among other things, to the primordial basis of world ethics, namely the Jewish decalogue written in the Torah. The following chapters open up the issue of blasphemy and the law, as well as blasphemy and the media.

The monograph *Blasphemy: A Very Short Introduction* by Ivonne Sherwood deals with an interesting topic in an original way, which can shed light not only on the issue as such but also on the history and reality of various world religions with a new perspective. It will be of great use not only to religious scholars but also to theologians and sociologists and will offer an intriguing read for readers across the humanities.

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https://doi.org/10.14712/25704893.2022.5