

## 2.7. Punk and New wave: destruction or doorway into Europe for the former socialist countries

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### Abstract

Underground music in the former Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland in the era of their socialist regimes had the utmost social, aesthetic and philosophical significance in the new wave style. A specific feature was that in some of these countries, experimental and new wave bands emerged earlier than punk groups because they were best suited for the expression of silent protest. Initially, these bands had presented themselves without political actions, but later they fell into open political conflicts and musicians were imprisoned for subversion of the country. In the Czech Republic, the period between 1968 and 1989 was associated with the activities of the bands The Plastic People of the Universe and the Prague Selection, which fused political and artistic dissident movements. In Slovakia, a youth gospel scene emerged in the underground, although it never had the musical characteristics of an alternative genre because gospel bands derived from mainstream rock and Afro-American gospel. While the activities of the Czech bands The Plastic People and the Prague Selection were banned from 1983 until 1987, the Yugoslavian geek rock band Haustor was enjoying its fame. The Polish post-punk band Maanam was first broadcasted by MTV in 1988. The Slovak alternative rock bands Demikát and 300HR limited their music to small, confined subcultures. Punk bands such as the Slovak Zóna A and the Polish groups SS 20, Kryzys and Siekiera became involved in conflicts that involved skinheads and hooligans. A question arises as to whether the conflicts were deliberately provoked as it was the 1981 to 1983 Nazi Affair in the former Yugoslavia that was associated with the rocker Igor Vidmar. The author of this paper analyses and compares the relationship between the mainstream and the underground together with their close ties to political activities.

**Keywords:** underground, socialism, mainstream, new wave, alternative rock.

### Introduction

When evaluating the rock music of 1977 to 1989 in the former socialist countries of Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, it is important to take into consideration several factors. Attention needs to be given to the social status of music and arts, as well as to the impact of ideology on their development. The article also raises questions about whether the artists had ambitions to become politicians and be actively involved in public life, whether there were any particular instances of punk and new wave music being prohibited for ideological reasons, or if any cases of political persecution of rock musicians occurred. Ultimately, an examination as to what extent punk and new wave in Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia contributed to the disintegration of their communist regimes in 1989 is also necessary. This study follows and compares the Polish, Yugoslavian and Czechoslovakian rock scenes' development from 1977 until the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

### A Doorway into Europe

In Poland, due to the Warszawska Jesień (the Warsaw Autumn) international music festival organized since 1956, avant-garde music had a dominating role (Vičar, 1994, 2013, p. 98). The festival has made world-famous such composers as Krzysztof Penderecki, Witold Lutoslawski and Henryk Górecki. Jazz music in particular represented an alternative form of culture and, to a lesser extent, it was an expression of a social protest (Ritter, 2011) associated with a nationwide embrace of jazz as a symbol of freedom (Pietraszewski, 2011). According to Igor Pietraszewski, "additionally, after 1956, Poland was gradually becoming the freest of the communist countries" (Pietraszewski, 2014, p. 9). However, according to his further analysis, the meaning of "freest" was primarily associated with the freedom enjoyed by the Polish Church, theatres and clubs, and freedom in jazz, cabaret, and avant-garde music. "Freedom" did not correspond with a free market economy and the politics of parliamentary democracy, but

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instead it was manifested through liberal culture and thought. Largely, therefore, the arts, culture and peoples' lives were outside central control and censorship, and in these the Polish people managed to defend their rights to freedom. According to Ray Pratt, rock music performers with their more radical involvement in particular political events are a much more significant part of socio-political life than are jazz musicians (Pratt, 1982, p. 51). In Poland, the protest-oriented character of jazz music was amplified by the underground rock movement, artists' ambitions to make Polish music known abroad, and by the religious dimensions within the Polish culture.

The countries of the former Yugoslavia were touched by "communism with a Western Face", a growing idea which, in the 1980s, formed the political basis for a mainly free market economy. The politics were led by the strong-handed dictator, Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980), and his close followers. In line with the phrase "bread and circuses to the people", the economy was built on the principles of demand and supply and supported the inflow of foreign capital; this made Yugoslavia the only communist country not to lose touch with the economic development of the Western bloc. What is more, to demonstrate a favourable foreign outlook, young Yugoslavians were allowed to play rock and roll. Unlike in Czechoslovakia, President Tito and his faithful supporter, Edvard Kardelj, never openly campaigned against rock and roll (Spaskowska, 2011, p. 4, Matzner & Poledňák & Wasserberger, 1983, p. 269). On the contrary, to show that this kind of music was only regarded as harmless fun, they chose a different cultural and political approach. In 1975, for example, Tito invited the band White Button (Bijelo Dugme) to perform for him on Christmas Eve at the Croatian National Theatre. In 1981, the *New Musical Express* magazine featured the Yugoslavian Električni Orgazam (Electric Orgasm)<sup>2</sup> as one of the best European bands along with the Belgrade club Akademija as being amongst the best in Europe (Gordy, 1994). However, in these outwardly demonstrated political gestures, youth very quickly discovered that behind the illusions of relative freedom and tolerance there were hidden motives of the dictator. Relative freedom meant limitations that especially concerned religious beliefs and the rights of ethnic minorities (Spaskowska, p. 9). In 1981, the communist government of Poland declared martial law; some bands were prohibited and some (such as the rock band Perfect) suspended their artistic activities to show solidarity with democratically oriented movements. The songs of the band Perfect had been widely appreciated by Polish audiences. With the support of new wave rhythms and ironical singing, the symbolic message of the song "Chcemy być sobą"<sup>3</sup> (We want to be ourselves, 1981)<sup>4</sup> showed how hard it was to be oneself when under ideological pressures.

Triggered by Alexander Dubček's reforms, politicians in 1960s' Czechoslovakia were trying to create "communism with a human face". To the artists, this process of political liberalization brought a relief from ideological pressures and a less severe censorship, which was mainly reflected by allowing the export of music to foreign countries. Musicians established contacts with several Western countries and signed contracts for album releases, but they could not accomplish their projects. The suppression of the 1968 Prague Spring reforms was followed by the persecution of anti-socialists according to 1969 Laws.<sup>5</sup> Reactions from Czech and Slovak artists and intellectuals to their persecution was not long in coming. In the Czech Republic, resistance was concentrated in the Jazz Section, the legally approved part of the Association of Musicians (est. 1969), and through the underground band The Plastic People of the Universe (1969). Consequently, jazz dissidents, underground rock musicians and political dissidents worked together. The Plastic People of the Universe took their inspiration from the music of Frank Zappa and the Velvet Underground, and from Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable multimedia shows. The 1974 brutal police repression at the *First Festival of Second Culture* in České Budejovice became the official milestone in the development of the Czech underground.

Ivan Martin "Magor" Jirous—the manager and artistic director of The Plastic People of the Universe—was, for organising dissident activities, samizdat in underground groups, and his views, convicted on five occasions and imprisoned for a total of eight and a half years. Similarly, the members of The Plastic People of the Universe were arrested and closely monitored during the period between 1969 and 1989 (Järvinen, 2009, p. 133). In 1974, the band was prohibited until 1988, at which time it dissolved. During this 14-year period, they performed illegally. At the same time, new wave and punk bands took over the activities of the Czech underground rock scene; amongst

<sup>2</sup> A Serbian punk and new wave band; they later shifted into the broad pop rock spectrum.

<sup>3</sup> LP *Perfect*, 1981, Polskie Nagrania Muza, SX 2114, Zbigniew *Hotdys* – guitars, piano and vocals, Grzegorz Markowski – lead vocal, Ryszard Sygitowicz – guitar.

<sup>4</sup> Tonpress.

<sup>5</sup> The Act of 22nd August 1969 of the Praesidium of the Federal Assembly (Collection of Laws no. 99/1969) on the necessary temporary measures for keeping and strengthening public order.

these groups Pražský výběr (the Prague Selection, formed in 1976) and Zikkurat (a punk group, 1979) were the most eminent. An ideal fusion was achieved in 1981 when Vilém Čok, the bass guitarist and singer of Zikkurat, joined the Prague Selection. In this band, he came to know and appreciate the experienced jazz-rock pianist Michael Kocáb and Michal Pavlíček's straightforward style of rock guitar playing (Vlček & Opekar, 1989). In their performances, the Prague Selection used theatrical shows: masks, wigs, glasses of strange shapes, and hair styles which followed the tradition of Czech theatre and cabarets. Their unusually crafted melodic lines, recitations (Matzner & Poledňák & Wasserberger, 1990, p. 438), punk parodies and ironic interpretation of lyrics accentuated political, aesthetic and social protests. In comparison with punk, the more complex harmonic structures, the musicians' technical virtuosity and creativity, and their stylistic heterogeneity symbolised the bands' resistance to the establishment, whilst transmitting messages that listeners were able to decode. Pavlíček's rock guitar riffs combined with Kocáb's jazz-rock motifs, played on the synthesizer, represented the image of the Czech new wave style. In the *Encyclopedia of Jazz and Modern Popular Music*, published shortly after the Velvet Revolution in 1990, Prague Selection's music was still characterised as aggressive rock (pp. 438-439). Stylistically, the band strove to eventually achieve a synthesis of different musical elements. For its style, the group was banned between 1983 and 1987. However, the main reasons for the prohibition—as stated in the *Encyclopedia*—were “incidents in the audiences” and “problems with agencies in organizing concerts”. The true reason—open conflicts with the communist ideology identified by censors in the visualisation and the lyrics—was not given. According to the official press releases, the Prague Selection at its January 1983 concert in Hradec Králové was selling uncensored posters which were the source of its “illegal income and wealth”; the opening band Trifidi participated in the performance without permission; and instead of the three concerts allowed, they gave four. To avoid censorship of their songs' lyrics, the band used a Swahili-like idiom with words whose sounds resembled the English language but made no sense. Michal Kocáb justified the use of the meaningless language by simply saying that the band either did not have sufficient time or was unable to add lyrics to their music pieces. However, the meaningless lyrics, although outwardly sounding stupid to the Communists, always carried a symbolic message understandable to the audiences. Such simplicity and “folly” in the lyrics, typical of mainstream pop, acquired new meanings through the music's parodical and ironical interpretation. In Kocáb's composition “S.O.S”, the band also ridicules Czechoslovakian pop music hits with references to the bass guitarist Ondřej Soukup's departure from the Prague Selection to Karel Gott's pop music ensemble.

In 1982, the film director Juraj Herz made a movie about the Prague Selection entitled *Straka v hrsti* (A Magpie in the Hand). Since the movie featured the signatories of Charter 77, it ended up in a safe and the Secret Police (ŠtB) began to monitor the band more closely. In the same year, their album *A Magpie in the Hand* was ready to be released; however, this did not happen until the beginning of Gorbachev's perestroika (“restructuring”) and glasnost (“openness”) in 1988, when the previously prohibited album was released under the title *Prague Selection*<sup>6</sup>. It meant a new relief in Czechoslovakia from the political pressure instigated after the 1968 Prague Spring events. In 1989, after the Velvet Revolution, Michal Kocáb, the pianist, singer and composer of Prague Selection, entered politics as an active member of the Parliament. He was the chairman of the parliamentary commission to oversee the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia, and later he became the Minister for Human Rights and Minorities (2009-2010). Kocáb's powerful artistic contributions grew into political commitments and enabled him to play an active role in Czech politics for almost 20 years.

In comparison with the Czech rock avant-garde, the Slovak scene in the former Czechoslovakia did not follow such a radical path. Instead, however, it was characterised by a strong current of underground gospel music, which had its association with Slovakian religiosity. Gospel music was recorded on cassettes in emergent clandestine studios and secretly distributed. Between 1969 and 1989 there were, according to available data, 37 gospel music albums illegally distributed. The development of a Slovakian underground gospel scene shared many common features with its counterpart in Poland. Religiosity and a rather conventional direction of music were likely reasons for the Slovakian rock scene development that saw the new wave band Demikát (1981) three years prior to the emergence of the punk group Zone A's emergence in 1984. During that time, punk rock musicians only played in the basement of their homes. In 1981, Marián Greksa together with the guitarist Andrej Šeban formed the band Demikát that performed for two years. The band gave concerts in Bratislava clubs and particularly excited the interest of students. Demikát adopted the British punk rock dress style with torn and colour-spattered clothes,

<sup>6</sup> LP Panton 81 0826-1311, the band's third album, remastered on CD in 1990, Panton 81 0826-2311.

which sharply contrasted with their playing of hard rock compositions, such as “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” (Brožík, 1982, p.1) by the Rolling Stones, who were the symbol of rock music for the young generation of Slovak listeners. However, Demikát also played their original music. The song “Ja som bača veľmo starý” (I Am a Very Old Shepherd, 1983) used the minor pentatonic in the melody, and the Dorian and Lydian modes in the chorus. In the lyrics, the band criticised the conventional and conservative approach of Slovak audiences. The depiction of an old shepherd who still grazes sheep, along with the image of a weak and fearful society, provoked Slovak audiences, but did not please the official institutions. At the time of new wave’s emergence in the Czech Republic, and with increasing socio-political criticism, the parody and symbolism which Demikát used in their music ensured a ticket sellout at the band’s 1983 farewell concert in the 1800-seat hall of the Bratislava Culture and Leisure Park. In comparison with their club concerts, it was a great achievement. However, Demikát released only one single (SP *Puberta Blues/Kráľovstvo krivých zrkadiel*, SP Puberty Blues/The Kingdom of Distorted Mirrors)<sup>7</sup> and no album. Not even the efforts of the guitarist and band’s leader, Andrej Šeban, to further continue with the new wave style and progressive rock in the band 300HR (1984) brought any wider response from the listeners. The band remained a part of the semi-professional scene for only another few months. Hence, between 1981 and 1986, the Slovak new wave scene fell outside the focus of official agencies and publishers. It was not without reason that in the 1990s Šeban was developing progressive metal in the groups Šeban-Rózsa-Buntaj, and Free Faces.

The situation in the then Czechoslovak Socialist Republic began to change in the second half of the 1980s when the supporters of Charter 77 obtained managerial positions in several government institutions. There, they collaborated in the organisation of the Rockfest (1986). The event had a number of contributing organizations that should be credited for enabling the Rockfest to take place with new wave, punk, alternative and, later, even with prohibited bands, e.g. *Psí vojáci* (Dog Soldiers, 1979-2011) and Zone A, performing at the festival. The *Newsletter*, a festival bulletin, reflected a significant change in views on rock music.

The Socialist Youth Association endeavours to support legitimate interests of young people. ... This area of pop music was developing rather spontaneously, and opinions on rock music were manipulated by different and sometimes insensitive interventions. One of the important means to address this situation was the Rockfest festival. (Teplý, 1988, p. 1)

Moreover, the Rockfest was held in the Prague Palace of Culture, which was then also the venue for the Congresses of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (as shown in the movie series *Bigbít 1956-1989*, 40/3). When the members of the punk band Dog Soldiers sought permission to perform in 1978, it was rejected because they allegedly played extremely depressing music and their parents had signed Charter 77<sup>8</sup>. In the trailer *There Is a Bathtub in the Bathroom* from the *Bigbít* movie<sup>9</sup> of the 1988 Rockfest, Filip Topol, Dog Soldiers’ pianist, has a bleeding hand from playing glissandos, and his expressive interpretation is still provocative even after many years. Although Dog Soldiers was a punk rock band, jazz musicians offered them a helping hand. The band was invited to perform at the 1979 Prague Jazz Days festival, organised by the persecuted Karel Šrp’s Jazz Section. Topol (1965-2013) was interrogated by the Secret Police, even though he was only 13 years old at the time. The group subsequently performed at Václav Havel’s cottage in Hrádeček in 1980; Havel was a member of the dissident movement and Hrádeček was a hub for the already-established underground rock elite. Although the Czechoslovak jazz and rock underground activities followed relatively independent paths, the two movements shared mutual sympathies and support.

The albums of the Yugoslav (Croatian) new wave band, Haustor (est. in 1977, LPs *Haustor*, 1981; *Treći svijet*, 1984; *Bolero* 1985; and *Tajni grad*, 1988), together with numerous concerts and broadcasts on radio, testify to the success of this group. Since the Czech band Prague Selection, which developed the same style, was prohibited between 1983 and 1987, Haustor’s activities demonstrated that the cultural and political conditions in Yugoslavia were freer than in Czechoslovakia. The band combined music, theatre, pantomime, new wave and, in addition to electric musical instruments, it also utilized brass and folk instruments.

<sup>7</sup> SP 1983, Marián Greksa – voc., Henry Tóth – guit., Peter Važan – basg., and Ján Fabrický – dr., Opus 9143 0588.

<sup>8</sup> *Bigbít 1956 – 1989*, 41 / 5, 1:40, 2:53’.

<sup>9</sup> *Bigbít 1956 – 1989*, 41 / 5, 4:37, 6:37’.

During Haustor's live performances, Rundek (Darko Rundek, guitarist of the Haustor) employed elements of performance art, along with the heavy make-up ... Pantomime was Rundek's foremost means of expression onstage ... (Zhabeva, 2014, p. 60)

Similarly to Yugoslavia, Polish new wave music captured the audiences' interest at the time when the Czech Prague Selection and its album *A Magpie in the Hand* were banned. In 1985, the Polish group Lady Pank gave concerts in the UK, Finland, the USSR and the USA; besides the sampler *Sztuka latania* (1985), it released as many as three albums (*Lady Pank*, 1983; *Ohyda*, 1984; *Drop Everything*, 1985). In 1986, Lady Pank's song "Minus Zero" was aired on MTV. Another group, Maanam, was also known outside Poland, and the English version of its LP *Nocny patrol* (The Night Patrol, 1983) was being sold in Germany, the Benelux countries and Scandinavia. A problem occurred in 1984 when the Rogot company decided to organise concerts in the USSR. A contract was signed between the Komunistyczny Młodzieży Poland (the Communist Youth of Poland) and the Youth of Soviet Union, but Maanam's singer, Kora, refused to perform in the Soviet Union thus causing a national scandal. The band's activities were suspended and its pieces prohibited in the media. However, the prohibition lasted less than a year because the pressure from the public and fans helped the group to resume its artistic activities. The following year, Maanam released another record and performed abroad (the UK, Germany and the Netherlands). The group's success culminated in 1988 when the video-clip "Sie ściemnia" (It's Getting Dark) became the first Polish rock video to appear on MTV.

## Destruction – Punk in Socialist Countries

While the punk movement in Britain was concentrated amongst working class people, in socialist Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia punk musicians and listeners came from the middle class and intellectuals (Sullivan, 2011; films *Bigbit 1956-1989*, *Nezmením sa!/I Won't Change!*, 1989; *Príbeh slečny/The Story of a Young Lady*, 1985). The first wave of Czech intellectual punk rock (The Plastic People of the Universe) was inspired by the music of Frank Zappa and the Velvet Underground. Experimental rock, punk and new wave in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia expressed disillusionment due to the discrepancies between the establishment's official rhetoric and its actual practices.

Punk in socialist countries, unlike its counterpart in the Western world, was not a response to youth unemployment, but a reaction to censorship, dual culture, official and private lives, isolation due to travel prohibitions to capitalist countries, as well as being a voice against the surveillance of everything that fell outside the standards—dress style, thoughts and actions. In the banned movie *I Won't Change!* (1989), the journalist, Ľuboš Dojčan, says that punk was a pessimistic response to an optimistic socialist future. In 1985, Martin Hanzlíček produced a film about the first Slovak punk band, Zone A, entitled *The Story of a Young Lady*, it showed the musicians' school years and their work, but it also emphasized that the band's members considered themselves shaped personalities with specific outlooks. Since the movie depicted the punks' good and disciplined conduct during the socialist era, it gave the impression of a mere 'misunderstanding' between the official authorities and young punks. This film was also prohibited and was allowed to be broadcast only after the Velvet Revolution.

In contrast to new wave groups, punk bands were straightforward and far more provocative. Their needling the authorities was sometimes deliberate. For instance, Igor Vidmar, Yugoslavian (Slovenian) journalist and underground events organizer (the publisher of *Pankrti*, the first punk SP and LP in 1977; and also the organizer of the first punk concert in Ljubljana in 1978), worked as a political journalist in Radio Student, the Independent College Radio in Eastern Europe.

In 1980-81, Ljubljana and Slovenian punks became so numerous and aggressively present on the streets. They even re-named a central Ljubljana square into 'Johnny Rotten Square' in massive black letters ... (Vidmar, 2012)

The movement began to grow and the police wanted to intervene. In 1981, they arrested three rather unknown musicians from the punk band Fourth Reich; one of them was the singer of the Ljubljana Psi (the Ljubljana Dogs). The police constructed evidence for the trial, which was followed by subsequent arrests of several members of punk groups. Most newspapers labeled the punks as Nazis. Since Vidmar was one of the key speakers of this movement, the police were looking for reasons to apprehend him. In 1982, he organized a concert to support the Polish trade union Solidarity (Solidarność). His articles in newspapers and presentations on Radio Student openly spoke about

the deliberately contrived 1981 plot against the punks. The state officials were still looking for an official reason to accuse Vidmar, who was known to wear a badge with a swastika and the inscription 'Dead Kennedys Nazi Punks Fuck Off!', which was the title of a Dead Kennedys' single. The Yugoslav ideologists also regarded the Nazi swastika as a symbol of Hinduism and Buddhism. Vidmar was accused of Nazi propaganda and arrested in 1983 (Vidmar, 2008). It is questionable to what extent it was a misunderstanding caused by the swastika's dual meaning, or provocation by Vidmar who abused the authorities' ignorance. Vidmar's case was extensively discussed in the Yugoslavian media and became known as the 'Nazi Punk Affair Ljubljana' (Stubbs, 1995); revealing the truth was not to the regime's liking. The situation in Czechoslovakia was different since the information on punk music, its prohibition and persecution was never included in the media.

According to Polish contemporaries, conflicts between the public and punk rock groups were purposely provoked.

In Poland of the 1980s, it was not anything uncommon to see agents called 'Ubeks' or 'Sbeks' during punk rock gigs. They were manipulating with skinheads and hooligans to make them hostile and aggressive towards punk rockers (Gindrich, 2014).

Slovak punk rockers, in contrast, could not justify their 1988 provocation in Bratislava, when they posed with swastikas for photographs. They were noticed by foreign tourists, who published a report in the German newspaper *Bravo*, which became, obviously, of interest to the Secret Police. Unlike in Yugoslavia where the 'Nazi Punk Affair Ljubljana' was broadly publicised, the punk rebellion in Slovakia did not become a public affair. It is, therefore, questionable whether it was a real incident or merely a hearsay myth of the socialist era. The 1980s' punk bands were styled after British punk and had provocation and rebellion as main features. They were only influential as a small subculture, but their activities, although limited, were unacceptable to the general public since they were accompanied by violent action. Such bands in Poland included SS 20, Kryzys, Siekiera, and TZN Xenna, which reacted to social unrests. Slovakian groups Paradox, Zone A, and Extip, along with the Czech bands Dog Soldiers, Ziggurat, and Visací zámek (A Padlock) need to be mentioned as well. The emergence of punk bands in Yugoslavia coincided with the origins of punk in Britain in 1976 and included bands such as Pankrti (The Bastards), Paraf, Prljavo Kazalište (Dirty Theatre), Termiti (Termites) and Electric Orgasm. After the 1989 revolutions and the collapse of socialist regimes, punk bands lost the principal reason for their provocations and adopted the characteristics of western extremism. While the punk movements in the West were anti-capitalist, punk in the Eastern bloc was anti-communist (Pęczak & Wertenstein-Zulawski, 1991). The second punk wave in late 1980s' Czechoslovakia already contained a number of negative elements, such as racism, drug addiction and violence. (Fuchs, 2002)

The first official and public punk concert in Slovakia was that of the band Paradox in 1983. It was also the band's first performance after three years of only playing in the basement of their home. A few months later, Paradox performed in front of 1500 people at an amateur District Political Song Competition in the Bratislava Culture and Leisure Park. Paradoxically, this event was supported by socialist apparatchiks as a politically engaging youth activity. In 1984, the members of the Slovak punk bands Ex Tip and Paradox united to form the group Zóna A. However, since the band's lyrics were not approved by the censors, they were not authorized to perform in public. Their concerts were accompanied by repressions and in 1984 restricted only to the Lamač district of Bratislava. By seizing their passports, the Secret Police prevented the band's participation at the 1986 festival in the Polish town of Jarocin. From 1985 to 1987, Zóna A was barred from all public performances. In 1987, they found the courage to give an illegal concert in the Bratislava Horský park; the Secret Police intervened and arrested more than 30 people. In 1988, they performed at the Rockfest festival in Prague, which meant breaking the original prohibition but, at the same time, enabled the penetration of punk music into Bratislava musical life. However, the band's concerts were often prevented by the Secret Police, which monitored and interrogated their members up until 1989.

With their political messages and semantic meaning in the music, new wave and experimental groups in socialist countries were closer to the music of Frank Zappa and the Velvet Underground, who were, in general, more cynical and intellectual than the British punk. It is, therefore, no coincidence that Czech and Polish new wave bands also sympathized with jazz. Michal Kocáb, the leader of the Prague Selection, initially played jazz-rock, the punk band Dog Soldiers performed at the Prague Jazz Days, the Polish group Maanam also included jazz musicians such as Zbigniew Namysłowski, Tomasz Stańko and Stanislaw Sojka. The Polish new wave group Perfect performed in the Warsaw jazz club, Stodola. After losing the object of their protest-socialism—some punk musicians began to combine punk rock with jazz avant-garde and free jazz. Such musicians included the Czech punker Mikoláš

Chadima and the Slovak pianist Július Fuják; together they played music which was a cross between punk, free jazz, prepared piano and improvisations, and also included samplers—real records on the Secret Police's persecutions of the Jazz Section (CD *Xafoo*, 2012). Punk in socialist countries in the late 1980s thus opened the door to Europe with all its positive and negative impacts.

## Music progress

The 1980s' new wave bands contributed not only to the creation of aesthetic values, but they also played a significant role in the social and political resistance against the socialist establishment. All these factors need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the bands' progressions. At that time, some bands already extended past the new wave style. For instance, in their song "Pepe Wróc" (LP *Live*, Savitor 1983) the Polish group Perfect ventured into hard rock and alternative rock as they used repetitions of a single motif together with a text gradation. In the compositions of the Czech band Prague Selection compiled on their LP *A Magpie in the Hand* (1983), the elements of alternative and gothic rock were evident in the bizarre expressivity and their work with sound. The Polish group Maanam had a slight post-punk and gothic rock orientation. According to the recent views of theoreticians, the Croatian Haustor is classified as a geek rock band (Zhabeva, 2014). Similarly, due to their intellectualisations and the use of non-musical elements, the Czech Plastic People and the Slovak group Demikát were also exponents of geek rock. While experimental rock and new wave musicians in the former socialist countries partially opened the door to Europe, they still maintained their identities and specificities; such bands included The Plastic People of the Universe, the Prague Selection, Demikát, Haustor, Laibach, Maanam, and Perfect.

## Conclusion

According to the German theoretician, Theodor W. Adorno, "Slavic peoples are spontaneous", "naively impetuous" and belong to the type of emotional listener ("emotionalen Hörer", Adorno, 1975, p.17). At the time of the establishment of punk and experimental rock in the late 1960s (with The Plastic People of the Universe), they articulated, like the American scene, sophistication combined with a simple rebellion. A critical approach and perfect musicianship were demonstrated not only in artistic productions but also in interpreting the political situation. The consequence, i.e. prohibitions of bands in socialist countries was the same as for British punk rock. Unlike new wave bands in the West, which did not experience the constant societal pressures, their counterparts in the former Czechoslovakia were persecuted by the state authorities. This represented the developmental difference between new wave bands in Western countries and those in the socialist bloc. However, in comparison with Czechoslovakia, new wave groups in Poland and Yugoslavia arose under freer political conditions, although conflicts were also unavoidable. The early 1980s' Polish, Yugoslavian and Czechoslovakian new wave bands were already able to artistically synthesize jazz-rock, hard rock, punk and theatrical gags into the form of an alternative rock genre that theoreticians call geek rock (DiBlase & Willis, 2014). According to Ekkehard Jost,

the potential critical effect of music is intensified if a certain experience of consciousness back- pressure sharpens the immanent pressure of the music. Non-musical elements such as the title, text, scene, artists' movements and associations, are amplified by the intervention of external foremost consciousness until it reaches its aesthetic pleasures that are passed onto the listeners (Jost, 1973, p. 33).

From this point of view, the new wave style grew into geek rock under the influence of the "socialist environment".

Although the naive emotionality was inevitably associated with an anti-intellectual attitude, the impact of official socialist ideology caused the "Adorno type" to change into an intellectual, capable of destroying the socialist establishment and becoming politically active. This can be demonstrated through the personality of the Czech musician and politician Michael Kocáb, by the underground band The Plastic People of the Universe, who were linked to Charter 77, as well as by the Slovenian activist Igor Vidmar. In Czechia, the country whose population

gradually replaced religiosity with intellectualisation,<sup>10</sup> the rock music of 1969 to 1989 found its strong base amongst intellectuals and dissidents (Václavík, 2010, p. 121). In Poland and Slovakia, intellectualisation was more evident in jazz and gospel music. The Orthodox Church-oriented former Yugoslav countries created new intertextual possibilities for reception and semantic contexts of rock music (for example the Slovenian band Laibach).

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<sup>10</sup> In 1974, approximately 20% of the Czech population were religiously minded; in 1989 the figure was 25%. At present, the Czech Republic proudly claims an atheistic orientation. According to the 2011 census, as many as 51% of the population indicated neither a church affiliation nor an atheistic conviction. <https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/nabozenska-vira-obyvatele-podle-vysledku-scitani-lidu-2011-61wegp46f1>