MA Program *Euroculture*

Declaration

I, Iva Raková, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled "Czech Alternative Culture under Communism: Unofficial Music During the Period of 'Normalization'", submitted as a partial requirement for the MA Program *Euroculture*, is my own original work and is expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the list of Works Cited.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis on Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Program *Euroculture*.

Signature……..

Date…….

Acknowledgements

I thank both of my supervisors, Mgr. Antonín Kalous, MA, Ph.D. from Palacký University in Olomouc, and Dr. Maria Rhode from Georg-August University in Göttingen, for their guidance and helpful comments during my work on this paper.
I would also like to thank Beau Daquila for his language consultations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Based on its title, this thesis deals primarily with the unofficial music of the 1970s in Czechoslovakia. However, without a broader historical context of non-conformist culture under communism in the country, the cultural and political movements opposing the establishment during 'Normalization' would lose their foundations. These movements continued in the tradition of the activities that had already begun in the inter-war period. Therefore, this thesis will focus not only on the Czech alternative and underground music of the 1970s but will also cover its predecessors from the previous decades, which built a strong tradition of an unofficial culture in Czechoslovakia. The term 'unofficial'[1], which will be used often in this paper, was chosen intentionally to include the broadest possible field of the kind of culture that was excluded from the pro-regime's artistic displays, was knowingly overlooked by the establishment, and did not fit into the official cultural policy measures. It is clear that the unofficial culture did not cease to exist following the Velvet Revolution of 1989, which brought democracy to Czechoslovakia. Its motivations shifted, because the new political system was based on freedom of expression and basic human rights. Moreover, the designation 'unofficial' would no longer fit either; nevertheless, alternative culture in the sense of people creating a new direction in the arts in opposition to mainstream culture did not disappear and continued to develop further.

The author is absolutely aware of the fact that there is already vast literature available in Czech as well as foreign languages on this topic, which is widely discussed in Czech society. It is important to stress, however, that the period ruled by the Communist party in Czechoslovakia is 'history' for the new generation of young

[1] The expression 'unofficial culture' is used here in contraposition to the official, institutionalized culture that was, in contrast to the unofficial activities, supported and promoted by the establishment, and served the Communist party's interests. In Czechoslovak history, the unofficial culture had many different names that meant more or less the same thing, writes the Czech sociologist Josef Alan. It was called "neoficiální, polooficiální, alternativní, undergroundová, disidentská, ilegální, paralelní, podzemní, opoziční, nezávislá" ["unofficial, semi-official, alternative, underground, dissident, illegal, parallel, 'podzemní', counterculture, independent"] culture (Alan 19). Therefore, the unofficial culture includes all displays of the alternative culture but it is not always synonymous with the word 'alternative' (like in the case of the 'alternative scene' of the 1970s, which was a specific variety of the unofficial music). The meaning of the word 'alternative' in the context of this thesis is explained on p. 16 (see subchapter 2.3 *The Post-WWII Alternative Culture*). The 'alternative scene' in music is discussed in subchapter 4.2.3 *The Alternative Scene* starting on p. 57.

people, who have experienced a democratic political system during the greatest part of their lives. But in the minds of the generation of our parents and their predecessors, those years are still present. The author of this thesis was born in 1986 and thus belongs to one of the first generations of people whose possibilities and thinking have not been restricted by the state establishment or influenced by socialism and the communist ideology. One can observe, however, that 20 years after the revolution, Czech society is still being confronted with the ramifications of the half-century-long totalitarian regime's rule. The younger generations listen to stories about queues for bananas and oranges, jeans bought in 'tuzex', where luxury western goods were sold, and ringing keys on Wenceslas Square in Prague. But we – speaking for the younger generation – cannot actually imagine how different life was in Czechoslovakia at that time. And what about creative people who wanted to express themselves freely using artistic means or had different political and inner convictions that they did not want to surrender?

Artists and intellectuals started working independently despite the regime's bans and, in extreme cases, their lives and the lives of their relatives were endangered, which was in fact how alternative and underground culture emerged under the dictatorship of the socialist aesthetic rules and political opinions. The unofficial culture, which was moved to the fringes of the socialist society, grew throughout the decades of Czechoslovak history in the twentieth century. **What were its starting points in the inter-war period, after the communist seizure in 1948 and during the 'thaw' of the 1960s, which was stopped by the Soviet invasion? How did the avant-garde and '*podzemí*' influence the underground culture during the period of 'Normalization', mainly in the spheres of underground and alternative music? How did the unofficial music develop during the 1970s and what were the regime's tools to destroy it? And, finally, what happened with the unofficial culture and underground music after the Velvet Revolution?**

These are the questions to be explored and answered in this paper. The research method of the paper was based on the author's critical evaluation of a variety of sources, including printed books, internet articles, and audio sources. This thesis is a historical paper based on a compilation of information from a variety of sources. At the same time, the author will try to contribute to the research on this topic by looking for roots of the underground culture of the 1970s and exploring the works of contemporary underground music bands in the Czech Republic. The author's motivation to write on this topic comes from her interest in artists' lives under communism in Czechoslovakia and her goal was, as already stressed, to present the roots of the unofficial culture and its

development to the younger generation in order to serve as a reminder of what was happening in our country only several years ago.

The key book that provided the author with the inspiration to look for more sources and focus on the unofficial culture was *Alternativní kultura: Příběh české společnosti 1945-1989* [*The Alternative Culture: Czech Society from 1945 to 1989*], which was published in 2001 and edited by the outstanding Czech sociologist Josef Alan. This book maps the forms of the unofficial culture after WWII and includes chapters on alternative displays in visual arts, photography, literature and samizdat as well as in music, film making and theatre. The book's contributors were significant representatives of the unofficial culture during the communist era in Czechoslovakia as well. Authors of particular chapters important for this paper included Martin Machovec, Josef Vlček, Stanislav Dvorský et al., and for the part dedicated to the underground culture the materials written by Ivan Martin Jirous that dealt with the story of the *Plastic People of the Universe* were useful.

As far as the structure is concerned, first of all, this paper will outline the history of the Czechoslovak unofficial culture reaching from the pre-war avant-garde up to the rock 'n' roll music of the 1960s. Although this period would provide enough material for a separate paper, here we will describe briefly the foundations of later underground culture during 'Normalization'. It is necessary to also return to the avant-garde movement, which went through many changes during the two wars and the time between them. The Czech avant-garde stressed artistic independence and revolutionary thinking. It was interrupted, however, by the doctrine of Soviet socialist realism starting in the 1930s and Zhdanov's demands, which had set clear rules on how the 'right' art should look and thereby regarded all other forms as bourgeois. The Czech avant-garde, dissolved by WWII, was barely put back together after 1945 and its disintegration was confirmed by the *communist putsch* in 1948. Besides the avant-garde movement, surrealism and post-surrealism were also important parts of the unofficial activities, which also penetrated and complemented the avant-garde movement. Although the end of WWII meant the end of the avant-garde, new values, post-war euphoria and disillusionment gave birth to alternative culture that was representative of the avant-garde ideas. *Skupina 42*, an artistic group including artists from various disciplines, focused on everyday life and the magic of cities. The main influence of the underground in the 1970s, however, was the literary edition *Edice Půlnoc*, and above all the poet Egon Bondy, whose works were rediscovered at the end of the 1960s. Last but not least,

during the 1960s, the softening of the political scene and 'socialism with a human face' enabled Western culture to be imported to Czechoslovakia. Thus, new bands imitating Western ones were founded throughout the entire country and 'bigbít' music represented the lifestyle of 'máničky', the long-haired youth. The process of cultural as well as political democratization of the country, however, was forcibly stopped by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968.

The third chapter focuses on the political history of the country, mainly on the democratization processes climaxing in the Prague Spring, on the subsequent Soviet invasion, and the beginning of the period of 'Normalization'. In order to understand the positions of the underground artists and dissidents, it is necessary to grasp the situation faced by Czech society. Psychologically-speaking, the entry of Soviet troops to Czechoslovakia was a complete tragedy for the citizens. Nevertheless, some of them attempted to wake up their fellow countrymen and create an opposition that would effectively face the consequences brought on by the occupation. The important force became students supporting reform-minded communists. However, neither after the establishment of several opposition groups nor after the self-immolation of Jan Palach was Czechoslovakia able to overcome the Warsaw Pact intervention and, as a result, people withdrew to their private lives. Within as well as outside the Communist party, 'Normalization' should have destroyed any displays of protest and opposition that would hinder implementing a neo-Stalinist communism in Czechoslovakia. 'Normalization' was connected with purges in the society on all levels and the appointment of new pro-Soviet employees to all significant administrative and political functions. The Communist party concluded a kind of 'social contract' with the citizens that ensured them certain benefits in exchange for their loyalty to the regime. People who did not want to adjust their life to the socialist demands created a 'parallel polis', another concept discussed in this chapter. The 'parallel polis' was the foundation for a dissent movement that came together after the political trial of the music group *Plastic People of the Universe*, reacting to the manipulated lawsuit with the establishment of *Charter 77*, which emphasized the importance of keeping basic human rights. The regime did not wait long to repress signatories, especially the spokespersons. For a better understanding of such persecution under communism, the concept of several levels of repression in a communist state will be presented in this chapter.

Finally, the phenomenon of samizdat publishing will be discussed at the end of the third chapter. The author decided to include samizdat because it was an extremely

important field in the unofficial culture that was also connected with the underground. In samizdat editions, lyrics and poems of several underground musicians were published.

The core part of the thesis, the fourth chapter, will focus on the unofficial music scenes in Czechoslovakia of the 1970s. First of all, Marci Shore's concept of communism as a generational history will be explained as a background for writing about the unofficial music scene during this period. Furthermore, it was necessary to define what the official culture during this period meant. The institutionalized mass culture served the interests of the Communist party and set the aesthetic rules in arts. It supported average works of arts, rejected innovation, and labelled them 'Western' and 'bourgeois'. Everything that was new and unknown was dangerous to maintaining the control of the totalitarian society. Therefore, suitable clerks loyal to the party were appointed to the nationalized cultural institutions in order to hinder artists from realising their projects. In the case of musicians, immense amounts of paperwork made acquiring a concert permit much more difficult. The first bans of music groups were part of a stricter cultural policy, which in turn actually fostered the expansion of the underground music scene in Czechoslovakia. The border between the official and the suppressed culture was not always clear-cut, however. There were many activities 'on the edge' of the official culture that stretched to the underground. People within this *gray zone* semi-officially helped the unofficial culture without being members of the Communist party or outright dissidents.

In this paper, the unofficial music scenes will be divided into three parts based on the assessment of music publicist Josef Vlček. First, the philosophy of the Czech underground and its connection with the clandestine activities of preceding decades will be discussed. Ivan Martin Jirous was one of the most significant persons in the movement and can be perceived as a kind of ideologue. The underground is connected mainly with the psychedelic band the *Plastic People of the Universe* (PPU), for which Jirous served as artistic director. Although at the end of the 1960s rock 'n' roll bands in Prague boomed, we will focus on the story of the PPU and their conflicts with the regime, which climaxed in the fabricated political trial of the band in 1976 and activated the founding of *Charter 77*. As the second part of the unofficial culture, the 'alternative scene' and its main representative, the *Jazzová Sekce* [*The Jazz Section*], will be discussed. Although the alternative scene shared common roots with the underground, the former one was more open and involved different kinds of people. The alternative

scene was formed somewhat later than the underground and deliberately opposed the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia.

Finally, at the end of the 1970s, the young generation came with punk and new wave music, fighting for freedom of expression. Amateur Czech musicians, influenced by their British idols, founded their own bands and shocked the public with their wild music and outfits. Although punk and new wave were not initially a political movement, the regime did not wait long to condemn it in the official press with a series of inflammatory articles using typical communist rhetoric. The concert organizers were ordered not to sign contracts with punk bands and thus this music was practically banned. Like in the case of the PPU, however, the establishment's counter-campaign had a completely opposite effect. The unofficial music scene then became known by the broader public and gained support of like-minded people.

The last chapter of this thesis will briefly discuss the situation of the unofficial culture during the 1980s and mainly after the Velvet Revolution. Because of the democratic political system, the former unofficial culture lost any sense of illegality and began to be referred to as 'alternative' culture. Before 1989, the softening political situation and Gorbachev's attempt to reform the system was also reflected in the field of cultural activities. Like at the end of the 1960, the border between the 'official' and 'illegal' became movable and the party started to make concessions. With the fall of the regime, the alternative culture became so broad that it was hard to distinguish what was alternative and what was mainstream. The Czech music scene was flooded by pop and electronic music influences from the West. On one side, many 'old' underground bands continued to play but there were also several new ones trying to follow the underground legacy. The PPU started playing again in 1997 and in 2009 they released a new album, which will be analyzed in this chapter as well. In order to conclude, the results of the research will be presented at the end of this paper.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNOFFICIAL CULTURE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In order to put the unofficial activities during 'Normalization' into historical context, we must return to the roots of the unofficial culture in the inter-war period. Gertraude Zand, who writes about the Czechoslovak 'Untergrund'[2] literature of the 1950s, goes even farther into history and claims that the tradition of non-conformism[3] started as early as in the *Sturm und Drang* movement and the romantic period, continues on to decadence and futurism, and ends up in the anarchist subcultures of the second half of the twentieth century (150). Indeed, romantic individuality and exclusion from the majority, which did not understand works of a forlorn hero, can be perceived as a basis for the later subcultures and non-conformist movements that emerged after WWI but above all they developed in the second half of the twentieth century. Unofficial cultures were connected mainly with changes in the political establishment and totalitarian regimes of different kinds coming to power after both world wars. The existing regime always played a significant role in forming unofficial, clandestine and illegal activities. Although not all non-conformist movements wanted to confront an establishment and had purely artistic purposes, they were usually politicized by the regime. The unofficial culture represented another way of doing things, a way for artists to realize their ideas. It did not follow the firmly set cultural policy measures of a regime and, as such, it endangered the establishment's stability with its creativity and independent thinking. Within Czechoslovak history around the two world wars, the state cultural doctrine was represented by Socialist Realism, while avant-garde, surrealism, and other artistic groups formed the unofficial culture.

[2] Zand uses the German word 'Untergrund' to describe clandestine activities during the 1950s. In Czech they are named *podzemí* (noun) or *podzemní* (adjective), e.g. podzemní literature, which literary means 'underground'; however, in Czech history the English word is connected with the underground movement of the 1970s. In this thesis the term *podzemí* will be used from now on for the period of the 1950s and *underground*, a word which is used also in Czech, for the period of the 1970s. In English, unfortunately, there is only one word for these somewhat distinctive movements.

[3] The word 'non-conformism' and 'non-conformist' (noun, adjective) is used in this thesis as a synonym to the word 'unofficial' (e.g. non-conformist/unofficial activities).

2.1 Avant-Garde and Surrealism

The avant-garde expressed a program of leftist thinking and political engagement together with absolute artistic freedom and support for individuality. Josef Alan, the renowned Czech sociologist, claims that the avant-garde was an ideological movement rather than an artistic one (9). Its program always connected artistic goals with political elements. In Czechoslovakia, the avant-garde was one of the two main movements in the culture. According to Alan, one stream of the Czech culture, resulting from the period of the *Národní obrození* [*National Revival*][4], fostered a national identity that was threatened by Hitler's occupation. On the other side of the cultural spectrum, there was the avant-garde inspired by civilization, modernity, bohemianism, anti-bourgeoisie sentiments and non-conformity (9). These two streams, however, did not compete against each other; both were an equal part of the cultural life in the pre-WWII period. It is important to emphasize that unlike the alternative culture, the avant-garde was formed within a liberal, non-totalitarian society that tolerated extreme artistic displays, writes Alan (9). The unofficial culture, on the other hand, developed under a totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia and took over the principles of artistic freedom from the avant-garde movement.

The avant-garde was closely connected with Dada and surrealism, which also had a strong tradition in this country thanks to contacts with France before WWII. Dada and surrealism reached their climax in the 1930s and was a culmination of the development of all avant-garde forms. During the following war, Czech surrealism was segregated into several small surviving groups but did not manage to unify after the end of WWII. Stanislav Dvorský writes that surrealism worked with basic principles of human creativity and wanted to expand people's consciousness. As a result, creative spontaneity gained importance and reality acquired an almost magical dimension (77-78). Ivan Martin Jirous, one of the core persons in the underground movement of the 1970s, also speaks about a mythological period in the works of the PPU, which worked with spiritual elements and tried to go beyond stereotypes of reality. Dada and surrealism also inspired the Czech underground with its critique of some social values and its resistance to ideology. As Dvorský confirms, surrealism sharply disagreed with fascist ideology, which demanded conservatism, loyalty to the state, and a return to national traditions (85). In Czechoslovakia, surrealists were not unified in one

[4] The Czech national movement of the nineteenth century that tried to revive the Czech language and national sentiments within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

movement but formed rather smaller groups and worked individually, acting as opponents of the official protectorate culture. During the 1930s, however, the whole cultural field was gradually becoming a tool of ideologies and for the avant-garde and surrealists it was more difficult to keep their autonomy. Therefore, the avant-garde began to disintegrate and, finally, WWII halted the development of this movement. The political scientist Ladislav Cabada confirms that the end of the avant-garde in Czechoslovakia came with the establishment of so-called Socialist Realism as the only official culture in the communist Soviet Union (192).

2.2 Communism and the Doctrine of Socialist Realism

The entire history of twentieth century Czechoslovakia was determined by totalitarian ideologies. First it was fascism coming with the Nazi occupation and the establishment of the Protectorate in March 1939, which was followed by the communist takeover in February 1948 and, finally, the Soviet occupation in August 1968. Both communism and fascism, however, began to affect the political scene immediately after WWI when the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were founded. The communist ideology, writes Cabada, offered social justice, classless society, and revolutionary changes in property and owners' relationships. It improved the lives of the poorest people and in intellectual circles the new Leninist philosophy was curing disillusions caused by WWI (182-183).

Both communism and fascism denied democratic principles and acted in the same way in the field of culture. We can argue, however, that the avant-garde was oriented towards leftish political spectrum and also sympathized with the communist ideology. One of the most prominent leftish artists representing the older avant-garde generation was S. K. Neumann, who supported proletarian art and became head of the first integrated communist cultural organization *Proletkult* (Cabada 185). In the young generation, Karel Teige was Neumann's opponent in discussions on leftish culture and zealously defended the basic avant-garde principle, which was that art should be independent from an ideology (Cabada 185). We can observe that the situation in the field of culture during the inter-war time was quite ambivalent. On one hand, sympathizing with communism, in the arts as well, was seen as better than sympathizing with fascism, which endangered the stable political situation in Europe. On the other hand, some artists made claims for absolute artistic freedom and no ideologies in art. Unfortunately for the Czech avant-garde and surrealist artists, the ideological

orientation of culture was strengthened in the country. Following the declaration of the Socialist Realism doctrine during the fourth reunion of the Soviet writers in 1936 came the end of the avant-garde and the beginning of its oppression (Alan 10).

Socialist Realism served the purposes of the Communist party and became the only right and official cultural doctrine. The concept was developed in the 1930s in the Soviet Union and spread to other countries where communists were active in political life. Socialist Realism was created as a superior culture to other cultural activities, which were not accepted as legal displays of artistic creation. Cabada writes that representatives of other cultural fields in Czechoslovakia suddenly found themselves on the border with the law and were persecuted by the party (192). Although Socialist Realism was applied in different artistic disciplines, it was always necessary to fulfil three basic criteria: 'stranickost' [partiality], 'ideovost' [ideological orientation], and 'lidovost' [popularity]. These demands were promoted by Czechoslovak theorists Zdeněk Nejedlý, Ladislav Štoll and Jiří Taufer (Zand 26). All artistic works had to be adjusted to these criteria and they were examined as to whether they were socialist enough and suitable for the masses. The strict demands of the Communist party in the field of culture assured that Socialist Realism excluded any attempts to make an original and creative work of art from the official culture. On the contrary, schematic, epigone and realistic works with a revolutionary perspective were supported in all genres and thus progress in artistic disciplines was a priori impossible.

Immediately following WWII, leftist intellectuals actively began to implement Soviet methods in the cultural field. The communists took posts in all significant cultural institutions, such as Czechoslovak radio, film and press institutions. Cabada writes that an important tool of the communist propaganda was the newly-established Ministry of Information led by the main ideologue Václav Kopecký. Moreover, many avant-garde artists, who were loyal to Stalin's politics and its methods during the inter-war period, became top-ranking officials (190). At the end of May 1945, Zdeněk Nejedlý stressed in a speech that the aim of culture was above all to wage a cultural fight against fascism and everything decadent. At the same time, writes Zand, it was necessary to go back to national classic authors and bring patriotic arts closer to ordinary people (24). Thus the Communist party provoked confrontation and pressure on non-conformist artists who were pushed to the fringes of society. The cultural exclusion disabled the public from having contact of their works, which retrospectively influenced the artists' attitude to the creative process. As Dvorský also reports, works that did not correspond with the demands of Socialist Realism were isolated from any

legal means of publishing and were thus practically banned (113). Before February 1948, the party tried to make artists cooperate, to win them over to their political views. After the takeover, they simply had to be loyal to the regime; otherwise, they risked their own lives.

Several months after the political coup of February 1948, the Communist party began to implement their policies in all spheres of life. In the cultural field, the party formulated its requirements in the cultural policy during the *Sjezd národní kultury* [*National Culture Congress*] in April 1948. There Zdeněk Nejedlý presented his paper on *Ideové směrnice naší národní kultury* [*Ideological Directives of Our National Culture*] and Ladislav Štoll delivered a paper entitled *Skutečnosti tváří v tvář* [*Faced the Reality*] (Zand 25). Both Nejedlý and Štoll promoted Socialist Realism according to Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov, the party secretary and the Soviet cultural boss who in 1946 implemented stricter state control in a cultural policy accompanied with extreme anti-West sentiments. First it was directed mainly against literature but it gradually spread to all spheres of the arts ("Zhdanovshchina"). Zhdanov's policy was also promoted in Czechoslovakia and made the situation for independent artists even worse. During the 1950s, when the regime was installed in its toughest form, the Communist party started purges within society and persecuted opponents. The party destroyed all the classes that could have been resistant to the new establishment, i.e. everybody who owned property, including private owners and businessmen. In political trials people considered 'inconvenient' were sentenced to either death or long years in prisons. One of the most well-known cases against leftish avant-garde artists was the trial of Záviš Kalandra, who was labelled a Trotskyite and executed in 1950. The head of the surrealist group, Karel Teige, died in 1951 of heart failure caused by stress, awaiting the same destiny, and the avant-garde artist Konstantin Biebl committed suicide by jumping out of a window (Cabada 191). The Communist party brutally persecuted the inter-war cultural, political and intellectual elite and spread an atmosphere of fear among citizens, which forced them to play by party's rules.

In order to strengthen its position, the establishment began to revise the political as well as cultural history of the country. Not only works of classical authors but also contemporary writers' books were labelled 'objectionable', thrown out of libraries, and destroyed. The history was adjusted to the Marxist view and works of classical and popular music went through the same process of being expunged. For writers, a new communist institution was established, the *Svaz československých spisovatelů* [*Association of Czechoslovak Writers*], which reduced the number of its members, in

comparison to the pre-war politically more-open syndicate. The strict cultural policy hindered many artists from making their works public and thus fostered activities in the newly emerging post-WWII alternative culture. On the other hand, working illegally meant constant uncertainty in receiving material funding for living. It was thus necessary to solve existential problems and maintain families and at the same time to keep one's artistic ideals despite the pressure of the communist government. Furthermore, Dvorský explains that the generation of the 1950s was made up of people born around 1920 who were not able to study because of the war. When they finally had a chance to attend school after WWII, they were not allowed to pursue their studies because of their background or opinions. Their personal perspectives were suppressed and their social status miserable (110-111). Therefore, they had to think not only about their financial security, but also about the border of where they could go in order not to give up their artistic convictions. From the other perspective, the lives of official authors were not easy either. They had some advantages coming from cooperation with the regime, above all social prestige and material rewards. Many authors were also given scholarships and stayed abroad. The pressure of the party on their work, however, was so great that even some official authors committed suicide.

Except for Socialist Realism, everything in the culture was regarded as decadent, bourgeois, subjective, and individualistic. Cultural streams like naturalism, symbolism, decadence, expressionism, the avant-garde, poetism, ruralism, surrealism, existentialism, Catholicism and all other spiritual orientations were not accepted into the official doctrine, writes Zand (28). Magazines and newspapers were being cancelled, publishing houses nationalized, artistic groups and institutions dissolved. Zand further reports that preventive censorship for published documents was also anchored in the constitution (newspapers, posters, simple inscriptions). Mail was censored, too, and radio jammers were used throughout the country (Zand 29). The regime simply used all available means to paralyze the Czechoslovak society and disintegrate the party's opponents. Some people managed to emigrate abroad but hundreds of young people who wanted to flee illegally, writes Barbara Dayová, died on the West German or Austrian borders where high fortifications and watchtowers had been built (8). The atmosphere of denunciation, envy and fear spread throughout the whole society: "In the 1950s everyone could have been sentenced for years in prison only for lending someone an ideologically objectionable book, whether it was a book from abroad or one

published during the First Republic"[5] (Dayová 7). Despite the unfavourable political situation and obstacles, there were people in Czechoslovakia who continued their cultural activities but had to necessarily 'go underground' and work secretly. The post-war alternative culture was another direct inspiration of the underground movement in the 1970s. We will discuss its development in the following subchapter.

2.3 The Post-WWII Alternative Culture

The term 'alternative culture' can be used mainly in two distinctive meanings. First, the word 'alternative' expresses "something that can exist or something you can do instead of something else". The word "is also used to describe something that is different from the usual things of its kind, especially when it is simpler or more natural, or not part of the establishment" (Sinclair 29). In this explanation, the term 'establishment' does not only mean a political constitution but also refers to the general state of things. 'Alternative' thus means doing things in a different way but it is not always identical to an experiment. This also explains the character of the alternative culture. It is just an alternative to the mainstream culture and does not have to be realized necessarily within a totalitarian system. In our context, however, the term 'alternative culture' designates the unofficial cultural activities after WWII in Czechoslovakia. The post-war alternative culture actually included similar kinds of activities as the pre-war avant-garde. Both of them proclaimed independent thinking, resistance to any form of repression, and conscious autonomy towards the ruling official culture. They refused cultural and spiritual decay and were non-conformist. The alternative and official cultures were two absolutely irreconcilable things from their very basic dispositions. Dvorský stresses that their conflict cannot even be called ideological because their focus was different from the outset (113). The alternative culture did not want to adjust to the official mandate because the experience with collaboration during the Protectorate was still too recent, explains Dvorský (115). Therefore, the alternative culture fought against utilitarianism, opportunism, corruption and consumerism. At the same time, the artists involved were constantly balancing between opposition to the regime and an unsatisfactory financial situation. To be an alternative artist meant lack of work and thus a lack of money. The result was a so-

[5] "V padesátých letech mohl být kdokoliv odsouzen na léta do vězení jen proto, že někomu půjčil ideově závadnou knihu, ať už ze zahraničí nebo vydanou za první republiky".

called *gray zone* (which will be discussed later in this thesis) that created movable borders between the official and rejected culture.

WWII clearly divided the pre-war avant-garde from the alternative culture emerging after the war. None of avant-garde and surrealist groups was able to restore its activities because the war caused significant changes in thinking of not only the artists but also of ordinary people. All the values were overturned at once. With the end of the war came freedom, euphoria, hope for better life. It turned out, however, that the post-war period was a period of uncertainty, scepticism, and a search for a new meaning of life, as well as one of disappointment and disillusion. Dvorský aptly wrote that the alternative in Czechoslovakia emerged:

> "[…] exactly on this breakage [in thinking] when all of life wants to be restored in the moment, where it was chopped off and interrupted by the war, but it remains betrayed by the reality that, suddenly, in that moment there is nothing to continue in meaningfully[6]" (88).

In the Czechoslovak alternative culture, indeed, there were tendencies that had many ideals but reached minimal satisfaction because people could have enjoyed only three years of freedom between the end of the war and the communist putsch. Notwithstanding the political situation, non-conformist artists were trying to continue their pre-war activities. Therefore, the alternative culture included many genres thanks to its unconventional views against a rooted cultural hierarchy. Dvorský writes that after WWII, the avant-garde artist Karel Teige wanted to reunite surrealist activities but the artists did not agree on a common program of post-surrealism. The secondary effect was the founding of the group *Skupina Ra*, which was dissolved, however, only one year later (91-92). February 1948 accelerated the disintegration of the potential post-surrealist movement as well as the development of other alternative activities. Moreover, with Teige's untimely death, one long period of the Czechoslovak avant-garde finished and it was never re-established again.

Another significant alternative group, *Skupina 42* [*Group 42*], was already established during WWII in 1942, as its name suggests. Its artistic manifesto became a text from the theorist Jindřich Chalupecký *Svět, v němž žijeme* [*The World Where We Live*], which focused on the everyday feelings of ordinary working people. *Skupina 42*

[6] „[…] přesně na tomto zlomu [v myšlení], v okamžiku, kdy veškerý život má vůli se obnovit jakoby v momentě, kde byl válkou uťat a přerušen, jenže zůstává zrazen skutečností, že v onom okamžiku náhle není nač smysluplně navázat".

brought together writers, painters, sculptors and other graphic artists as well as theorists and was inspired by avant-garde, surrealism, futurism, cubism and also the existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger. In its artists' works, the mythology of the city landscape and its *genius loci* were stressed. *Skupina 42* included many artists whose ideas were significant for the later development of the unofficial culture, such as Ivan Blatný, Josef Kainar, Jiřina Hauková, Jindřich Chalupecký and Kamil Lhoták ("Skupina 42"). In 1948, however, like many different artistic groups, *Skupina 42* disbanded and its members branched out into three parts, writes Zand. Kainar tried to work within the new political situation, Blatný emigrated, Chalupecký, Hauková and others worked further in a modernist sense (Zand 29). *Skupina 42* was also inspired by surrealism but its later development was based on individual achievements. It was, however, also an important element in the Czechoslovak alternative arts, one that worked with industrialism and the poetry of civil and ordinary life, and also reflected the negative sentiments of the post-war period.

Besides membership in an artistic group, there were many artists in Czechoslovakia, above all writers, who were "loners", or solitary individuals, and with the communist takeover they lost any opportunity to publish their work. People like Bohumil Hrabal, Josef Škvorecký, Vratislav Effenberger, Jan Zábrana, Vladimír Holan, Jakub Deml, Bohuslav Reynek and others were forced to earn their living as manual labourers (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 158). These legends of Czech literature sought to keep their artistic ideals and therefore had to give up any hopes of having their work officially published[7].

As far as music is concerned, the demands of Socialist Realism were somewhat vaguer than in literature. Music expressed ideas more abstractly and therefore some avant-garde tendencies were tolerated. Yet, Machovec writes that official music required works to be understandable and optimistic, and to have an almost folksy characters (*Od avantgardy* 156). Therefore, like in literature, the official music became simplified and followed the same mass pattern. In the unofficial culture, jazz above all, which was of course condemned by the Communist party, was spread in the post-war generation. At the beginning of the 1960s, younger generations started listening to rock music and the first information about the Beat generation emerged in Czechoslovakia. Dvorský emphasizes, however, that under the Czech conditions the influences from abroad were rather inspiration for people's own activities. Artists transferred some

[7] Some of them, however, were published in samizdat editions, see subchapter *3.4 Samizdat* starting on p. 33.

elements to arts (open-minded thinking, spontaneity) rather than directly imitating a 'Western' lifestyle (126). There is one more important movement of the 1950s that influenced the underground emerging 20 years later: the literary edition *Edice Půlnoc* [*Edition Midnight*] and Egon Bondy, the legendary poet who was rediscovered by the underground in the 1970s.

2.3.1 *Podzemí* and *Edice Půlnoc*

Besides the activities of *Skupina 42*, other small surrealist, and post-surrealist groups and individual artists, there was one significant group at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s that inspired the underground of the 1970s and realized one of the first unofficially published works[8] in Czechoslovakia: *Edice Půlnoc*. As already discussed, in Czech we differentiate between two terms: *podzemí*, which describes clandestine activities of the 1950s, and is connected mainly with *Edice Půlnoc*, and *underground*, which is used for the period of the 1970s. English, unfortunately, has only one word, *underground*, for both movements. The author will therefore use *podzemí* to speak about the 1950s and *underground* to refer to the 1970s.

Although we cannot say that the *podzemí* of the 1950s was already a movement like the later underground, we can sense some kind of community and certain lifestyle among writers of *Edice Půlnoc*. The sharper the criteria of the official culture were, the more activities were forced to go to *podzemí* and the community was thus strengthened. Zand writes that from its semantic meaning the term *podzemí* already implied something low. It was primitive, dark, sinister and irrational, something that was at the bottom in a moral and also philosophic sense (Zand 149). This was also characteristic of the underground of the 1970s, which consciously withdrew from structures of the system. Zand further argues that *podzemí* and the underground also emerged under democracy, such as in the case of the American underground and the Beat generation. Democratic values and norms (conservatism, consumer society, etc.) also provoked non-conformist behaviour and the underground was not connected only with totalitarian regimes (Zand 154). It is true that on one hand inspiration for the Czech underground of the 1970s was the American model, first used in rock music and later in other artistic disciplines, but in the Czech context it was *podzemí* of the 1950s, which developed

[8] *Edice Půlnoc* still cannot be called a samizdat edition because of its relatively unsystematic working and small number of published works. To read more about samizdat, see subchapter *3.4 Samizdat* starting on p. 33.

under the communist rule, that connected the arts with a certain lifestyle and 'underground feeling'. *Podzemí*, mainly *Edice Půlnoc*, was not only alternative in terms of art but also in terms of life and habits in a qualitative sense. It was very close to the underground philosophy of the 1970s and, from a historical point of view, it can be regarded as the successor to the Czech underground.

Edice Půlnoc was in operation from 1948 to 1953 and included prose writers and poets whose works were published in this unofficial edition. Most of their works were not published legally until as late as 1990. The authors of *Edice Půlnoc* denied imaginativeness and the symbolic character of poetic language and wanted to purify it drastically from aesthetic values (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 158). They had also a kind of ideological basis in dogmatic leftism directed against bourgeoisie and they supported an extravagant lifestyle and bohemianism. Zand states that writers around *Edice Půlnoc* were inspired by surrealism and revolutionary romantic thoughts (151). Machovec adds that they believed in the socialist revolution of the anti-Stalinist/Trotskyite sort (*Od avantgardy* 158). Petr Mecner, who writes about common tendencies in *Skupina 42* and *Edice Půlnoc*, also states that the key personalities of *Edice Půlnoc (*Egon Bondy[9] and Ivo Vodseďálek) were young Marxists at the beginning but both of them assessed Stalinism as negative. At the same time, they were fascinated by deformed mythology and the absurdity of the regime (Mecner 46). Indeed, above all Egon Bondy and his radical left-wing attitudes is one of the most controversial and prolific personalities of this period. Together with Vodseďálek they wanted to realize de-poetized literature and went beyond all conventions. Bondy's *total realism* and Vodseďálek's *embarrassing poetry* worked with primitive, vulgar, obscene and provocative expressions (Zand 155). Although Bondy strongly influenced the underground and above all the *Plastic People of the Universe* 20 years later, it was not the edition's original intention to leave its heritage for future generations. Furthermore, only Bondy was later rediscovered while, for instance Vodseďálek's works, even though close to Bondy's style, remained ignored. Machovec confirms that until the end of the 1960s, the reaction of the public to one of the most original artistic groups was almost non-existent. Bondy's work was discovered by the theatre director Radim Vašinka and literary critic Jan Lopatka and later on, at the beginning of the 1970s, by the art historian Ivan Martin Jirous, who introduced Bondy to the PPU (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 165). Some of Bondy's key

[9] Egon Bondy was a Jewish pseudonym of his real name Zbyněk Fišer.

works that were important for the underground of the 1970s, and were also put to music by the PPU, include for instance the poem *Jeskyně divů aneb Prager Leben* [*Wonder Cave or the Prague Life*] and the book *Velká kniha* [*The Big Book*], and above all the part *Ožralá Praha* [*The Drunk Prague*], which was full of anti-poetic and primitive expressions (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 159-160). Bondy's influence on the underground of the 1970s is undisputable but at the same time we should not overlook the importance of other writers who were published in *Edice Půlnoc*, including Ivan Boudník, who introduced the concept of *explosionalism*, as well as Bohumil Hrabal and his *neo-poetic* works. In the mid-50s, those involved in the group set out on their own paths and communication among them gradually ceased.

In Czechoslovak unofficial culture, one can thus speak mainly about pre-war avant-garde and surrealism, post-war alternative culture and then about the underground during 'Normalization'. The years from the communist takeover in 1948 until Stalin's and Gottwald's death in 1953 were marked by revolutionary extremism, which calmed around 1956 when many authors could once again publish, display, or perform their work. Zand writes, however, that the 'release' did not last long and around 1958, thanks to the situation in Hungary and Poland, Czechoslovak politics and culture was re-Stalinized again (30). During the 1960s, the concept 'socialism with a human face' was used to reform the Communist party and a 'political thaw' has begun that was also reflected on the cultural field. This is already the subject of the next subchapter.

2.4 *Bigbít*

> *"If you can remember anything about the 60s, you weren't really there."*
>
> Paul Kantner, Jefferson Airplane (qt. in Primus 4)

Kantner's quote aptly expresses the wild atmosphere of the 1960s in America, where the San Francisco band Jefferson Airplane, which was formed in 1965, began the psychedelic movement in rock music. People were supposedly smoking so much marihuana and taking so many drugs that they could not remember anything from this time. It was the years of the hippie generation, the boom of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, a period of social changes and the emergence of the underground movement in American society. All of these events were also reflected in the Czechoslovak society, which experienced a wave of political 'release' connected with reforms within the

Communist party that led towards more democratic principles, and thus also to a freer cultural scene and borders that were more open for travelling. The impetuses from abroad strongly influenced the forms of the domestic culture. In the mid-60s, not only famous bands like the already-mentioned Beatles and Rolling Stones but also alternative rock music American groups became popular. Vlček writes that in the USA, the cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco became the cultural centres of the west coast while on the east coast the main scene was in New York and was led by Frank Zappa and Lou Reed (213). Other influences came from American underground bands like Morrison's *The Doors*, Hendrix's *Experience*, Janis Joplin, *Captain Beefheart*, Sanders's *The Fugs* et al. (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 169-170). All of these groups became idols for the newly-emerging Czechoslovak bands, which were first trying to imitate the music from the West but then gradually developed their own distinct sound. Although not many Czech people knew of the rock music coming from West, at the beginning of the 1960s many "American-style" bands were founded in Czechoslovakia. Mejla Hlavsa, a member of the PPU, said that it was the Prague quartet Břevnov where most of the rock bands emerged, and above all the famous group *The Undertakers* (Hlavsa and Pelc 9). Rock 'n' roll music in Czechoslovakia, called 'big beat' or phonetically transcribed into Czech as 'bigbít', ranged from amateur garage bands to professional groups like the *Matadors*, *Rebels*, *Juventus*, *Olympik*, *Flamengo*, *Vulkan*, *Stop the Gods* and others (Wilson 36). During the 1960s, hundreds of bands were founded not only in Prague but also outside the capital city and practically each small city had its own rock band. The net of big beat clubs and festivals grew and even continued some time after the Soviet invasion.

The spread of foreign rock music around the country was extensive. Primus talks about how his schoolmates brought recordings to school and how during breaks they listened to each record and analyzed them. It was not only about music but also individual musicians, their work among different bands, and sometimes even the length of their hair was discussed (Primus 6). It was incredible how fast a Czech band was able to learn a foreign song. Foršt writes that when Jiří Černý, the outstanding Czech music publicist, played a famous song from abroad like *Twelve on a Swing* on his radio program a band recorded it on a tape recorder, rehearsed it in one afternoon and played it at a concert or a dance later that evening (92). 'Bigbít' became a significant part of Czech culture and even several big beat festivals were organized at the end of the 1960s. The festivals were not only about rock music but to a certain degree they were also connected with criticising communism. Rebels of the 60s-generation wanted to show

absurdity and the bonds of the society where their parents and the majority of youth lived. As Primus puts it, the rebelling youths were "the ones who acted according to principle, their parents only rarely did so, and their teachers hardly ever" (6). The young radicals wanted to live lives without any compromises and completely on their own. Thus the festivals became platforms for protests and disapproval of the Soviet occupation. After 1968 the Czech rock music scene was rearranged completely and many bands broke up. At the same time, especially after the third big beat festival, rock disappeared from big stages and had to withdraw from the official scene.

During the 1960s, the Czechoslovak culture became internationally renowned not only in the field of rock and jazz music but also thanks to Czech *New Wave* movies directed by Ján Kadár, Miloš Forman and Jiří Menzel, whose movie *Closely Watched Trains* from 1966 was awarded the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film (Long 5-6). Also in other artistic disciplines new impulses came. In the case of theatre, so-called *theatres of small forms* [*divadla malých forem*] started up in Prague. In *Semafor* and *Rokoko* young singers with new sound performed, such as Gott, Matuška, Pilarová and Filipovská, who were kind of the rebels at that time (Foršt 90). In the field of literature, one scandalous event occurred when the famous beatnik writer Allen Ginsberg visited Prague in 1965 and was expelled from the country, reputedly because of ethical reasons, namely his homosexuality, drunkenness and disorderly conduct (Arichtev). The primary and confidential reason for Ginsberg's expulsion, however, was fear of the influence his ideology would have on the Czechoslovak youth because he was elected as a king of the student *Majáles*.

We can see that during the 1960s, a certain plurality of opinions and individuality in artistic creation emerged. Due to the political 'release', the cultural situation also improved. Because of all these events in the political and cultural life, the border between official and unofficial culture in some cases almost disappeared or at least was much more blurred than in the previous years, reaching what could be called semi-official status. Therefore, in the 1960s we cannot speak about unofficial culture as such, as this was a matter mainly of the 1950s and the underground in the 1970s, thanks to the stricter nature of the regime. During the 1960s, the Czechoslovak society underwent significant changes. After years of brutal oppression, the 'smell of freedom' was spreading across the country along with the freer political situation and actions of reform-minded communists. The influences of western culture, however, were still unacceptable for the Communist party. As the rock musician Vladislav Svoboda, nicknamed 'Hendrix', expresses it, for communism "everything from the West was

immoral, disgusting and capitalist, simply not to be compared with the life of a socialist man" (76). All the reforms climaxed in the so-called Prague Spring in 1968 and the subsequent invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies, which stopped the process of democratization in Czechoslovakia and threw the country into the period of 'Normalization', which completely buried the social and cultural heyday of the whole decade.

3. THE PRAGUE SPRING AND 'NORMALIZATION'

3.1 The End of 'Socialism with a Human Face'

During the 1960s in Czechoslovakia, a serious attempt was made to reform the Soviet socialism towards more democratic principles in the economic as well as social sphere. The main proponent of this tendency was Alexander Dubček, the new First Secretary of the Communist Party, who tried to liberalize the declining economy and supported 'socialism with a human face' since 1967. Long writes that greater freedoms for the press and freedom of assembly were required, trade with western countries was expanding, and electoral laws should have been revised (2). The reform movement, called the Prague Spring, was supported by a considerable number of citizens. In his *Two Thousand Word Manifesto*, the writer Ludvík Vaculík urged to develop the democratization process in the country and warned of possible Soviet intervention. The document, however, was considered a threat to the reforms and its signatories were subsequently persecuted (Růžička 1). It turned out that Vaculík was right. The Moscow leaders were looking suspiciously on new trends in the Czechoslovak politics and feared that they would endanger Soviet positions in Eastern Europe and awaken similar tendencies in other Soviet bloc countries. What followed was what is nowadays still a widely discussed era of contemporary Czechoslovak history, sometimes symbolically connected with the 'fatal eights' at the end of years 1918, 1938, 1948 and finally – 1968. First, from 20 to 30 June, the USSR conducted joint military exercises of the Warsaw Pact nations in Czechoslovakia, which meant actually a rehearsal for the invasion that occurred several weeks later. During the night of 20 August 1968, the armies of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Bulgaria crossed the borders into Czechoslovakia and occupied Prague and other places (Long 2-3). Dubček's government proclaimed non-violent resistance but the population protested and persuaded the confused soldiers to go back home. Subsequently, Dubček and four other members of the government were arrested and brought to Moscow for negotiations. After its return several days later, the delegation confirmed that Soviet troops would be stationed in Czechoslovakia and press censorship would be restored (Long 4). The occupation by the troops should have been temporary in exchange for 'normalizing' the situation in the country, as confirmed in the treaty between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The withdrawal of the Soviet soldiers, however, was not negotiated until after the revolution of 1989.

Finally, Dubček was removed from his function and the new First Secretary, Gustáv Husák, was appointed by the Moscow leaders to realize the Soviet's intentions (Otáhal 14). Despite these facts, the citizens still tried to protest but various events were unfortunately losing their importance and the society was falling into depression and resignation. There were, however, students who were gaining significance throughout the whole decade and who organized public meetings and demonstrations. Students became a significant political instrument for fighting for democratic socialism (Otáhal 13). One such student from Charles University in Prague decided to express his disapproval with the invasion and move the society to do something by performing a desperate act. In January 1969, Jan Palach set himself on fire on Wenceslas Square and unfortunately died three days later. This disaster launched a wave of demonstrations and his burial turned into a big event. Long writes that although it did not lead to the removal of the troops, Palach became a national hero and his act provided emotional support for the opposition. During the years of 'Normalization', Palach's anniversary was an opportunity to hold memorial demonstrations (Long 7). In 1970, the Communist party accepted the document *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ* [*Learning from the Critical Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Reunion of the CPCZ*[10]] in which the Prague Spring was condemned and any attempt to reform communism in the future was excluded (Měchýř 94). Thus the so-called process of 'Normalization' began in the country and the "authoritarian communism was re-established along its originally rigid and Stalinist line" (Falk 80). In other words, it was necessary to disable any civic activities that would endanger the position of the Communist party.

The events of the Prague Spring aroused interest in public activities and laid roots for independent opinions and newly forming civic society, which were subsequently interrupted by the Warsaw Pact intervention. In addition, in the culture of the 1960s, which was discussed in the preceding chapter, the associations of writers, composers and other artists also achieved considerable independence from the ideological demands of the party. During 'Normalization', however, objectionable authors, living as well as dead, were blacklisted, the production of *New Wave* movies was stopped, new pieces were driven out of theatres etc. Czechoslovakia and its citizens were gradually falling into the helplessness and gloom of 'Normalization'.

[10] The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

3.2 Czechoslovak Society in the Period of 'Normalization'

The Soviet occupation, in the communist parlance called 'brotherly and international help', launched the process of 'Normalization' and the Prague Spring was labelled a counter-revolution by communists. The Communist party in the Soviet Union defined 'Normalization' in the official newspaper as:

> "the complete exposure of the right-wing, anti-Socialist forces; the elimination of their influence on a part of the population, and especially the youth; the resolute strengthening of the leading role of the Communist Party in the activities of the state agencies, in the ideological and public sphere, in the whole life of the country".
>
> (qt. in Long 6)

The main feature of 'Normalization' was thus its totality of interfering in all spheres of people's lives, not only in economics and politics but also in private fields including private ownership. The government increased state bureaucracy and focused on persecuting the intelligentsia in culture, science and arts within as well as outside of the party. The Czech historian Jan Pauer states that during the radical purges one-third of the party members were made redundant (52). Furthermore, according to Bělina's data, almost 30,000 people were banned for performing their jobs, 17% of the army commanders were laid off, and the Secret Police lost almost one-third of its pro-reformist officers (291). Moreover, purges in the Academy of Sciences, at universities and in cultural institutions and media had a devastating effect on the Czechoslovak society and culture. Almost all the intellectuals (artists, writers, scientists, journalists, teachers, judges, etc.) but also celebrities and pop singers, who hesitated to be loyal to the regime, could not perform their jobs and were degraded and forced to work manually. Gordon H. Skilling, the Canadian expert on Czechoslovakia, remarked that in the 1970s Czechoslovakia fell back into "a kind of neo-Stalinist version of the system" and therefore "scholars and professional people were working as stokers or window-cleaners" (xiii). People withdrew from public life and focussed on their leisure activities, which were the only time citizens could fulfil to a certain extent. For this period, the emergence of so-called *chatová kultura* [*cottage culture*] was typical. People started building their weekend houses and focussed on satisfying their consumer values. For not participating in public matters, the regime gave them a piece of privacy. Thus cottages were kinds of 'islands of freedom' and escape from the socialist-reality demands of the state. Because schools were also under the permanent supervision of the

party, young people turned their free time mostly to pop music, sports and nature, and above all scouting.

The process of 'Normalization' had an enormous impact on the Czechoslovak society. It established a rule of fear because, as Měchýř writes, not only were people loyal to the party afraid of existential discrimination and imprisonment but rulers also feared that every violation of the state policy would mean an end to their rule (98). Political processes at the beginning of the 1970s aimed at breaking the resistance of citizens and stirring up this feeling of fear in society. In some aspects, 'Normalization' refreshed the memories from the dreadful 1950s, although repression was much milder. Dayová argues, however, that in the 1970s, many more people suffered because of their convictions than those of 20 years ago. They could not perform their jobs and their children were denied education (Dayová 8). The Soviet invasion, whose long-term impact left ramifications that are still felt in the present, became a life-changing event for many Czechoslovak citizens. Even today it evokes strong emotions and often mixed feelings. On one side it was a time of reforms, zeal and euphoria, which was however replaced on the other side by betrayal, depression, disillusionment and disappointment.

The relationship between the totalitarian regime and citizens was based on a certain 'social contract'. It was the case of not only Czechoslovakia but also of other Central European communist states after 1968. The government gave its people some certainties in exchange for accepting the state system and giving up individual initiatives. According to Antonín J. Liehm, the establishment guaranteed the citizens secure jobs, social services and security if they would cede to the authorities their democratic rights to free speech and assembly and the right to organize. Thus citizens practically surrendered their own identity (Liehm 174). If the principle worked, no riots and revolts would occur in the society. However, when the establishment is not able to provide the society with the advantages they have promised, the public can start raising objections and the social contract has to be renegotiated. New rules have to be set and the citizens have to regain their basic human rights in order to discuss the contract with the establishment. In Czechoslovakia, the communist regime was trying to satisfy people's material needs to keep them quiet. There was, however, a minority of persons who wanted to change the contract and who created a 'parallel polis'[11], a seed of an

[11] See Chapter 6: Opposition Intellectuals in Czechoslovakia: *Václav Benda's „Parallel Polis"* (pp. 247-251) in Falk, Barbara J. *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings.* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003.

independent society. The activities of these people, who were later called dissidents, climaxed first in the publishing of *Charter 77* and later in the creation of the Civic Forum in 1989, which negotiated the fall of the communist regime during the Velvet Revolution. Dissent was not only a matter of the 1970s but already had its roots in the previous decade. Vladimir V. Kusin distinguishes its several phases. During the 1960s, in-system dissent began to organize within the Communist party and reform tendencies were supported. In 1967, the opposition formed against the party and in 1968, the reformism culminated in the Prague Spring. After the invasion, the dissent within the establishment, i.e. the reform-minded communists, was destroyed by means of purges within the party. At the beginning of the 1970s, the ex-reformists were still trying to establish an opposition, the *Socialist Movement of Czechoslovak Citizens*, but people did not want to join leaders who had failed during the Prague Spring. Thus the movement ended up in arrests, trials and imprisonment (Kusin *Dissent* 48-49).

The next phase of dissent came with the trial of the PPU in 1976[12] when a new non-political opposition began to organize. Despite the variety of backgrounds and opinions, the intelligentsia managed to unite themselves on several points. Their main goal was to establish a dialogue with the leaders and to keep basic human rights in the socialist state. As Prečan emphasizes, the dissidents understood human rights as a new point of departure for the critics of the regime and one for the cultivation of citizenship (158). Václav Havel, one of the world's most renowned Central European dissidents, formulated the main principle of the non-conformists, "*To live by the truth"*, in his samizdat essay *Moc bezmocných* [*The Power of the Powerless*]. For him, it was essential to restore the civic society and legal order. Along with Havel's writings was connected the initiative *Charter 77*, which united dissidents who were brought together from three distinctive groups around three leaders, who later became speakers of the Charter. First, it was Jiří Hájek, the reform-minded communist who was active during the Prague Spring. The second person was Jan Patočka, also a liberal philosopher and thinker who had been uniting people who were against communism since 1948 and never believed in it, joined the initiative. Last but not least, it was the playwright Václav Havel, who represented the alternative activities among writers, poets, rock musicians, filmmakers and other artists (Dayová 18-19). The non-conformity, however, meant a life in professional isolation. There were only two options: to become a dissident or to

[12] See p. 52.

emigrate. For the people who stayed, involvement in non-conformist initiatives and the signing of the Charter meant intimidation, persecution, detainments, arrests and even death in case of Jan Patočka, who died in 1977 following exhausting interrogations just several months after the Charter was written.

Besides the Charter, there were also home seminars, sometimes called the 'flying university', which were held in Prague and other cities by academics and the children of dissidents, who were not allowed to attend high schools and universities (Long 16). The seminars included a variety of topics ranging from philosophy, theology and literature to mathematics and theatre. Moreover, in 1979, the Sub-Faculty of Philosophy in Oxford started an association with Czech seminars, which continued well into the 1980s. In 1981 the Jan Hus foundation was established in London in order to support Czech academic and cultural activities (Long 16). The cyberneticist Ivan Havel, Václav Havel at his weekend house (Hrádeček), and Jan Patočka organized various lectures and clandestine seminars.

All dissidents, non-conformist intellectuals and artists had to face severe repercussions exercised by the establishment. The state tried to control cultural productions by means of bureaucratic obstacles that were practically equal to censorship. Existential sanctions and other persecution were also directed against any display of free thinking and independent initiative.

3.3 Persecution

A totalitarian state always tries to control people's lives in every field and it requests citizens to keep its rules of the game in exchange for a comfortable living. When the 'disobedient' people try to break the rules, the state punishes them. First, the establishment had set the conditions that would prevent citizens from confronting the regime. This was the case of the state-conducted censorship that had existed in Czechoslovakia since 1953 and was executed by *Hlavní správa tiskového dohledu* [*The Main Administration for the Printing Surveillance*] only on the basis of a non-published government resolution. The censorship was then legitimized in 1966. Two years later, however, the law was cancelled and from that time censorship did not officially exist (Alan 51). Nevertheless, the control mechanisms of the state and obligatory confirmations of everything by the superior staff and state organs led to the phenomenon of *auto-censorship*. Authors who tried to break through this net of bans

had to adjust their artistic demands to the official culture. This inevitably had a negative impact on the quality of their work. Although censorship was legally prohibited, the blacklists of forbidden literature published by the government included problematic and subversive writers who were often persecuted. Alan remarks that the writers were accused of focusing their work "against the declining bourgeoisie culture, cosmopolitism, Trotskyism, decadence, formalism, pessimism, revisionism, opportunism, etc." (12). The ban fell not only on writers but also on objectionable domestic as well as foreign playwrights. The historian Vladimir V. Kusin documented this by a director's order in the National Theatre for the season of 1970-71:

> "1. Before the first reading rehearsal the actors will be instructed as to the one and only correct ideological interpretation of the play. 2. A delegate from the party's central committee will follow every new staging from the first rehearsal to the premiere. 3. A special central committee commission of the party will see every new play 10 days before the first night to decide whether to go ahead with the premiere or not. 4. Deletions will be made in Brecht's *Mother Courage*, Anouilh's *Becket* and Fry's *The Lady Is Not for Burning* […]" (*From Dubček* 103).

Publishing or performing a work was banned if it contained any allusion to the political situation in Czechoslovakia, any mention of persons in emigration or dissent, or anything concerning the church and religion.

Non-conformists were also penalized in their jobs. They were made redundant or degraded to lower positions. All the organizations that could exercise any kind of non-conformist activities were banned, too. In order to prevent citizens from thinking independently and thus endangering the foundations of the communist ideology, it was necessary to *pacify them through consumption*. This is a term used by Robert Sharlet, whose work focuses on Soviet politics, and suggests that although the forms of the alternative culture and dissent varied throughout Europe, both Soviet and European states used 'a common post-Stalin paradigm' in reprisals. The *pacification through consumption* was the most efficient and mildest way to secure social stability. The party used these kind of reprisals in Czechoslovakia during 'Normalization' when stabilization was needed. According to this principle, when a state satisfied a society economically, citizens would be more tolerant to a political establishment and the social contract is able to work. To ones who still opposed it, however, a *repressive tolerance* was applied. The political authorities had to give protesting intellectuals an imaginary space for expression, which was very limited but evoked a critical platform. This was

the way the Czechoslovak regime isolated objectionable intellectuals who could have woken up the working class (Sharlet 10). Therefore, many authors chose dissent in order to work in secrecy but, to a certain extent, freely. If the intellectuals still did not obey the socialist state, they were punished for deliberate political offenses by *differentiated political justice*, explains Sharlet. Visible political trials against dissidents represented the relatively 'hard way' of state reprisals. When everything else failed, *suppression by force* was applied. In Czechoslovakia, the communists used this most extreme method widely in the 1950s and in 1968 (Sharlet 10).

The repression of the 1970s was connected not only with dissidents but also with the underground musicians[13] whose activities and related repercussions are discussed in the following chapter. None of the Czech dissidents' initiatives were left unpunished by the state organs. The regime reacted hysterically on the release of *Charter 77* and, especially in 1977, the signatories were exposed to great pressure. The president at that time, Gustav Husák, was afraid that the number of signatories would reach hundreds of thousands. Therefore, as Bugajski describes, the government wanted to isolate it from the public. The Charter's signatories "were vehemently denounced as traitors and agents of Western imperialism" and were verbally attacked in the *Rudé právo* newspaper and Soviet newspaper *Pravda*. The state organs also started a disinformation campaign against the Charter by creating a false charter document that was meant to confuse the people. At the same time, it proved the reliability of citizens who were obliged to announce these texts to the police (Bugajski 81). Almost all the signatories underwent interrogations, temporary arrests and physical attacks. During the Secret Police's *Action Isolation*, writes Pauer, its agents tried to put an end to the Charter by means of threats, pressure, provocations, doubtful offers to emigrate, physical violence, confiscation of manuscripts and driving licenses, disconnecting of telephones, etc. Moreover, signatories' children, family and friends were also antagonized and intimidated. Further, 260 signatories left Czechoslovakia under the pressure of persecution. Many of the Charter's 35 speakers were imprisoned (Pauer 58-60). Although the repressions cannot be compared with the brutality of the 1950s, some of the dissidents' penalties reached a point not seen since the darkest time of Stalinism. Pauer adds that Ivan Martin Jirous spent altogether eight and a half years in jail. Peter Uhl, a dissident and one of the

[13] See the subchapter 4.2.3 *The Trial with the Plastics and Charter 77*.

founders of the VONS[14], was imprisoned for nine years, and Václav Havel was jailed three times, lastly in 1989 (Pauer 59).

Dissent, although differing in its displays, included many writers whose works could not of course be published legally. Thus dissent was closely connected with samizdat publishing, which spread information on the Charter as well as fiction literature and poetry. In samizdat writings, underground poetry and lyrics of some music bands were also published. Therefore, it is definitely worth discussing some basic characteristics of the samizdat activities in the 1970s.

3.4 Samizdat

Although illegal publishing has its roots in the clandestine magazines, flyers from the Nazi occupation, different anti-communist texts and literary editions of the 1950s (Bondy's *Půlnoc* and Boudník's *Explosionalismus*), we can speak about samizdat as late as in the 1970s because that is the decade in which a relatively wide reach and good organization of samizdat publishing mainly occurred. Before that time, only several attempts were made.

The word *samizdat*, coming from Russian, is an ironic analogy to the Soviet National Publishing House *Gosizdat* (*Gosudarstvennoje izdatělstvo*). The term has been used to describe self-publishing activities and came to the West at the beginning of the 1960s with the first Russian samizdat prints. The phenomenon itself, however, is older. The first samizdat prints, although not called by this word, were published after the October Revolution (Gruntorád 493). In Czechoslovakia, the first information about home and foreign affairs, historical documents, and political analyses were published in samizdat at the beginning of the 1970s. Gradually the amount of literary works also increased. The very first samizdat edition after 1969 was *Texty přátel* [*The Texts of Friends*] from Olomouc (Gruntorád 495) but the first well-known one became Ludvík Vaculík's *Edice Vzdor* [*Edition Defiance*], which was published in 1972. The name *Vzdor* was an abbreviation of the note *Express Ban on the Additional Copying of Handwriting*[15], which was typed on each book published in this edition (Zand 46). It was a protection before prosecution and assured the alleged legality of a published book. Other famous editions, like Vaculík's another edition *Edice Petlice* [*Padlock*

[14] *Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných* [*The Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted*], see p.54.
[15] *Výslovný zákaz dalšího opisování rukopisu.*

Press] *Kvart, Česká expedice, Krameriova expedice* et al., also worked on this principle. One break in these activities was Václav Havel's *Edice Expedice* [*Expedition Edition*], established in 1975. Havel always put to the printer's mark a serial number and wrote that he copied it for himself and his friends. This technique was courageous because he could have been prosecuted for the violation of several paragraphs (Gruntorád 496). When he was arrested (ironically because of something else) his wife Olga continued in his efforts and until 1989 they managed to publish several hundred titles. Despite the persecution of all samizdat publishers, these activities were spread mainly after the preparation of *Charter 77* and, in the 1980s, there was already a mass of publications of not only books but also magazines. One of them, the *Revolver Revue*, is still in operation today and gained a considerable amount of respect for being a critical literary magazine (Gruntorád 502).

Gruntorád emphasizes that samizdat publications were at least 10 times more expensive than ordinary books (497). All the non-official publishing houses made losses and definitely did not earn money, and in better cases only covered their expenses. Notwithstanding this fact, the demand was still higher than the offer and samizdat books found their readers. Except for attempts to organize independent publishing houses in the country, Czech literature and journalism was also spread abroad after 1968. As far as Czech books published in exile, great contributions were made by Josef Škvorecký and Zdena Salivarová, who founded the publishing house *68 Publishers* in Toronto. As Falk remarks, materials that could not be printed in Czechoslovakia were printed in Canada and then smuggled back into the country. Also Czech exile magazines like Pavel Tigrid's *Svědectví* [*Testimony*] from Paris and Jiří Pelikán's *Listy* [*Sheets*] from Rome even contributed to the development of Czech literature during 'Normalization' (Falk 95).

From transcripts without typography and editing work, samizdat publishing progressed to original and independent phenomenon including a number of editions that became an important part of the unofficial culture during the times of 'Normalization'.

4. THE UNOFFICIAL CZECH MUSIC SCENE OF THE 1970s

1968 meant a turn in many senses. It was a break in politics and the lives of many people, but it was also a generational turn. The generation of people who were born in the post-war years reached maturity and began to express their opinions and become politically engaged. Long sees 1968 as an important turning point because "each generation had seen its hopes and dreams demolished by political forces beyond its control" (10). He meant the 20 and 40 year olds and older people in that year. For each generation, 1968 meant different things. It was an encounter between the generation of people born in the 1920s and those born in the 1940s. Marci Shore explains that "[f]or the first group 1968 was the end; they [the people] were largely broken by disillusionment. For the second group 1968 was the beginning; they experienced the formative moment of their consciousness" (314). Indeed, as Shore explains in her paper[16], the history of communism in (not only) Czechoslovakia was the history of generations, of the entering of a new generation onto the scene. This was also the case in 1989 when a sharp generation break occurred. In the 1970s, it was just the young generation who created the unofficial cultural scene that revolted against the establishment in Czechoslovakia.

The entire field of the unofficial culture during 'Normalization' as well as all the non-conformist cultures in the previous decades in Czechoslovakia consisted of different artistic disciplines. We can speak about the alternative in visual arts, and in writing and publishing literary works within samizdat editions. In the 1970s, however, the underground and other unofficial music[17] was the field that affected a much broader audience than the other artistic disciplines. On the other hand, it is necessary to ask whether that culture were focussed on becoming 'popular' and commercial at all. As the music publicist Josef Vlček writes, the word 'commercial' soon acquired a pejorative meaning. It was connected with pandering to the audience and was thought of as kitsch. On the other side, the veil of non-commerciality could also hide that a music band was simply not able to communicate with its listeners (Vlček 202). The lyrics were so incomprehensible and concerts were so shocking that the performance was definitely

[16] See the list of Works Cited.

[17] This thesis does not deal with classical music although the officially recognized and rejected classical music existed in this period, too. In this paper, the unofficial music includes mainly underground, the alternative scene, punk and new wave.

non-commercial but at the same time, it was hard to find the point in how the musicians acted. Thus we can say that the unofficial music was primarily meant for a smaller audience but it was also spread among young people more than other artistic genres during 'Normalization' thanks to the regime's anti-campaigns against several music bands.

The unofficial culture during the 1970s not only covered the culture in the meaning of intellectuals' and artists' creative works but also alternative ways in much more prosaic parts of life such as fashion, housing, interior design, and leisure. In the narrow-minded totality, which tried to form people's lives into the slightest details, the alternative designated everything except for the party dictate. Therefore, as in the preceding history of communism in Czechoslovakia, in the 1970s we can also observe several layers within the whole cultural stratum. First, it was the official and institutionalized culture supported by the state establishment as the only one and right form of culture. Everything else which did not correspond with the state cultural policy, which was not aimed at the masses and the working class, had to 'go underground' (this underground culture was later also called the 'second' culture by Ivan Martin Jirous).

This division, however, cannot only be viewed as black and white. The range of different forms in the official and unofficial culture was wide and they often penetrated each other. According to Alan, the unofficial culture included illegal, forbidden, parallel, independent and semi-official activities as well as underground and dissent movements (Alan 6). Because the border between the official dictate and the not-tolerated or even prohibited culture was rather blurred and dependent on the actual political situation, many people found themselves on the edge of the official and unofficial culture, in the *gray zone*. This was a tangled net of personal contacts, artistic ideals and inner convictions fighting against the political reality and necessity of maintaining a family and ensuring children's studies. Thus in many cases one could not clearly state what was good or bad, what was pro-regime or independent. Alan confirms that thanks to the tendency to interpret history only in black and white, the unofficial culture and dissidents automatically gained a positive connotation after 1989 although their character was often ambivalent (6).

4.1 The Official Culture and the *Gray Zone*

Like after the takeover in 1948, within the so-called 'Normalization' process the Communist party again began to formulate forms and functions of the official culture, which was supported by the regime, in order to control the course of cultural events. For instance, heads of major cultural institutions were changed. The party approved the appointments of the editor in chief of music broadcasts on the *Czechoslovak Radio*, the director of the music agency *Pragokoncert*, and the directors of the music publishers *Supraphon* and *Panton* (Vlček 203). The regime thus wanted to isolate the non-conformist culture created by the people who did not adjust to the regime's cultural policy criteria. Vlček writes that the alienation was based on negative press campaigns and in the case of music also on bans on performing (203). If a band wanted to gain professional status, which enabled it to acquire a promoter who would find them possibilities to perform, it had to pass requalification exams called 'přehrávky' in front of a special jury composed of professional pro-regime musicians and theorists. The jury not only examined the bands' music and lyrics but also the cultural and political knowledge of its members. Radim Hladík, a member of the examination commission in Prague, said about problematic bands that did not pass the 'přehrávky': "There were three things one could do in this situation: either try to continue playing without pissing off the regime; emigrate; or resign their professional status (qt. in Falk 84). The concert permit itself, however, was further dependent on the personal opinion of a responsible cultural worker in the relevant local institution. That policy was guided according to the principle 'if you aren't sure, don't give them permission' (Vlček 203). Later in the 1980s, when the regime's ties started to loosen, some discussion and negotiation with these officers was already possible.

The official mass culture supported average and epigone works of art that tried to conform to the common taste. The regime, therefore, again introduced valid ideological and aesthetic norms that were promoted by the major nationalized cultural institutions. In the case of music, the restrictions that had the broadest impact on the music scene were that, starting in the beginning of the 1970s, bands with English names had to be renamed to Czech ones and the English repertoire as well as 'Western' rock music was banned. Jirous adds that many musicians started accompanying commercial pop stars and adjusted to the establishment's policy just because of the possibility to

perform publicly, no matter what kind of music it was (*Pravdivý příběh* 10). Jirous, looking for the reason for that behaviour, wrote about these musicians: "I think that they had lacked and still do lack the notion of what art and its function is in the world and what the obligation is of those who were endowed with the ability to create the art"[18] (*Pravdivý příběh* 11). This statement was characteristic for the underground thinking and radical attitudes towards musicians' work and perception of arts.

Another campaign was launched against new fashion trends from the West that were favoured by young people who experienced the events of 1968. The regime wanted to create a generation gap between them and the generation of their parents and grandparents, between 'the young' and 'the old'. Therefore, as Vlček confirms, the communist anti-campaigns targeted jeans and loud music but mainly long hair, which was symbolic of the young people's unwillingness to accept the contemporary social system. For the older generation, the long hair was the most unacceptable expression of opposition (Vlček 203, 205). The meaning and symbolism of the long hair among young people was immense. Mejla Hlavsa, a member of the *Plastic People of the Universe*, confirms in a book-interview that long hair was a crucial matter at home as well as at school. Hlavsa's parents threatened him that he should sacrifice his hair in order to finish school. Even some boys had their heads in plaster so that the police could not cut their hair (Hlavsa and Pelc 19, 21). In Prague, gangs of long-haired boys were formed and held meetings regularly at different places. Thus, one can say that the reaction of the regime and the anti-campaign launched against the freethinkers with long hair became a kind of discrimination and effort to separate these people from the socialist society. Long hair became a symbol of protest against the establishment, a symbol of solidarity among the long-haired youth striving for freedom of expression in the music and arts they liked.

On the edge between the institutionalized and rejected culture, there were thousands of people balancing in the so-called *gray zone* [*šedá zóna*]. They were neither open dissidents nor Communist party members but they semi-officially helped the unofficial culture as well as the dissidents. Long explains that people acting in the *gray zone* did not sign *Charter 77* but acted in accordance with its principles. They were technical, legal and academic experts working in research institutes, publishing houses or cultural institutions and helped the unofficial culture to survive and even flourish

[18] "Myslím, že jim chybělo a doposud chybí vědomí toho, co je umění, jaká je jeho funkce ve světě a co je povinností těch, kterým se dostalo daru umění vytvářet".

(Long 15). They "differ from dissidents mainly in the sphere of courage", writes Long. They were "spectators to what [was] happening, not players themselves" (Long 16). Within the *gray zone*, the artists who were not able to confront the regime sharply tried to gain space that would not demand making artistic or life compromises.

As discussed earlier, the communist cultural policy determined the circumstances when the culture and arts were tolerated by the regime. The unofficial culture opposed the promoted main stream projects and artists and created its own subculture on the fringes of the socialist society. One can thus argue that the regime sometimes functioned even as an impetus for the underground activities. In a broader sense, the establishment was the reason for expressing different opinions and making a different culture, and it almost fostered the actions within the unofficial culture. Bitrich writes that, for instance, the alternative big beat was connected with the communist regime but distanced from it at the same time (61). Thus the establishment of the 1970s and 80s did not only hinder the unofficial culture in its development but also gave meaning to the artistic activities. In the music as well, the regime unconsciously participated in the unique atmosphere of the concerts and lent them strong moral credit (Bitrich 66). It strengthened the communication between musicians and the audience and created a feeling of secrecy and conspiracy. As such, listeners were able to hear slight and hidden allusions even in lyrics with a non-communist context and could read between the lines.

4.2 The Unofficial Culture

The greatest part of this chapter will be devoted to the unofficial culture of the 1970s, which also represents the core interest of this thesis. First of all, in order to gain an overview of time, we will set the whole spectrum of the unofficial culture in a time framework according to the music publicist Josef Vlček, who actively participated in the *Jazzová sekce* [*The Jazz Section*], an alternative scene association. The first wave, the underground, was rooted in the pre-'Normalization' period and was centred on the bands the *Plastic People of the Universe* and *DG 307*. The second wave of the unofficial culture began in the mid-70s and was called the *alternative scene*. The most significant band acting on that field was the *Jazzová sekce*, which organized the festival *Pražské jazzové dny* [*The Prague Jazz Days*] for several years. The third generation came with punk and new wave music in the first half of the 1980s (Vlček 208).

Although the unofficial culture in Czechoslovakia was quite broad and variable in its forms, we should mention several facts that pervaded the whole scene. Most of the bands were amateurs and their music production was often imperfect. That was the case not only of the PPU, but also of the alternative scene and punk bands. One exception could be the *Jazzová sekce*, which also included professional musicians who sometimes did not want to play with 'amateurs' who were not able to master their instruments. Rock music, however, also depends on the relationship between a band and its audience. Bitrich argues that rock music does not require virtuosity, which can even hinder the music, but simply a musician's body, which strengthens the communication with listeners (73). One can thus ask whether the Czech unofficial big beat could then be called 'music', when the musicians could not really play their instruments. On the other hand, the unofficial music was not only about playing and technique. It was the atmosphere and political situation that raised the impression from a concert. Further, we cannot forget about the importance of lyrics as well. Thus the amateurism was an inseparable feature of the unofficial Czech music scene whereas the bands often gradually improved their technique and harmony while rehearsing more often.

Along with the phenomenon of the stage shows during performances, the role of recording was connected. In the socialist Czechoslovakia, recording was very complicated because of the lack of professional technical equipment. Even as late as in the 1980s, writes Vlček, it was possible to make secret studio recordings. In the 1970s, the concerts were recorded on reel-to-reel tapes and later cassettes, which became more readily available (Vlček 229-230). However, the recordings were not able to transfer the strong atmosphere of the concerts. Suddenly, without the show, the pure music fell flat. Listeners had completely different experiences in a concert hall and at home listening to a recording, which was one reason why many songs and even bands fell into oblivion because it was almost impossible to transfer the mood of the concert to the recording.

Tapes and recordings of unofficial music groups were sold and traded on black markets called *burzy*, which were the only way to get not only Czech but also foreign recordings of underground and alternative bands, English music magazines, and posters. The markets were usually held on Sunday mornings and climaxed in the mid-70s in Letenské sady, a vast park in Prague, where it was possible to scatter during sudden police raids that were organized to confiscate illegal materials (Vlček 209). Sometimes people were even summoned to the criminal police department and were interrogated about the origin of a recording.

In the oppressive atmosphere of the first years of the 1970s, the unofficial culture began to look for its own ways of how not to succumb to the regime's cultural policy. One of the most significant movements of this time was the underground scene.

4.2.1 The Underground

Ivan Martin Jirous, the guru of the Czech underground movement, characterized the underground activities in 1976 as follows:

> "[…] [T]he underground is an activity of intellectuals and artists whose works are unacceptable for the establishment and who are not passive in this unacceptability, but with their attitudes they are trying to destroy the establishment"[19].
>
> (qt. in Vlček 212)

The Czech underground represented an extreme pole of the unofficial culture, above all music, in the 1970s and 1980s. It was a form of a deliberate resistance refusing or at least ignoring the establishment. Underground members themselves, however, denied that the movement was a political opposition. They claimed, on the contrary, that it was the regime that politicized it.

Although the roots of the underground culture in the 1970s were already discussed in the previous chapters of this paper, it is necessary to emphasize several facts. The 'tree' of the avant-garde predecessors of the Czech underground was reconstructed during the 1970s because there was a need to establish an underground in the Czech cultural tradition. The most important underground music band, the *Plastic People of the Universe*, rediscovered the older works of the radical leftist Egon Bondy, who was engaged in the unofficial literary scene in the 1950s. Thus the influence of Bondy became much greater in the 1970s than during the previous two decades. The PPU continued in the big beat wave of the 1960s and followed the activities of *The Primitives Group* band[20] as well as of the action art band *Aktual*[21], which was founded

[19] "[U]nderground je aktivita umělců a intelektuálů, jejichž dílo je nepřijatelné pro establishment a kteří v této nepřijatelnosti nejsou trpní a pasivní, ale snaží se svým postojem o destrukci establishmentu".

[20] *The Primitives Group* was one of the first psychedelic music bands in Prague. Their performances included elements of 'action art' (shock was important; they used, for instance, a vacuum cleaner as a music instrument).

[21] *Aktual* was put together in the town of Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad) and Knížák, inspired by the avant-garde of the 1960s, defined the goal of his band in the text *Aktual – žít jinak* [*Aktual – to live in a different way*] (1973): "Je lhostejné, jaké prostředky jsou použity, ale vždy jen ty, které jsou právě nejmaximálnější. Kristus, Karel May nebo příšlušník VB mohou být spolutvůrci." ["It doesn't matter what means are used but they have to be always the most extreme ones. Jesus Christ, Karel May or the

by the Czech artist Milan Knížák. The basis of the underground in the 1970s was the unofficial groups of the mid-60s and events of 1968 and the following years fundamentally formed the unofficial culture during 'Normalization' (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 155-156). The roots of the underground scene in Czechoslovakia lied also in the hippie movement and the American arts of the 1960s. Vlček reports that the mediator of these influences was the magazine *Světová literatura* [*World Literature*], which published translations of not only beat writers like Kerouac and Ginsberg, but also of the Czech writers parallel to them (for instance Bohumil Hrabal, Vladimír Páral's book *Lovers and Murderers* from 1969 and Milan Knížák's letters from his stay in USA). However, it was records and translations of lyrics from *Pink Floyd*, *Genesis*, *Frank Zappa*, *Lou Reed* and other underground American bands that had the greatest influence on the Czech underground scene (Vlček 208-209).

Notwithstanding all the influences of the West, it is important to stress that in the USA the way that people left social and show business structures was rather a matter of their own choice. In Czechoslovakia, on the contrary, leaving for the underground was more involuntary. Vlček demonstrates this by the fact that the PPU, even though it was a rather symbolical act, tried to pass 'přehrávky', the requalification exams, and keep their professional status on the official music scene (203).

The underground culture in the USA was also connected with drug scandals. In Czechoslovakia, however, drugs were rather the focus of only a few people who occasionally took some pills or homemade Pervitin, i.e. methamphetamine. Vlček writes that access to drugs in the communist state was restricted but there were some ways to get marijuana, for instance. Also 'magic mushrooms' were discussed a lot among the underground people but it is hard to say whether they were used as much as they were talked about (Vlček 209). Czechoslovakia was rather a country with a beer culture. Beer was a source of enlightenment, claims Vlček, but at the same time one that resulted in a hangover, which was the common mood of the society (209). Thus, despite the communist's anti-campaign where the PPU were depicted as drugs addicts, the reality in Czechoslovakia was different and drugs were a marginal thing.

The music underground declared itself an apolitical movement. The problem with that claim was that it was impossible not to ignore the public matters going on and

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State Police member can be co-creators"] (qt. in Vlček 213). Knížák worked primarily with non-musicians and had minimal knowledge of making music, too.

to exist outside the socialist structures and state control. The underground musicians argued, however, that they simply wanted to play their favourite music and be separated from the official culture. Vlček writes that the underground was rather pushed to the political opposition because it disdained the regime and wanted to be excluded (232). Coming from the principle that it was apolitical, the underground did not intentionally meet dissidents. The reason for this isolation was the fact that a part of the dissidents were also ex-reformists and thus former members of the Communist party. On the other hand, Machovec argues, although the underground tried to avoid direct conflict with the totalitarian oppression, the musicians did not hide their provocative look (such as the already-mentioned problems with long hair) but since March 1974 and the so-called *Budějovice massacre*, the first direct police intervention that occurred after the concert of the PPU in Rudolfov near České Budějovice, there was no way back and the open fight with the regime began (*Od avantgardy* 178). The underground was actually popularized thanks to the repressions that climaxed in the trial with the PPU two years later. In its beginnings, however, the underground was quite an exclusive circle of individuals because the broad general public did not understand much of the underground philosophy or the music. Vlček adds that 'educated' people preferred folk music and small theatres (219). Thus the relative closeness of the movement led to members' disinterest in the wider audience as well as to contempt for professionalism because the initial number of amateurs within the underground was relatively high and many musicians were proud of not being professionals.

The underground was connected not only with artists but also with non-creative people and it became a lifestyle. In Czechoslovakia, the underground was first of all a city culture. Prague gave its inhabitants the advantage of relative anonymity and unwanted persons could 'get lost' among other people more easily. Vlček emphasizes that in the city there were lots of pubs, usually the cheapest ones, which functioned as important communication centres of the underground, first at members' homes in different Prague quarters like Žižkov, Vinohrady and Podolí. The pubs in the city centre, mostly in the Malá Strana quarter, were places where the quarters communicated with each other and exchanged information about concert venues. At the same time, however, the different groups feared their plans would be revealed so a kind of conspiracy emerged (Vlček 211). Although the centre of the underground was situated in the capital city, lots of smaller closed communities existed in other towns in the country, too.

Almost every movement has its kind of ideologue, someone who tries to define the goals and purposes of the community and to explain the actions of its members. In the Czech underground, one of the most significant personalities was definitely Ivan Martin Jirous (born in 1944). Originally, he was involved in art and literature but his life became determined by rock music. As Paul Wilson, a former member of the PPU, wrote: "He [Jirous] came to Prague, studied art history, hung around the nascent rock scene, grew his curly chestnut hair long, and wrote inflammatory articles" (37). Jirous worked first with *The Primitives Group* and helped them to organize their psychedelic shows. In 1969, he met the PPU and became their artistic director. Machovec adds that Jirous also attracted theorists' and artists' attention from the circles around the so-called *Křižovnická škola* to the underground and created a basis for the arising underground community (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 171-172). Jirous's text, *Zpráva o třetím českém hudebním obrození* [*Report on the Third Czech Musical Revival*][22], published in February 1975, can be considered a manifesto of the Czech underground movement. The main ideas in this document, summarizes Machovec, underline that the underground represented the spiritual attitude of artists and intellectuals who were not bound to any particular artistic stream but who consciously defined themselves against the society they lived in. In legal terms, no changes were possible (*Od avantgardy* 181). Jirous emphasized in the document that "zběsilost a pokora" ["fury and humility"] were the essential qualities of people from the underground (qt. in Machovec *Od avantgardy* 181).

Jirous further stresses in his writings that the Czechoslovak underground wanted to create a so-called 'second culture' independent from the establishment. Its goal, he argues, could not be to destroy the establishment because then the underground itself would have become a new establishment. According to Jirous, it wanted to show that there were lots of things to do within the underground (*Pravdivý příběh* 23). The underground was not limited to only one artistic orientation, explains Jirous further, but in music it was particularly represented by rock. The underground was an intellectuals' attitude, a critique of the world they lived in and of the establishment. The means were artistic but the art itself was not the goal (Jirous *Pravdivý příběh* 22). Jirous further

[22] In: Jirous, Ivan Martin. *Pravdivý příběh Plastic People*. Praha: Torst, 2008. By the third Czech musical revival Jirous means the joint action of the music groups *Sen noci svatojánské band* and *DG 307*, which started working together and eliminated the rivalry among different genres. People realized what connected themselves against the communist cultural policy and the underground scene began to flourish (*Pravdivý příbeh* 6).

writes that the expression 'underground' was borrowed from English and used under the Czechoslovak conditions. The underground wanted to determine the difference between the official art and things they were doing and at the same time they did not want to use the Czech term *podzemí*, which denoted the clandestine activities of the 1950s (*Pravdivý příběh* 61). The term 'underground' was gradually adopted by artists and became a synonym for distinctive aesthetics and ethics outside the established society.

Jirous claims that the worst thing the regime did was that it did not provide young people with sufficient and relevant information about various fields of human activity (*Pravdivý příběh* 6). Jirous was also convinced that the regime could not accept the things they were doing in the underground because their actions did not support the notion that everything was in the right order. Things, according to Jirous, were definitely not in the right order. He further explains: "I understand that the establishment is not happy about it [the underground]. But we are not happy about the establishment either" (*Pravdivý příběh*, Jirous 21)[23]. The underground lacked any kind of weapons or violent thinking so the establishment in fact did not have any pretence to put an end to it.

Who were the people involved in the underground? Like in the literary edition *Edice Půlnoc* 20 years ago, most of them around the PPU were completely unknown artists. It was more a collection of working youth than of university students. Machovec states that the cultural base of the underground was "semi-official in Czechoslovakia, made up of educated artists and intellectuals who overlooked the rock music scene" (*Od avantgardy* 169)[24]. The educated artists perceived the underground rather as the trash of society, also because of the high number of amateurs within the movement. The underground brought together people with an immense variety of social and cultural backgrounds. Not only rock concerts but also classes in philosophy, literature and religion were held as well as exhibitions, happenings, theatre performances and poetry readings. Despite the variety of focuses, the people involved in the underground shared the conviction that they lived in a diseased era and the only thing they could do was to live their own lives. It was a community based on a plurality of opinions and mutual tolerance, and the particular circles often penetrated and supplemented each other. Machovec points out, however, that the underground was intolerant towards different interpretations of man's position in society (*Od avantgardy* 184). Indeed, the emphasis

[23] "Chápu, že z toho [z undergroundu] má establishment malou radost. Ale i my máme malou radost z establishmentu".

[24] "V ČSSR vzdělanými umělci a intelektuály přezíraná pololegální scéna rockové hudby".

on individual freedom essentially clashed with the opinions of the socialist establishment.

The underground began to be aware of itself with the growing number of police interventions during rock concerts and thus solidarity was strengthened among concert visitors. All the underground concerts were organized secretly and until the very last moment their visitors often did not know where the concert would be held. Groups of young people often met on a train going to a given direction and learned about the concrete concert location in a train compartment. To go to a concert, people often travelled around the whole country, which strengthened the feeling of the underground community. One of these events was, for instance, the *First Festival of the Second Culture*, the so-called *Hannibal's Wedding*, held on September 1, 1974 in Postupice, a small village near Benešov (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 179). *The Second Festival of the Second Culture* in Bojanovice, the wedding of Ivan Martin Jirous himself, followed by arrests, interrogation and prison sentences, became a 'swan song' of the Czechoslovak underground for a long time. After the trial of the PPU and their friends in 1976, the integrity of the underground was partly broken because of the regime's oppressions. The emergence of *Charter 77* was a direct consequence of the trial, but at the same time the underground became too politicized and publicly known. During the 1980s, many underground artists were imprisoned or forced to emigrate.

Although the core of the underground movement was above all music and the PPU, literary works emerged subsequently and some of them were put to music. Of course, they were not allowed to be published officially and thus were released mainly in different samizdat editions, which were discussed in the preceding chapter. On one side, it was Egon Bondy who kept in touch with the young generation of intellectuals and became acquainted with rock music. Jirous met him in a psychiatric clinic. Except the works mentioned in the second chapter[25], it was also Bondy's utopian novel *Invalidní sourozenci* [*The Disabled Siblings*] (1974) that influenced the underground with its appeal to sever connections with the official culture and place emphasis on underground independence. His new works, for instance *Sbírečka* (1974), *Trhací kalendář* (1975) and *Mirka* (1975), also had a strong influence on the young underground generation of the 1970s (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 179-186). Anthologies of contemporary poets were also collected. The very first collection of underground

[25] See p. 21.

poetry was put together during the autumn of 1975 by Jirous as a present for Egon Bondy's 45th birthday. The anthology entitled *Invalidní sourozenci Egonu Bondymu k 45. narozeninám* [*The Disabled Siblings for Egon Bondy on His 45th Birthday*] included texts written by Vratislav Brabenec (saxophonist of the PPU), Věra Jirousová, Andrej Stankovič, Fanda Pánek and Josef Vondruška (Jirous *Underground Literature* 62-63). Other poetry anthologies also usually marked someone's 45th birthday. Moreover, in 1979, the first underground magazine *Vokno* [*Window*], in which poetry was also published, began to be issued. Jirous writes further that the poet's activities were considered exclusively private. Their closest friends and relatives did not often know that they were writing (Jirous *Underground Literature* 62). Thus underground literature, not only the legend Egon Bondy, who was an undisputed authority figure and teacher, but also other writers and poets of the younger generation, became an important inspiration for musicians.

4.2.2 Underground Bands and the *Plastic People of the Universe*

Although the *Plastic People of the Universe* became the most significant and well-known psychedelic underground band in Czechoslovakia, other groups that formed the underground scene in the 1970s are also worth mentioning. First of all, there was *The Primitives Group*, which were perceived as the predecessors of the PPU, and played foreign songs (e.g. from Jimi Hendrix, *The Doors*, *The Mothers of Invention*, *The Fugs* etc.) even before 'Normalization' began. Vlček adds that their concerts resembled a 'rock gesamtkunstwerk'. The live shows were not only about the music but also the lyrics, masks, make up, outfits and graphic design of their record sleeves played an important role (Vlček 213). *The Primitives Group* stopped playing in 1969.

Around 1973, according to Jirous, 'the third Czech music revival'[26] began. Many underground groups with similarly underground names emerged, such as the noise group *Sen noci svatojánské band* [*A Midsummer Night's Dream Band*], *Umělá hmota* [*Artificial Substance*], *UH2*, *Dom* and *DG 307*, which was founded by the suggestive poet Pavel Zajíček (Vlček 214-215). Other popular bands were named *Hever & Vazelína Band* [*Lifting Jack & Vaseline Band*], *Půlnoc* [*Midnight*], *Národní třída*

[26] According to Jirous, 'the second music revival' can be dated to the end of the 1960s when a number of rock bands increased around the whole Czechoslovakia. Several hundreds of them emerged in Prague. The quality, says Jirous, did not matter. The important fact was the number, which created room for choice. 'The third music revival' followed in the 1970s (*Pravdivý příběh* 6).

[*Národní Street*], *Garáž* [*Garage*], *Psí vojáci* [*Dog Soldiers*], *Invalidní důchod* [*Disability Pension*] and *Svatý Vincenc* [*Saint Vincent*] (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 177). Except for rock and psychedelic music, folk singers Karel Soukup, Svatopluk Karásek, Miroslav Skalický, Petr Kluzák and Jim "Čert" Horáček were also involved in the underground music scene (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 174). It was, however, the PPU that became without exaggeration legends of the Czech underground.

The *Plastic People of the Universe* became a core of the underground movement in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s. Paul Wilson, the former vocalist and rhythm guitarist of the group, said about them:

> "They are the distillation of a struggle. On the surface, it's a struggle with a regime that cannot tolerate any music or art except what is made in its own image. But essentially, it is a struggle between the principles of life and death" (Wilson 47).

The PPU made no compromises, in music or in politics. For them, the underground was a lifestyle, not only an intellectual attitude. It was a principle of how to improve their lives within the hostile political system. At the beginning of the 1970s, purges in all the society and human activities occurred. Not a single member of the band, however, paid any attention to it. Mejla Hlavsa explains in a book interview that nobody understood why they should be worried about some Husák[27], about checks or requalification exams. For their concert manager, however, it was more difficult to organize a performance of a band with an English name and repertoire without a Soviet author. The result of the requalification exams was clear: cut their hair, change the band's name to a Czech one, and change their repertoire. Hlavsa adds that nobody knew that not going to the auditions was a political attitude, and passing them meant collaboration with the regime (Hlavsa and Pelc 54). The PPU did not want to back off from their artistic ideals, so the underground and illegality became the only possibility for them. It was rather a result of the intolerant regime's cultural policy because, as Hlavsa says, the band tried to play officially and attended the requalification exams, too. Also under Jirous's influence the band excluded any compromises but at the same time did not strive for fame within the underground. Thus the PPU lost their professional status and Jirous stated their clear mission: "[…] [I]t is a musician's duty to play the music according to his consciousness and the music that he likes. Only in this way can

[27] Gustáv Husák was a Slovak politician, former president of Czechoslovakia, and a long-term communist leader in the country.

he give his joy of creation to the audience"(*Pravdivý příběh* Jirous 10)[28]. Although this concept is very extreme, it reflects perfectly the base of the underground philosophy in music.

The band was formed after the occupation in 1969 in the Prague quarter of Břevnov, which was a hotbed for many underground music bands. The founder and moving spirit was the nineteen-year-old bass player Milan 'Mejla' Hlavsa, who went through several bands beforehand. He formed the group together with Jiří Ševich, Michal Jernek and Pavel Zeman (Wilson 36). Their first concerts were held in the Ořechovka quarter and the band played covers of the American underground legends like the *Velvet Underground*, Frank Zappa and the *Doors*. The PPU, also influenced by the American group *The Fugs*, gave weekly concerts in the small village Horoměřice near Prague, which became a centre of the underground music scene for several weeks. Hlavsa reports that there were three special buses for fans going from Prague to the concert venue (Hlavsa and Pelc 46). Initially the PPU sang in English because they thought Czech was not suitable for rock music. Later, writes Jirous, and also thanks to the influence of Knížák's action art band *Aktual*, the PPU started singing in Czech in order to come closer to the local audience, and even used both Czech and English in one song (*Pravdivý příběh* Jirous 92).

The PPU played something completely opposite to the sentimental romantic style of the official music and when Mejla Hlavsa started composing his own songs, they were in no way similar to the contemporary jazz or other genres of the period either. Their percussion-driven music was dissonant, often without any obvious melody and harmony, and with incomprehensible lyrics. Paul Wilson characterizes their music as "very weighted toward the lower registers, somewhat ponderous and unmelodic, moving forward in deliberate sections, each with its own structure and mood" (39). The new direction in their music came with the saxophonist Vratislav Brabenec, who was more involved in jazz beforehand. His solos excelled in Hlavsa's compositions, where enough space was left for other players to improvise.

Except for Bondy's writings, the PPU put into music literary texts of Czech as well as foreign avant-garde and unconventional writers, for instance William Blake, Edmund Spencer, Christian Morgenstern and from Czech history K. H. Mácha, who was considered the first Czech beatnik by the underground. From the contemporary poets, the PPU used works of Vratislav Brabenec (member of the band), Ivan Wernisch,

[28] "[J]e povinnost hudebníka hrát takovou hudbu, jakou mu velí hrát jeho svědomí a jaká mu přináší radost; jedině tak může svoji radost z tvoření předat publiku".

Milan Nápravník, Jiří Kolář and others (*Pravdivý příběh* Jirous 13, Zand 162). Later, Jirous invited Egon Bondy to one of the PPU's concerts. Bondy said that he liked their music but it would be even better with his lyrics. That was the beginning of their cooperation. In Bondy's poetry, although nothing was taboo and there were lots of vulgarisms, sex, and disgust, it was always justified and had an intention. In his poems, he never provoked without purpose (*Pravdivý příběh* Jirous 13).

Besides the lively and rhythmical rock music, the PPU also stressed the visual side of their performances. Generally, the idea of a 'gesamtkunstwerk', an emphasis on the stage show during concerts, was important in the underground. The PPU always used strange masks, makeup, decorations and even fire on stage. In a book interview, Mejla Hlavsa remembered one concert in Mánes exhibition hall in Prague where they killed a hen during the concert and tried to explain to disgusted listeners the connection of the ritual murder with mythology (Hlavsa and Pelc 51-52). The impressions of their concerts were often described as not technically and musically perfect but authentic and truthful, with strong expressions. In Paul Wilson's words, "they [the PPU] made up in energy and showmanship for what they lacked in musical ability" (36). The underground concerts in general also harvested more emotional impressions because the visitors often did not know even one day before an event where it would be held. The performances were widely discussed in pubs afterwards and therefore legends were nearly made even though there were usually no more than several hundred people in attendance (Vlček 216-217). Although the listeners and fans were presented by the regime as suspicious long-haired and violent individuals, Jirous objects that during the concerts of the PPU, there was no violence in the audience whatsoever (*Pravdivý příběh* 102). Many concerts were also taken down to the PPU's chronicle, a graphic hand-written work accompanied by pictures and collages from the events.

The artistic director of the PPU, Ivan Martin Jirous, nicknamed *Magor* [*Loony*], has already been mentioned. Originally, he worked with *The Primitives Group*, which stagnated at the end of the 1960s. Jirous, impressed by the PPU's concerts, offered them his help and wanted to continue in the style of the gradually disintegrating *The Primitives Group*. The PPU, however, also received an offer from the former manager of the popular band *Olympic*, Petr Kratochvíl, who had more commercial visions about the group's career. Jirous and Kratochvíl started working together but it was clear that their ideas about the band's future differed. In 1972 the PPU tried to pass the requalification exams and to regain professional status. The jury, writes Wilson, granted

them a license but two weeks later they received a letter from the booking agency *PKS* [*Prague Cultural Center*] with a refusal and an explanation that their music "was 'morbid' and had a 'negative social impact'" (qt. in Wilson 42). Thus, for Kratochvíl, it was still more difficult to find possibilities to perform and he suggested the PPU emigrate to Malaysia because he knew that it was impossible to give concerts legally any more. Mejla Hlavsa says in the book interview that Jirous sharply disagreed with that solution and would have quit his work if they had emigrated. Instead, Jirous proposed the musicians earn money for new equipment by working as lumber jacks in forests near his home town Humpolec. After long discussions and arguments within the band, they decided for the second possibility (Hlavsa and Pelc 54-56). Consequently, the band went underground and consciously decided to perform illegally. Without having passed the requalification exams, they could not play publicly and had to find their own possibilities to perform. Jirous came up with an idea of playing at wedding celebrations and birthday parties. Sometimes it even happened that people got married just to hold an event and listen to the PPU. The illegal concerts, however, did not escape the police's attention.

The PPU learnt about Státní bezpečnost [StB, the Secret Police] from Jirous at the turn of 1971/72. About the same time, the police began to be interested in them and started investigating whether the PPU were making money legally at one of the concerts (according to the criminal code it was named 'Engaging in an illegal enterprise') (Wilson 41). In the summer of 1973, Jirous and his three friends were arrested for insulting a pensioner, who was a retired secret policeman, in a Prague beer hall. They called him 'bald-headed Bolshevik' (Wilson 42-43). Intimidations at other bands' concerts followed. They climaxed during the *Budějovice massacre* in 1974, the first well-organized action against the underground. Wilson reports that before the PPU started to play at their concert in Rudolfov, several busloads of police arrived, cancelled the event, and ordered the fans to go back. While the mass of fans was forced towards the train station, the policemen hit them with truncheons and the fans who went to Prague were photographed and interrogated on the train. At every stop, crowds of policemen made sure that no one would escape from the train. In the end, six people were arrested and many expelled from school (Wilson 43). Afterwards, police showed up at every one of the band's concerts. Thus, it was quite astonishing that no one came to the *Second Festival of the Second Culture* in 1976 in Bojanovice. The police were waiting, and then it struck hard. The largest action of the underground since the beginning of the 1970s had been launched.

4.2.3 The Trial of the PPU and *Charter 77*

At Jirous's own wedding, the *Second Festival of the Second Culture*, about 400 guests came and several rock bands performed for about 12 hours (Skilling 8). It seemed that the event was so well organized and concealed that the police did not notice it at all. This conviction was unfortunately wrong. Skilling reports that one month later, the Secret Police arrested 26 people and over 100 visitors were interrogated (8). Similarly, Wilson writes that 27 people were arrested (most of them musicians and members of the groups the PPU, *DG 307*, *Umělá hmota* and *Hever & Vazelína*) and over a 100 of them were interrogated, but according to him it 2 was months after the event (44). Mejla Hlavsa said that it was also about 25 people (Hlavsa and Pelc 117) but Long states that only 19 musicians and fans were arrested (11).

However different the facts were, it was clear that the regime took eliminating the underground seriously. It wanted to paralyze the movement from its very core and to imprison the main 'brains' and intellectuals. Moreover, the PPU's equipment was seized and different materials in dozens of flats were confiscated.

The first trial was held in Plzeň. Three members of the bands *Hever & Vazelína*, Skalický, Havelka and Stárek (Hlavsa and Pelc 124) were sentenced to up to 15 months in jail. The main trial was held in Prague in September 1976. The persons connected with the PPU, Ivan Martin Jirous, Vratislav Brabenec, Pavel Zajíček and Svatopluk Karásek, were given terms from eight months to one and a half years (in the Jirous's case) (Wilson 45). They were accused of disorderly public conduct and disturbing the peace. Long claims that the trial was manipulated and ridiculous because the prosecutors saw the major problem from the fact that the PPU used words like *prdel* [*ass*] and other vulgar expressions in their lyrics (11). In order to defame the group, the Czechoslovak television subsequently transmitted the program *Atentát na kulturu* [*Attack on Culture*], making the band members out to look like drug addicts and pointing out their deliberate opposition to the official doctrine. Moreover, in the magazine *Dikobraz*, an infantile comic about the PPU was issued, and in the magazine *Mladý svět*, an article about Jirous called "*Případ Magor*" ["*The Loony Case"*] was published (Hlavsa and Pelc 139). In the media, the PPU "were just long-haired neurotic drug addicts and mental cases who took delight in the grossest of perversions and deliberately sang vulgar, antisocial songs" (Wilson 44). Unintentionally, this became the best promotion for them and via broadcasts of western radio stations the BBC, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, the PPU became known throughout

Czechoslovakia. All the publicity, on the contrary, brought even greater sympathy from the citizens and especially dissenting intellectuals, who expressed their solidarity with the four musicians who were inadequately charged in a clearly political trial.

The trial of the PPU turned out to be the crucial moment for unifying the Czechoslovak dissidents. A group of intellectuals out of the official society, including Václav Havel and Jan Patočka, came together and defended the underground bands. They wrote an open letter to the West German novelist Heinrich Böll in which they appealed for support and wanted to reach the international media's attention. Havel thought that the PPU were just young people who wanted to live their lives and play the music they liked. The arrests, according to him, "were an attack on the spiritual and intellectual freedom of man, camouflaged as an attack on criminality, and therefore designed to gain support from a misinformed public" (qt. in Long 11). They implied that the regime was ready to imprison people who thought and expressed themselves independently. This was motivation for the main opposition circles that came together and decided to struggle for maintaining human rights in a broader sense.

Czechoslovakia was in fact formally obliged to respect basic human and civil rights after the Federal Assembly approved the *Helsinki Accords*, the final outcome of the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe* held in 1975 in the Finnish capital. This conference attempted to improve relations between the Soviet bloc and the West and should have created a feeling of solidarity with groups that expressed their disapproval with the situation in their state, writes Jan B. Weydenthal (149). During the 1970s, many open briefs addressed to the government were written by former politicians, journalists, scientists and writers trying to draw the party's attention to maintain human and civil rights. Moreover, according to Pauer, the Czech reformers hoped to improve the situation in Czechoslovakia with the help of euro-communist parties at their international meeting in 1976 in East Berlin (55). This initiative, however, failed and the *Helsinki Accords* together with the PPU trial, which was clearly directed against their different lifestyle, moved the intellectuals towards drafting *Charter 77*. The document, signed by about 2,000 Czech dissidents, stated that the government was denying internationally guaranteed human and civil rights. The Charter was established as a free, informal and open association of people of different convictions, churches and jobs without the goal to become a political opposition, describes Pauer. It wanted to recognize political plurality, equality, tolerance and solidarity (Pauer 55). In order to promote the Charter and other connected documents among citizens, the signatories established the samizdat magazine *Information about the*

Charter and in 1978, the VONS, *Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných* [*The Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted*], was founded. The VONS tried to keep the international public informed about the situation in Czechoslovakia by means of radio stations from the West (Radio Free Europe, Voice of America). Moreover, it provided financial, material and spiritual support for the families of those who had been illegally prosecuted. In 1979, five people from the committee (Otta Bednářová, Václav Benda, Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Havel and Petr Uhl) were arrested and given sentences from two to five years (Blažek and Pažout 7). The VONS also continued to work after the Velvet Revolution and nowadays it organizes seminars and publishes documents on *Charter 77* and the political processes of the 1970s.

Jirous, who with short breaks had spent altogether nine years in prison, informed other imprisoned members of the PPU that petitions were signed in order to release the musicians. Hlavsa says that, in addition to Václav Havel, personalities like professors Kosík, Patočka and Černý and the writers Jaroslav Seifert, Pavel Kohout, Ivan Klíma and Ludvík Vaculík were involved (Hlavsa and Pelc 120). The attacks against dissent continued to escalate. The establishment's strategy was to make the people's lives so uneasy that they would ask to emigrate, which was equal to forced displacement. Daily house searches and interrogations ending up in a cell of preventive detention was the reality of many people who signed *Charter 77* or of those who were not imprisoned after the trial of the PPU. Despite all the harassment and intimidations, in 1978 *The Third Festival of the Second Culture* was organized at Václav Havel's cottage Hrádeček. Hlavsa says that the Secret Police knew about everything even though small groups of people were created according to a particular 'key' and only heads of those groups knew where the event would be held (Hlavsa and Pelc 144). After the festival, the State Security wanted to get rid of the PPU and dissidents completely and make them emigrate. In many cases it succeeded. Hlavsa adds that "[i]t was a time when a friend damned a friend because he decided to emigrate but he himself emigrated right after him" (Hlavsa and Pelc 146)[29].

After being released from prison, it was hard for the band to start rehearsing and playing together again. Their integrity was broken by the regime but they persevered and kept on playing and continue to perform today. The PPU became a symbol of opposition against the establishment but its members believe that they did not play only to overthrow the one party rule. Their supporters also had different opinions of the

[29] "[…] [b]yla to doba, kdy přítel proklel přítele, protože se rozhodl emigrovat, aby vzápětí emigroval sám."

band's behaviour. On the one hand, people told them that they should not bring politics into their music but, on the other side, there were fans who wanted them to assume a clearer political stance. Others praised them for not being afraid of going to jail because of their music (Hlavsa and Pelc 147).

Since the prosecution of the PPU, the band was connected with *Charter 77* in public and the two were often erroneously perceived as one interconnected initiative. Although the underground was close to some dissidents, they differed in one main principle: people were pushed to dissent when they had opinions that were different from the rulers'. Moreover, the dissidents in Czechoslovakia wanted to reform or remove the socialist government (Long XII) and still had ideals about civic society while the underground lost all hopes and did not attempt to change anything. The way to the underground was chosen voluntarily, almost as one's destiny. In the West, East European dissidents were perceived positively as heroes and defenders of human rights, but in their own countries they were regarded as troublemakers and enemies of socialism. Some people from the underground refused to be interconnected with the dissidents because, besides writers, artists, academics and the clergy, the dissent also included reform-minded communists, who were not accepted by the underground community. The bridges between the underground and the dissidents were created by supporters and sympathizers of the underground, such as Václav Havel and Jan Patočka. After the publication of *Charter 77*, the regime reacted hysterically because it considered both the underground and dissidents dangerous. Interrogations and arrests of signatories, as well as the so-called anti-charter, worked as a negative campaign in the public media. The government brought together Czechoslovak celebrities, for instance popular artists and sportsmen, who criticized the Charter and supported socialism in speeches and statements (Long 141). In January 1977 in the National Theatre, writers, actors, musicians, visual artists and architects presented a proclamation *Za nové tvůrčí činy ve jménu socialismu a míru* [*For New Creative Acts in the name of Socialism and Peace*] where civil participation and the responsibility of a socialist artist was emphasized. One month later, artists working in show business also joined the proclamation (Karlík and Pokorná 11). The support of the anti-campaign from the side of the 'national elite' was immense and almost startling. It had, however, as with the trials of the underground, an opposite effect and more people learned about *Charter 77*. Nevertheless, the real political meaning of the Charter was minimal. People preferred satisfying their material needs instead of living their lives by the truth. According to a survey in 1994, reports Pauer, only 19% of citizens knew the Charter existed and the

Slovaks considered it a solely Czech concern (62). Although the public was not widely affected by this document and the charter was criticized for its exclusivity and closeness, it was an important attempt to lead a dialogue with the regime and it achieved a relatively strong echo and vast solidarity abroad. *Charter 77* was also an important impetus for similar initiatives that multiplied during the 1980s.

Besides the underground movement, there were also other musical activities that the establishment did not include in the official culture. Above all these included the alternative scene, and punk and new wave music.

4.2.4 The Alternative Scene

In this thesis, the term 'alternative scene' is used to describe the second wave of the unofficial culture in Czechoslovakia starting in the mid-70s, as explained by the music publicist Josef Vlček. The preceding subchapter was devoted to the first generation of the culture rejected by the establishment, namely to the underground movement. The second generation, the 'alternative scene', was formed several years later than the underground. Just to remind us of Vlček's division, the third wave of the unofficial culture came with the manifestation of a new generation whose values were defined sharply against its parents and connected with punk and new wave music, which will be discussed in the following subchapter. In addition to the most important actor on the alternative scene, the *Jazzová sekce*, we should not forget folk musicians who sang political and social protest songs, who include Jaroslav Hutka, Charlie Soukup, Jaromír Nohavica, Vladimír Merta, Ivan Hoffmann, Jan Burian, Jiří Dědeček et al. (Vlček 259). Under the regime's pressure, those singers performed at small unknown places in order to avoid the establishment's attention.

The alternative scene was formed by mostly amateur music bands that were founded around the mid-70s. It was parallel to the underground but progressed independently from it. The two streams were somewhat similar but at the same time they bore some distinctive features. Like the underground, writes Vaněk, bands from the alternative scene consciously gave up the possibility of gaining professional status (185). They either deliberately stood in opposition to the regime or ignored it. Contrary to the underground, the alternative scene was more open and did not voluntarily isolate itself from the reality (Vlček 208). Because it dissented with the contemporary political situation, the alternative scene did not avoid oppressions and negative campaigns from the regime's side either. Bands like *Expanze*, *Extempore*, *Elektrobus*, *F.O.K.*, *Kilhets*,

Amalgam as well as the *Jazzová sekce* had to face severe repercussions (Vaněk 198). The latter band experienced a similar destiny as the PPU.

The official status of the *Jazzová sekce* was purely amateur. It was only an interest group within the *Association of Musicians* that turned from a community of jazz fans into a dissident organization. According to Vladimír Kouřil, one of its representatives, its main objective was to promote jazz, to spread information about it (publishing of a jazz bulletin), and to organize concerts, especially the festival *Prague Jazz Days*. All the activities were voluntary and unsalaried (Kouřil 1). According to Vaněk's reports, in its climax period in the mid-70s, the *Jazzová sekce* had around 3,000 members. It was estimated, however, that 10 years later in 1986, the number of members reached 6,000 (Vaněk 188). The *Jazzová sekce* began to work at the end of 1971 in Prague and united the most outstanding Czech jazz musicians and persons interested in jazz and rock music. It supported the unofficial music scene and at the *Prague Jazz Days*, organized from 1974 to 1979, it provided opportunities to perform not only to jazz bands but also to amateur rock musicians, contemporary classical music ensembles, and brand new alternative groups. Later on, writes Kouřil, the *Jazzová sekce* started publishing the books *Jazzpetit* and *Situace* where works of unofficial writers were presented (2). Thus, the association expanded its activities from jazz to other music genres and literature. These activities, unacceptable for the establishment from an ideological point of view, of course did not escape its notice. The regime was not able to control all the events organized by the *Jazzová sekce* and forced it to adjust to the demands of the official cultural policy. Finally, the *Jazzová sekce* came into conflict with the Association of Musicians and later also with the Ministry of Culture, writes Vlček (222). At the beginning of the 1980s, the *Jazzová sekce* was politicized and became 'alternative' not only in culture but also in politics (Vlček 233).

The Association of Musicians was dissolved by the state but the *Jazzová sekce* considered its own abolition an unlawful act and fought for its existence on the basis of international law while continuing in its work (Kouřil 2). Between 1984 and 1986, Kouřil continues, the state considered its activities illegal and began to prosecute the main representatives even though many of them were already monitored by the State Security during the 1970s. In 1987, two people, Karel Srp and Vladimír Kouřil were sentenced to 16 and 10 months unconditionally and three other people conditionally for up to 10 months (Kouřil 2). Although that was the end of the *Jazzová sekce*, there were former members who wanted to restore its activities and during the 'perestroika' period in the second half of the 1980s, they managed to establish a preparatory committee for

the subsequent organization *Unijazz*, which finally gained permission for its activities in 1990 after the revolution (Kouřil 2). Now the *Unijazz* works as a successor of the *Jazzová sekce*, presents alternative and world music in connection with other artistic genres, and brings together its fans. Since 1993, it organizes the yearly festival *Alternativa* whereby it tries to foster an independent and experimental culture in Central Europe ("Profil Unijazzu").

4.2.5 Punk and New Wave

> *"Punk is the only music which expresses the things going on in the heart of the young people."*
>
> Mick Jones, member of the punk band the *Clash* (qt. in Vaněk 175)

The punk style came at the end of the 1970s and, as the quote demonstrates, it was not only music but also a whole lifestyle reflecting the cultural, social and economic attitudes of the new generation. Punk was born in England and was part of the so-called new wave, which consisted of a mixture of different styles from punk and pub rock to new romance and experimental music, explains Vlček. Punk music from the end of the 70s was fast, energetic and aggressive. Three- to five-member bands played short and expressive songs and the lyrics described the feelings of young people (Vlček 236-237). The most famous foreign band was the *Sex Pistols*.

Punk had several different interpretations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, punk music was a trend in pop-music characterized by offensive and violent elements in music, shocking effects towards one's surroundings, provocative behaviour and clothes (Vaněk 175). Punk rockers threw away good manners and were often aggressive and vulgar. They wore uniforms, ripped-up T-shirts, cheap worn-out jackets decorated with safety pins and razor blades, short hair dyed with garish colours (an imitation of the hairstyle of Cherokee Indians fixed with lacquer or, in Czechoslovak conditions, with water and sugar), chains and heavy boots (Vlček 234, Vaněk 181). Punk was also perceived as a mixture of social attitudes, aesthetic opinions and music styles with the motto 'no future'. If one did not cooperate with a regime, he or she did not have any future in the sense of a professional career or in the sense of a future in one's personal life. Punk music was accompanied by 'pogo', a crazy and wild dance (Vaněk 181). Vlček adds that the punk also expressed a protest against famous art rock bands (*Yes*, *Genesis*, *Pink Floyd*) and commercialization. Although punk bands did not

play technically perfect music, their performances were energetic and continued underground traditions with its art decorations, design, symbols and logos (Vlček 235). The rise of punk was also connected with the crisis of the record industry, whose market for LP purchases and concert attendance were decreasing at the end of the 1970s. In punk, explains Vlček, there was a new trend of do-it-yourself LP production, which substantially reduced recording costs (235-236). Moreover, punk was something completely new and relatively easy to listen to and play. Thus, it attracted the attention of young people who visited concerts and subsequently founded their own amateur punk bands.

The generation of punk rockers lost the ideals expressed by the hippie motto "Make Love, Not War". This feeling was enhanced by factors like the increase of unemployment because of the economic recession, increase of divorce rates as well as an increase in the number of young drug addicts, ecological problems, Vietnam war, student clashes in Paris, the occupation of Czechoslovakia etc. (Vaněk 179). All these circumstances formed the attitudes in the punk movement. Moreover, thanks to better technologies and new recording media like cassettes and CDs, punk spread quickly not only in Western countries but also in the Soviet Bloc states including Czechoslovakia. The attitudes of punk rockers in the West towards the bands in the East, however, were somewhat ambiguous. This is demonstrated in a story told by Paul Wilson, who had seen a *Sex Pistols*' documentary full of arrests and protests at the end of the 1970s in England. He suggested they smuggle the movie to Czechoslovakia for the PPU but someone from the *Sex Pistols*' entourage said that the PPU was an anti-socialist band, that the *Sex Pistols* did not support fascist rock bands and he would rather send the film to South Africa (Wilson 46). Here we can see that the notion of socialism differed in the western democratic countries from the one in the East. Nevertheless, punk in Czechoslovakia was strongly influenced by punk and new wave music in the West and Czechoslovak punk rock did not remain unknown for journalists from the West either.

In Czechoslovakia, punk belonged to the third generation of musicians who became distinct from the art rock and vacant disco music of the 1970s. A considerable part of young Czech people was influenced by the punk and new wave music of the West. The newly-established punk and new wave bands boomed mainly from 1979 to 1980. The Czech punk rockers identified with the ideology of their western idols. It was a generation protesting against the world that was connected with a particular lifestyle, 'uniform' and provocation of the bourgeois people and establishment. Vaněk observes

that at the same time, punk rockers felt alienated. They were a source of mutual misunderstanding between punk and the other world and looked for its own realization (Vaněk 180). Thus, also in Czechoslovakia, punk became a revolt of the young generation fighting for freedom of expression. Punk was also a symbol of music for a broad circle of people. Creating some music ceased to be a privilege of celebrities. As a result, punk was played mainly by amateurs who imitated their foreign idols, covered their songs, and were not always technically perfect, but at the same time, real Czech rock without an inferiority complex emerged (Vaněk 186-187). With punk, rock came back to its roots of simplicity and directness. It gained new energy in music and lyrics with poetry of a harsh life on the streets without a future, writes further Vaněk (178).

The first program in Czechoslovakia devoted purely to punk, although only for listening, was organized at the *Sixth Prague Jazz Days* festival in 1978. One year later, the Czech audience could hear the first live punk concert performed by the band *Extempore*, which was led by Mikoláš Chadima. There was one important personality in Prague considered to be the guru of Czech punk, Karel Hrabal. He founded the very first purely punk band *Energie G*, which covered British punk songs (Vaněk 182-183).

Next to punk, there was the term 'new wave', which began to be used simultaneously with the start of punk in 1976 to 1977 in Czechoslovakia. It covered the whole generation of bands playing experimental music in pubs, as well as those of more commercial musicians. Vlček explains the Czech new wave was linked by three roots. First, it was folk music because of its place on the fringe of society. Also, underground and the bands like the PPU and *DG 307* gave impetuses to the new wave because they made no compromises with the regime. Finally, it was the Czech alternative of the 1970s that produced the most interesting and experimental music and stimulated the new wave in that direction (qt. in Vaněk 184-185). Contrary to the foreign events, in the Czechoslovak environment the new wave had some specific features. It mocked 'grayness' and stereotypes supported by the regime. The music was sarcastic and accompanied by impressive visual presentations. The bitter humour and sarcasm even emerged in some bands' names, e.g. *Kečup* [*Ketchup*], *Suchý mozky* [*Dry Brains*], *Hlavy 2000* [*Heads 2000*], *Garáž* [*Garage*], *Dvouletá fáma* [*Two-years-long Rumor*], *Pražský výběr* [*Prague Selection*], *Nahoru po schodišti dolů band* [*Up the Stairs Downwards Band*], *Máma Bubo* [*Mum Bubo*], *Odvážní bobříci* [*Courageous Beavers* etc. With their English names, not only punk and new wave bands, but also other unofficial music groups wanted to perform in the style of the western ones: *Blue Effect*,

Flamengo [*Flamenco*], *The Matadors*, *The Rebbels* and others (Vaněk 185). Later, however, in the 1980s the bands were forced to change their names and use the Czech equivalents.

The Czechoslovak new wave included several orientations united in clubs where concerts were held. The centre of the punk style was the Prague club *Na Chmelnici* in the city quarter of Žižkov. Punk, however, also spread outside the capital, in Brno and smaller towns like Teplice, Valašské Meziříčí, and Přerov. Furthermore, so-called *Prague Grotesque* tried to rediscover the magical Prague in opposition to the gray 'Normalization'. Its most famous band *Pražský Výběr* with musicians Michael Kocáb and Michal Pavlíček was connected not only with the city but, thanks to its name, also with the cheapest wine brand, symbolizing boredom. Also *new romance*[30] bands (the *Precedens* in its beginnings, for instance) emerged in Czechoslovakia, as well as new age and world music, represented by Vlasta Marek, and even reggae (the famous and still playing *Yo Yo Band*). We cannot forget industrial bands and noise bands in Czechoslovakia as well, which were inspired by the experimental part of the British new wave. Also the German industrial group *Einstürzende Neubauten* was known in Czechoslovakia. In socialist conditions, however, musicians lacked electronic instruments. Before the Velvet Revolution, metal music, affected by foreign bands like *Mercyful Fate*, conquered the scene (Vlček 234-258). We can see that the new wave scene was broad and the list above is not complete. All those bands were often moving on the edge of legality and conflict with the establishment. Punk and new wave definitely influenced the generation forming the 1989 events because rock music became a way to show dissent with the establishment. It expressed disagreement with the authorities who prohibited everything.

Although punk and new wave were initially not political phenomena, the regime managed to politicize it successfully within one decade. After the boom of punk at the end of the 1970s, the establishment began to interfere with cultural organizations to restrict the possibilities to hold concerts and record music. The state increased the amount of paperwork that was necessary for organizing an event and thereby tried to discourage bands from performing publicly. After doing away with the underground and the *Jazzová sekce*, the regime focused on punk and new wave around 1982. Vaněk

[30] The musical style that came after punk in Britain. It was characterized by a rather frustrated, disgusted and disappointed pose and disgust for consumerism (Vlček 241).

writes that the State Security concentrated on punk and new wave sympathizers in the action, who were nicknamed *Odpad* [*Trash*]. At the beginning of the 1980s, the workers of the cultural centres around the country were given a list of 35 names of professional and amateur bands that were banned and could not perform. Thereby the regime showed the organizers clearly that they should not sign any contracts with the bands on the list (Vaněk 191-195). In 1983, the most famous new wave group *Pražský výběr* was banned under the pretence of the non-taxed purchase of posters. Furthermore, the performance of their host band was supposedly not allowed.

The party's attacks climaxed on 22 March 1983 when the communist magazine *Tribuna* published an article from Jan Krýzl, whose name was actually fake as it was found out later, called "Nová vlna se starým obsahem" ["New Wave with Old Content"] (Vaněk 198). The article was open criticism of punk and new wave music from the regime's position, and was supported by communist rhetoric (ideological diversion from the bourgeois West) and ill-founded information. One week later, the article was supplemented with another one in the party's newspaper *Rudé Právo*, which included false information and incorrect terms. That meant disaster for punk and new wave because organizers and associations responsible for the bands started to cancel contracts with them. Thus, such music was practically banned. The two articles were a direct command to the concert organizers to disable performances of punk and new wave bands. As with the case of the PPU, however, the campaign had a completely counterproductive effect. Young people who had not been exposed to new wave bands before learnt about them and, as Vaněk writes, from 1983 to 1984 founded many amateur punk and new wave groups. Vaněk compares it even with the boom of bands after the Beatles (215).

On the other hand, the regime managed to shock some parents, mainly educated ones, who feared for their children's moral upbringing. Vaněk explains that it should provoke the notion that young people endangered other young people (201). Despite all the effort to damage the movement completely, concerts were still being organized and the new wave LPs were still smuggled from abroad. Moreover, Krýzl's article in *Tribuna* caused deep reactions of people involved in the movement. The magazine redaction received many letters, including also three polemic texts from Mikoláš Chadima, Josef Vlček and Lubomír Dorůžka, the prominent personalities of the unofficial music. They condemned Krýzl's lack of knowledge in rock music history and the fact that things were taken out of context, Vaněk writes. They emphasized that Krýzl offended some bands by not making distinctions and not using objective facts (Vaněk

209-210). Thus it was clear that the regime suppressed something that lied beyond the horizon of its understanding.

The broader consequence of these events was a series of meetings of the top communist ideologists not only in Czechoslovakia but also in Moscow where the communist heads discussed how to influence the youth in the right way (Vaněk 206). The intention to end the Czech punk and new wave scene was also supported by the Soviet ideologists but with Gorbachev's *glasnost* and reforms starting in the mid-1980s, there was already a 'smell of freedom' that anticipated the upcoming events. In the autumn of 1989, punk rockers were also active during the Velvet Revolution.

In the era of 'Normalization' even leisure time, including music, was controlled by the state. All the music, which was later called unofficial, alternative or underground music, had initially one purpose: people just wanted to play what they liked, listen to their favourite music, and wear their favourite clothing. Such a living, authentic and free culture and way of thinking was something that the regime could not influence. Therefore, it was dangerous for it and the system pushed the unofficial culture from the core of the society to its fringes. On the other side, as already discussed, the regime was a reason for creating the 'second' culture. Consequently, we have to ask what happened to the unofficial culture after the Velvet Revolution and how did it deal with the new democratic political system.

5. CZECH UNDERGROUND MUSIC TODAY

Starting in the second half of the 1980s in Czechoslovakia, Gorbachev's *perestroika* also enabled a 'softening' in the field of the unofficial culture. The Communist party allowed several hidden concessions, above all the organization of a rock festival. In these years, the new underground generation met with the old one. The PPU's young successors were mainly Tony Ducháček's *Garage*, Filip Topol's *Psí vojácí*, and Viktor Karlík's and Jáchym Topol's band *Národní třída* (Vlček 250-252). The PPU themselves could not play publicly at all in the 1980s and they split up completely in 1988. Their artistic leader Jirous was in prison, and Bondy withdrew to his private life. Many underground artists were forced to emigrate. Mejla Hlavsa said that after 1968 the interrogations somewhat ceased, only one or two a year, but the communists never forgot to offer him cooperation with the party (Hlavsa and Pelc 16). He never conceded though. In the literature of the 1980s, the major event was the founding of the underground magazine *Revolver Revue* in 1985, in which works of the most significant writers and poets of the young generation were published. The writers involved, above all Jáchym Topol, J. H. Krchovský, Petr Placák, Fanda Pánek, Andrej Stankovič, were also connected with the younger underground bands (Machovec *Od avantgardy* 188). *Revolver Revue* still operates today and continues to create space to publish non-mainstream writers. Also in 1985, Jirous's work *Magorovy labutí písně* [*Loony's Swan Songs*] and Placák's *Medorek* were published in samizdat (Machovec Od avantgardy 190). Both of the authors were imprisoned and these two poetry collections became an important literary event in the decade.

Throughout the 1980s, parallel structures still occupied bigger space and moved the borders from the initial 'what is not permitted, is forbidden' to 'what is not forbidden, is permitted' (Gruntorád 503). Moreover, the regime was not able to control new technologies like computers, copy machines and radios with dual cassette decks (Vlček 253), which also contributed to the regime's collapse. The Velvet Revolution aroused euphoria and fostered the founding of new alternative bands. Logically, after 1989 the alternative scene and underground in the sense of illegality ceased to exist but still tried to fight for authenticity, independence and non-manipulability within the consumer democratic society. Because the unofficial culture did not act against the totalitarian political establishment and was no longer unofficial after 1989, it makes more sense to call it *alternative* culture since the 1990s.

Alan writes that in the alternative culture after 1989 it was hard to distinguish what was alternative and commercial (5). For instance, originally alternative bands founded in the 1980s like *Žlutý pes*, *Bossanova*, *OK Band*, *Žentour*, *Laura a její tygři*, *Oceán* or *Precedens* became a part of the mass culture in the 1990s (Vlček 259). When the borders were opened to the whole world, mainly western music influenced the commercial scene in the Czech Republic[31]. Since the early 1990s till now, the music market has been dominated by electronic dance music together with the expanding commercial products of rap and pop music ("Populární hudba 90. let"). Big beat listeners became a minority and music in general ceased to be a symbol of one generation, like in the case of hippies and punk rockers. On the other hand, the international scene brought jazz, rock and world music, which also influenced newly-emerging Czech bands. There is, however, one important element which distinguishes big beat and alternative music from pop: pop music does not have the underground's rebellious nature and is more a form of entertainment. Therefore, pop cannot form a subculture like the underground did. Moreover, the age of computers has created a strong generational division between the old big beat and the new electronic music.

How should one define the underground after 1989? Can it still be called underground or is it an anachronism? In an interview in 2009 Ivan Martin Jirous answered a question regarding what the condition of the Czech underground was nowadays:

> "I hate the term underground which I myself introduced to the Czech so-called 'culture'. Now it's quite in vogue to be concern with the underground but one himself has to decide if it does or does exist not any more. But in my opinion, if you don't put your neck on the line, you can't have an underground. Nevertheless, there are still bands that I like and that probably belong to the underground: Slovakian *Živé kvety* […], [o]r [Czech] *Garage*, *Psí vojáci*, *Echt*, *DG 307*." (Kadlecová)[32]

Jirous's statement represents one point of view, that the underground was connected with the totalitarian regime. It was the extreme display of the unofficial music and literature that ignored the regime but, at the same time, as it acted against it

[31] Czechoslovakia got separated in 1993 into two independent republics: the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

[32] "Nesnáším ten termín underground, kterej jsem navíc sám uved' do český takzvaný kultury […]. Teď je dost v módě se o underground starat, ale jestli je, nebo už není, to si musí rozhodnout každej sám. Ale podle mýho soudu - když nejde o krk, není žádnej underground. Nicméně pořád existujou kapely, který jsou mi blízký a snad do undergroundu patřej: slovenské *Živé kvety* […] [n]ebo [čeští] *Garage* a *Psí vojáci*, *Echt*, *DG 307*".

.

with this ignorance it thus also behaved politically. Many underground artists continued these actions even under democracy. Bondy, for instance, still kept his non-conformist image in the 1990s and taught Marxist philosophy in Slovakia while he was trying to give up material dependence in the era of consumerism (Zand 163). On the other side, the young generation of artists in the 1980s interpreted the underground rather as a self-reflection and turned it inwards, for example, in the works of Jáchym Topol, who became an outstanding and well-known writer in the 1990s. Like-minded people around Topol continued to also look for oneself in the changed political system and did not exclude the existence of the underground within the democratic society.

In 1997 the PPU started playing together again after 16 years at the request of Václav Havel, who organized an anniversary party of Charter 77 at the Prague Castle (Stoppard). At that same time, the individual members were also working on other music projects. In 2001, Mejla Hlavsa, the founder of the band, chief songwriter and bassist, died on a lung cancer. This was a significant breaking point in the whole band's history but the PPU decided to go on performing. One woman who was a generation younger, Eva Turnová, who played in *DG 307* before, took Hlavsa's place in the band. She said about the experience:

> "When Mejla died, I think the idea was that having a woman playing bass would make it seem less like someone was trying to take his place. But the audience didn't like it. They wanted Mejla. I was booed!" (Stoppard)

It is clear that Hlavsa's position in the band was irreplaceable and the loss of the band's founder, long-time player and close friend was painful. Eva Turnová, however, soon became an important person in the band. Other new members in the band include the guitarist and singer Joe Karafiát (since 1997) and the drummer Jaroslav Kvasnička, who has played with the PPU since 2009 ("The Plastic People"). The 'old' members playing in the group since the 1970s are Vratislav Brabenec (saxophone, clarinet, vocals, composition, lyrics), Jiří Kabeš (electronic viola, theremin, vocals) and Josef Janíček (keyboard, vocals). In December 2009, the PPU produced a new studio album called *Maska za maskou* [*The Mask behind the Mask*] followed by a concert tour, which immediately aroused immense attention in the Czech music scene. Each album of the PPU is an original, which is also true of the new one. For the first time in the band's history, the recording includes songs composed by songwriters other than Mejla Hlavsa. The music is composed mainly by Janíček, Karafiát and Turnová. In the lyrics, the major part was written by Brabenec, but also texts from underground poets like

J.H. Krchovský, Andrej Stankovič and Jiří Kolář are included. For the first time, Jirous's text was also put into music in the song *Magor's Shem*. The overall sound of the PPU is definitely influenced by Joe Karafiát, the former member of *Garage* (Doležal). Stoppard writes that nowadays the PPU's music is a fusion of rock and free-form jazz that has been evolving for 40 years and whose goal is to sound like their first loves the *Velvet Underground* and *Doors* (Stoppard). The typical 'Plastic' sound, distinctive from other rock bands, is given by traditional instruments (mainly Brabenec's saxophone and Kabeš's viola). Several songs, however, sound completely different. The last one, *Tiger in Prague*, for instance, with clarinet and accordion, almost resembles klezmer music. Turnová's melancholic singing and her three compositions in the album correspond with the PPU nihilist underground philosophy but add a tender, womanly element. The song *One Foot/The Ox-Morning Star* is the longest piece in the album (over eight minutes) and probably represents the most 'underground' sound on this recording. It is an improvisation with a composed melodic introduction followed by Brabenec's dark lyrics and an escalating instrumental madness. Brabenec's saxophone gives many songs an almost jazz feel and unifies the band's sound throughout the album. The central song and also the title of the recording express typical 'underground' feelings:

> The mask behind the mask, behind the mask a mask
> by road or no-road a road stands in the way of the road
> wave after wave rippling across the sea
>
> Misery as far as the eye can see
> desolation where humanity has settled
> instead of hope the madman's fear
> and joy derived from crepe paper
>
> Words twisted names substituted
> a sign made of stones collapsing in a dream
> a moment of confusion can be mistaken for love[33].
>
> (*Maska za maskou*)

The theme of misery, frustration, anxiety and death pervades throughout the whole album, but sarcasm and ironic humour complete the expressive moods. The PPU do not try to sound the same as they did 20 years ago and thus the overall impression is

[33] Translation Marek Tomin.

smoother and less raw. Each of their albums is an original and even after Hlavsa's death, the band still has something to say, not only to its contemporaries, but also to younger generations. In the first years of the new millennium, the PPU drew from their past and reconstructed two composed series with the contemporary music orchestra Agon. In 2004, *Pašijové hry velikonoční* [*Easter Passion Plays*], and very recently, at the beginning of 2010, the CD *Obešel já polí pět* [*I Walked around the Five Fields*], a recording of a concert of the PPU in 2003 (Nováček), were released. Moreover, currently the PPU regularly perform in the New Scene of the National Theatre in Prague as a part of Tom Stoppard's piece *Rock 'n' roll*, a play concerned with the significance of rock music and opposition movements in Czechoslovakia between 1968 and 1989 (the performances are sold out in advance!).

The *Plastic People of the Universe* is not the only band who continued playing after the Velvet Revolution. Famous bands like *DG 307*, *Garage*, *Umělá hmota* and Mikoláš Chadima, an important personality of the alternative scene in the 1980s, still perform and make recordings. Moreover, some new 'underground' bands were established right after the revolution, like *New Kids Underground*, who try to follow the old underground (Doležal). There is one important project that contributed to the research on the unofficial music in Czechoslovakia. Czech Television and a collective of writers made a 42-part documentary called *Bigbít*[34], which maps the history of the Czech and Slovak rock music from 1956 to 1989. This unique project seeks to present the Czechoslovak historical reality and variety of rock music performed in the country. It includes examples of music from the period, historical documents and interviews with the primary musicians of that era.

Although nowadays *Bigbít* and underground are not in the centre of the music scene or the market in the Czech Republic, it did not fall into oblivion and still has circles of fans that span generations.

[34] Official homepage available at <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/index.php>.

6. CONCLUSION

In 1997, Mejla Hlavsa told an interviewer:

> "Our community, which was, probably imprecisely, referred to as 'underground', was a pocket of normal life…People with feelings similar to ours came to our concerts. Their music preferences were not necessarily similar, but music wasn't as important as meeting people and being together in a normal environment for a while. I don't know if anything like that would be possible had the *Plastic People of the Universe* not existed then." (Stoppard)

This quotation from one of the core persons in the Czechoslovak underground clearly describes what the movement's purpose was. "Being together in a normal environment for a while", such a simple thing at first sight, had immense political and personal consequences in the end for the people involved. As far as the term itself is concerned, not only Hlavsa but also many other people including Ivan Martin Jirous have viewed the word 'underground' as misleading. Nevertheless, it was rooted in the Czech vocabulary and in the Czech context, it is connected, more specifically than its original meaning, with the music of the 1970s, especially with the band the *Plastic People of the Universe*. The term 'underground' became also a core expression of this paper.

This thesis explored the roots of the underground culture of the 1970s and in this research, it was necessary to go several decades back to the inter-war period. Mainly the avant-garde movement and the writers in *podzemí* around *Edice Půlnoc* influenced the form of the underground during 'Normalization'. From a historical point of view, it is important to stress this fact because it was artists in the 1950s who anticipated the underground community of the 1970s with their unconventional lifestyle. On the other side, some personalities within the avant-garde and *podzemí* were leftist and even communists, while the underground was primarily apolitical and ignored the regime. Such political apathy had a contrary effect - the establishment perceived the underground as a political opposition. Thus the regime started several means of repression, climaxing in the trial of the PPU that united the dissidents who subsequently established *Charter 77*. The oppressions continued until as late as 1989 although in the course of the 1980s, they became much milder. In its intensity, however, they could not 'compete' with the fear of the 1950s, when the Communist party brutally persecuted all its opponents. The 1950s and 1970s were thus decades of a fierce restoration of communism, while in the 1960s and 1980s, the strong political situation was somewhat

softened. Besides the historical roots of the underground in the avant-garde and *podzemí*, its foundations lie mainly in the 1960s, when the music scene was more open to foreign influences. Thus the newly-emerging Czechoslovak bands were able to learn songs by rock 'n' roll bands from the West and adjust it to the Czech environment, where it was called *bigbít*. First, they tried to imitate the 'Western' groups but soon they were able to compose their own original songs. That was also the way of the PPU, who started playing in 1969, and became a core of the circle of people who later became known as the underground. This word was taken over from English by the main ideologist, theorist and artistic leader of the band, Ivan Martin Jirous, who was jailed for his activities for more than eight years altogether. The PPU became legendary, symbolizing the revolt of the young people against the narrow-mindedness of socialism. After they were banned from performing, they had to play secretly at private events. Not only the PPU but also several other music groups belonged to the underground music scene, as well as to the way of life and thinking at that time. The unofficial scene was, however, much broader. Later, in the 1970s, the *Jazzová sekce* and other bands from the alternative scene also became a target of the communist government. Last but not least, at the end of the 1970s, punk and new wave recordings from abroad, smuggled into Czechoslovakia, fostered the founding of Czech bands with a similar music style. This music did not remain untouched by the establishment and musicians had to face severe repercussions, interrogations, intimidations and even arrests. Together with them, also signatories and spokespersons of *Charter 77* had the same destiny. During the 1980s, the music scene became much broader. On one side, there was the younger underground generation establishing new bands; on the other side, there was the softened political situation heading for significant changes that occurred at the end of the decade. Thus the party began to make concessions and compromises in respect of the organization of live music events.

After 1989, the music scene in Czechoslovakia and later in the Czech Republic has seemed to be very fragmented and, because of the open borders, significantly influenced by music from the West. Nevertheless, some former underground bands still continue to play and there are several new ones that want to link to the underground of the 1970s. The PPU suffered a big loss in the death of the founder of the band, composer and bassist Mejla Hlavsa, in 2001. Nevertheless, they recorded a brand new album called *The Mask behind the Mask* that aroused an immense amount of attention on the Czech music scene and became a subject of many discussions on the distinctive music style of the band and the role of the underground nowadays.

Although the underground was quite a small and exclusive circle of people, it has been a movement of great historical importance whose significance is still felt today. The author of this thesis hopes that this paper has given the reader a complete view of the roots of the underground in Czechoslovak history as well as some perspectives from contemporary discussions on the sense of the movement within the democratic political system and society in the Czech Republic.

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