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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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**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 podhalit, 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 pronutí 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

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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.”<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>, and Miloš Šolc) were conducted in a semi-structured form. The other two respondents (Daniel Raus<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Josef Červeňák was interviewed both face-to-face and by correspondence.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> Filipi also highlights the importance of the missionary and Evangelistic aspects of the movement.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.”<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> VOJTÍŠEK, „Evangelikalismus...“, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> VOJTÍŠEK, „Evangelikalismus...“, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> ROGER E. OLSON, *Příběh evangelikální teologie* [*The Story of Evangelical Theology*], Praha: Návrat domů 2012, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> ZDENĚK VOJTÍŠEK, *Encyklopedie 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.”<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> SYNEK, *Svobodni v nesvobodě*, p. 30–31.

<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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)<sup>18</sup>. 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

<sup>14</sup> 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 komunistů SKPV 2004, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> BALÍK and HANUŠ, *Katolická církev...*, p. 44–45.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> In non-Catholic churches, it included opportunities to organise mass interdenominational conferences.<sup>20</sup>

## 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.”<sup>21</sup> He thus sees the church as “an alternative polis that shows the outside world that things can be done differently than normal.”<sup>22</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup> Černý warns against a model in which the church engages in politics as a whole because “political diaconia”<sup>24</sup> requires a deep knowledge of the problem and political life, which the church often does not have.<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup>

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

<sup>19</sup> BALÍK and HANUŠ, *Katolická církev...*, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence with Josef Červeňák.

<sup>24</sup> Political diaconia refers to a situation in which the church actively intervenes in human rights issues and systematically engages in the socio-political sphere.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.”<sup>28</sup>

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”<sup>29</sup> 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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

<sup>27</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 50–51.

<sup>28</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>30</sup> 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."<sup>31</sup>

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."<sup>32</sup>

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."<sup>33</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup>

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.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>33</sup> Correspondence with Daniel Fajfr.

<sup>34</sup> 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’.”<sup>35</sup> 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.”<sup>36</sup>

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.”<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Josef Červeňák.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Josef Červeňák.

<sup>37</sup> Correspondence with Daniel Fajfr.

<sup>38</sup> 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<sup>39</sup> 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.”<sup>40</sup>

Šolc recalls how in his youth, he was shaped by his father’s<sup>41</sup> 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.”<sup>42</sup> 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.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> At that time, the church was called The Unity of the Czech Brethren.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>41</sup> Miloš Šolc Sr. (1911–2007) was an important Baptist preacher and successful tennis player.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Miloš Šolc.

<sup>43</sup> 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."<sup>44</sup> 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."<sup>45</sup>

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-

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>45</sup> 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."<sup>46</sup>

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.'"<sup>47</sup> 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."<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> However, after his rebirth in 1978 and in connection with the congregation's

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>49</sup> 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."<sup>50</sup> 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."<sup>51</sup>

The premises of the Holešovice congregation was one of the places where the so-called "Chatting meeting"<sup>52</sup> 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 'Zarathustra'; 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."<sup>53</sup>

"Intellectual pleasure"<sup>54</sup> was Drápal's primary motivation for attending these meetings. In the early 1980s, however, the membership of the Maniny congregation began to expand.<sup>55</sup> 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."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>, whose

<sup>50</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 49–50.

<sup>51</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 50.

<sup>52</sup> "Kecanda" in original.

<sup>53</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Jak to všechno začalo*, p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>55</sup> DRÁPAL, *Historie Křesťanského společenství Praha: Léta růstu*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>57</sup> 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.”<sup>58</sup>

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.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite sympathising with the Chartists and characterising the Charter as “a manifesto that could not be disagreed with,”<sup>60</sup> 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.”<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> This illegal educational initiative offered an evening study of Czech studies to intellectuals who were undesirable to the regime.<sup>63</sup>

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.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>62</sup> 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.

<sup>63</sup> 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.”<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>. 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.”<sup>67</sup>

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

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>65</sup> 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.

<sup>66</sup> Famous Czech philosopher.

<sup>67</sup> 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 Sváta 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.<sup>68</sup>

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 Sváta Karásek and Vratislav Brabenec. Sváta Karásek and I were friends. We actually influenced his songs a little bit. We had recordings of spirituals, which he translated into Czech."<sup>69</sup> 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."<sup>70</sup>

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

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Dan Drápal.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Petr Macek.

<sup>70</sup> 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."<sup>71</sup>

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."<sup>72</sup> 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."<sup>73</sup>

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."<sup>74</sup> 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."<sup>75</sup> 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*<sup>76</sup> and *Song*<sup>77</sup> – 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

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>72</sup> This incident took place on January 17, 1972, Bohdan Mikolášek sang the song "Silence" ("Ticho" in original).

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Pavel Černý.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Daniel Raus.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Daniel Raus.

<sup>76</sup> "Větrné Mlýny" in original.

<sup>77</sup> "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."<sup>78</sup>

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,<sup>79</sup> 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."<sup>80</sup>

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."<sup>81</sup>

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

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Daniel Raus.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Daniel Fajfr.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Miloš Šolc.

<sup>81</sup> 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.

<b>Underground</b>	<b>Shared characteristics</b>	<b>Evangelical communities</b>
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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