



# The three phases of rock music in the Czech lands

Sabrina P. Ramet <sup>a,\*</sup>, Vladimir Đorđević <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Sociology and Political Science, The Norwegian University of Science & Technology, NTNU, Trondheim, Norway

<sup>b</sup> Department of Territorial Studies, Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic



## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Available online 18 February 2019

### Keywords:

Rock music  
Czech Republic  
Politically charged lyrics  
Punk  
Performance licenses  
Censorship

## ABSTRACT

In the Czech lands (included in Czechoslovakia until the end of 1992), rock music has evolved through three phases. In the first phase, lasting until 1968, rock musicians had no ambition to offer social or political commentaries. This began as the era of rock 'n' roll, which is to say music being performed for dancing. The second phase began after the Soviet bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, lasting until the end of the communist era in 1989. In this phase, rock musicians (no longer playing rock 'n' roll) were closely monitored by the authorities and were expected to sing happy songs, submitting their song texts to the authorities for approval in advance of performing them. In spite of this control, some rock groups purposefully sang political texts in the 1970s and 1980s, mocking or criticizing the communists, albeit often cryptically. Finally, in the third phase – since 1989 – having lost their ideological foe, Czech rock groups have for the most part become politically disengaged.

© 2019 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In the societies of Eastern Europe, experiencing 45 years of communist rule followed by – so far – three decades of variously democratic or right-wing authoritarian or corrupt oligarchic rule, rock musicians and their audiences have experienced, broadly, three phases. In the first phase, lasting in Czechoslovakia until 1968, rock musicians had no ambitions to offer social or political commentaries; they were listening to broadcasts of British and American rock 'n' roll on Radio Luxemburg and Radio Free Europe, loved it, and did their best to copy what they heard. Across the region, rockers were convinced, at that time, that English was the language of rock – indeed, the only language in which rock lyrics should be sung. Generally speaking, their efforts at transcription paid off, but sometimes there were strange constructions; at other times, their efforts to write English produced bizarre expressions, as in the Matadors' song, "Hate Everything Except Of Hattered" (Opekar, 2013).<sup>1</sup> This first phase was one of relative innocence, with members of the young generation discovering the music of Elvis Presley, Cliff Richards and the Shadows, and the Beatles. The Czechoslovak record label Supraphon brought out a compilation of music by the Fab Four in 1969 under the title, *A Collection of Beatles Oldies but Goldies*.

The Supraphon compilation might be viewed as the last gasp of the first phase, since the Soviet bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia during the night of 20–21 August 1968 had a dampening effect not only on politics and literature, but also on the rock scene. Rock groups were pressured to switch to a soft-pop repertoire with optimistic lyrics or, alternatively, shut down

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [sabrina.ramet@ntnu.no](mailto:sabrina.ramet@ntnu.no) (S.P. Ramet).

<sup>1</sup> A video of the Matadors performing "Hate Everything Except Of Hattered" may be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOGUBV18sFw>.

(Blüml, 2015: 258). In this second phase, the phase of “normalization” – which for the purposes of this article may be treated as running until the end of the communist era in late 1989 – the Czechoslovak authorities clamped down on rock musicians and then, in 1973, introduced “requalification exams” which rock performers were required to pass if they were to be granted licenses to perform. Those not granted such licenses were considered illegal and consigned to the cultural underground. An unlicensed band caught performing before an audience could be charged with “disturbing the peace” or “illegal business activity” and thrown in jail (Vaníček and Naninka, 1997). Rock groups had to submit the texts of their songs for approval, the music had to be upbeat and sunny, and attire and hair style had to adhere to a conservative norm (for example, no long hair for men). When a concert involving the unlicensed bands Plastic People of the Universe and DG 307 (named after the code for a psychological disorder) was scheduled in 1974, police were sent to the concert site, wielding clubs and beating hundreds of rock fans, later expelling many of them from the university (Vaníček and Naninka, 1997: 34).

Rock became heavily politicized in the era of “normalization” for two rather different reasons. In some cases, a rock group was treated by the authorities as politically hostile, even if none of the songs written by band members had political texts. When we met with two members of the Plastic People of the Universe in May 2018, they stressed that none of the song texts they composed had political content and that, from the beginning, all they wanted to do was to perform their brand of rock (Brabenec and Janíček, 2018). The only political lyrics the Plastic People ever sang was the blatantly anti-communist “One Hundred Points” – an oppositionist text ironically written by the editor of the communist news organ, *Rudé Právo*, which they set to their own music (Sheridan, 2011: 25).

But there were also rock groups which purposefully sang political texts and adorned the covers of their albums with provocative images. One example is the group *Pražský výběr*, founded by keyboardist and singer Michael Kocáb in 1976. In 1982, the group recorded the album *Straka v hrsti*, which the authorities deemed objectionable and refused to clear for commercial release. The album was finally released only in 1988 (Kocáb, 2018).<sup>2</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, rock bands often figured as gadflies, even sometimes as voices for the opposition. The collapse of communism in 1989 reshuffled the deck. The new political authorities did not worry about the haircuts, attire, music, or lyrics of the rock performers, who in turn lost their erstwhile role as gadflies. The rock scene now fragmented, with new currents emerging, such as hardcore, rap, grunge, and shoegaze. Since 1989, it has also become possible for British, American, and other Western bands to perform in the Czech lands; among those that have come to the Czech Republic since 1989 are the Rolling Stones, Massive Attack, Pearl Jam, and Metallica. Paul McCartney and Paul Simon performed in Prague in 2016, as did the German industrial band Rammstein.

Since the focus of this article is on Czech bands, with one exception, groups from Slovakia are omitted from the discussion, regardless of their importance. The article ends with a brief comparative discussion, comparing the reception of rock in the Czech case with the reception of rock in other communist and post-communist countries.

This article is structured as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of our research methods. This is followed by a summary of the key literature on rock music in Eastern Europe; in this section we spell out the central arguments we present below. Section III is devoted to the first phase in the development of Czech rock, running from the 1950s until 1968; in this section, we highlight the group *Matadors*, and take note of the impact of the *Rolling Stones* on the Czech rock scene. In section IV, we sketch the main lines of the second phase, breaking this down into two sub-phases (1968–1979, in which we highlight the *Plastic People of the Universe* and currents in the punk scene; and 1980–1989, in which we highlight the memorable group *Pražský výběr* as well as the notable group *Katapult*). This was the era in which some rock groups became increasingly politicized. Section V is devoted to the third phase, the “return to Europe”, with Czech groups, with some exceptions such as those in the punk scene, letting go of politics. Finally, in the conclusion, we summarize some ways in which, in communist times, the Czechoslovak rock scene was typical of rock scenes in communist Eastern Europe and identify some new trends which have emerged since communist hegemony came to an end in the region.

## 2. Research methods and theory

As far as methodological approaches are concerned, this article is largely built on three different ones. First of all, we conducted a series of face-to-face interviews with leading rock personalities in Prague in May 2018. The interviews were of semi-structured type, whereby we posed questions intended to elicit general information on the bands whose members were interviewed, as well as more specific information about these bands' songs and lyrics. In the process, we hoped to learn about ways in which their lyrics, music, or performances may have been controversial – especially, in the years up to 1989, with the communist authorities, and to establish what was or has been their impact whether with domestic or foreign audiences. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the authors to pursue questions arising from our interviewees' initial responses. In addition to interviews with members of influential Czech bands, we also interviewed journalists who have followed the rock scene, raising questions with them to establish or confirm the importance, influence, and political and social role of the various bands and their music. These questions covered issues similar to those asked in the interviews with Czech rock musicians but also included questions regarding records, albums sold and respective activity on the music scene before the fall of communism, music genres and influences, and changes that have taken place ever since the fall of communism in

<sup>2</sup> The full album has been posted at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzcW3jcQ3\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzcW3jcQ3_0).

1989. Finally, the authors also benefitted from email communication with one musician who was willing to answer the questions but not in a position to come to Prague to meet with us.

Both in the interviews and in making use of existing literature, whether in Czech or in English, we looked for how the rock groups oriented themselves vis-à-vis social and political issues, what controversies arose or have arisen regarding these groups, and, for those, with social agendas, what they hoped to achieve.

### 3. The literature

English-language scholarly literature on rock music in the communist world can be dated to the mid-1980s. Among the first scholars to focus on communist-area groups were Ramet (1985, 1988), Skilling (1989), and Ryback (1990). In their early studies, these researchers took into account the way in which local rockers created a “counterculture” (Ramet, 1985: especially 149–152) or “musical underground” (Skilling, 1989: 79) and noted communist wariness about rock, resulting in the arrest and/or persecution of some rockers (Ramet, 1985: 155–158; Skilling, 1989: 179–180; Ryback, 1990: 176–177). These early works were followed by a collection of papers (Ramet, 1994a,b), and studies by Cushman (1995), Szemere (2001), and Zhuk (2010). One of the things that emerged from the aforementioned works was a clear understanding of how the political context shaped alternatives for the bands, so that rock groups enjoyed the most leeway in Yugoslavia, liberal by communist standards. However, within Yugoslavia, focusing on the years 1972–1989, there were more liberal republics (Slovenia and Croatia) as well as more conservative republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia). By contrast, the control of the rock scene was probably toughest in Ceaușescu’s Romania and Brezhnev-era Russia; rock was illegal in communist-era Albania.

For the communist era, one can distinguish four distinct political postures adopted by rockers: first, there were the apoliticals that had no interest in politics, such as the Bosnian band *Crvena jabuka* (Red Apple) or the Croatian band *Parni valjak* (Steamroller). Second, there were official bands, which enjoyed regime’s sponsorship, had access to the best venues, and were amply remunerated, singing songs which met with official approval, such as the Soviet bands *Veselye rebyata* (Jolly Guys) and *Samotsvety* (Precious Gems), or the East German group *Puhdys* (Puhdys) (Ramet et al., 1994: 183, 197; and Leitner, 1983: passim). Third, there were bands that mocked the communists, by parodying their slogans and rhetoric – bands such as the Soviets bands *Alisa*, with the song “Experimenter of upward-downward motion”,<sup>3</sup> and *Vremena vremeni* (Time Machine), with its song “The Calm” (Troitsky, 1988: 42), or the Bosnian band *Zabranjeno pušenje* (Smoking Forbidden) with its gentle mockery of Haile Selassie as a stand-in for Tito in its song “Haile Selassie”.<sup>4</sup> Finally, fourth, there were bands which sang songs critical of the communists, whether with subtle texts (such as the Slovenian group *Laibach*)<sup>5</sup> or explicitly critical texts (such as the Polish band *Manaam*, with the song “Night Patrol”)<sup>6</sup> or with completely rejectionist texts, such as the Hungarian *Coitus Punk Group*, which asked, in 1984, why nobody had hanged the “dirty rotten communist gang” yet (Ramet, 1995: 257–259; Kürti, 1994: 80–81; and Ramet, 2003: 183–185).

There were limits to what the communists would tolerate and their tools of control included censorship and bans together with the imposition of controls on the music played at discotheques and rock clubs (Lloyd-Jones, 1985; Machovec, 2017). Many communists across the region would have agreed with Kurt Hager, a member of the East German Politburo, who offered, in 1981, that “Dance music, that is rock music, should aid even more effectively in encouraging the development of good taste and clean relationships between young people” (as quoted in Leitner, 1994: 23). Where the Czechoslovak rock scene is concerned, it is somewhat paradoxical that the regime put the members of *Plastic People of the Universe* on trial in 1976, given that their texts were, with one notable exception, largely impenetrable. But, on second glance, the paradox disappears because the communists typically had no patience for anything vague, ambiguous, or impenetrable, with a partial exception for Yugoslavia’s communists, who could not agree on a common policy where the provocative *Laibach* group was concerned.

With the collapse of communism throughout the region, the limits of what is tolerable have been relaxed in most countries in the region. Rock bands have reacted in different ways – whether by abandoning politics (if they were political in the first place) or by shifting their critique to the dominant Church organization, as the Polish group *Dezerter* has done (Ramet, 2018) or, even more famously, as the Russian feminist punk rock band *Pussy Riot* achieved in 2012. Yet another response has been to embrace nationalism, for example with the staging, in June 2018, of the nationalist rock opera, “Trianon: the rock opera”, reopening old wounds from Hungary’s loss of territory after World War One (Walker, 2018: 1–4).

### 4. The first phase: from the 1950s to 1968

Although British groups were the dominant influence on Czech rockers in the early years, *Bill Haley and the Comets* were popular in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s as were Elvis Presley and Chubby Checker dancing the twist. Rock music was being

<sup>3</sup> The song may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgolaktMXbU>.

<sup>4</sup> The song may be heard in a later recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KB92rqVyk0>.

<sup>5</sup> A 1987 recording of a live performance by Laibach of “Leben heisst Leben” may be heard here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOeE\\_7iOpRM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOeE_7iOpRM).

<sup>6</sup> A 1982 recording of the song may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umXUXHdgbbw>.

performed already in the 1950s, with Prague's Reduta club serving as the most important venue at the time. It was there that, in 1956, *the Accord Band* performed its version of Haley's "Rock Around the Clock". As Czechs "caught the fever", a number of successful rock bands sprang up, including *Olympic*, a band formed in 1962 but gaining professional status only in 1966, which played easy-to-follow melodies. In the 1960s, *Olympic* was widely considered to be the Czech answer to the *Beatles* (Vítek, 2018). In spring 1962, *Komety* (the Comets) performed in Prague's Lucerna Hall, in what was the country's first major rock 'n' roll concert. The first professional rock group to emerge was *Mefisto*, launched by Petr Kaplan and Karel Svoboda in 1964. Other important bands which formed in the 1960s included: *Framus Five* (in 1963, later reconstituted as *Framus 5*); the *Matadors* (1965–68); *Flamengo* (1966); the Prague band *Donald* (until 1967); the *Primitives* (1967–69); and the art rock band *Blue Effect* (1968–90, revived 2004–16). As of 1965, there were roughly 15 professional rock groups playing in Czechoslovakia, most of them in Prague, alongside more than a thousand amateur bands (Ramet, 1994a,b: 56).

All the early Czech rock bands started by playing covers of some of their favorite songs. For example, *Olympic* started by playing *Beatles* songs but, by 1966, was performing also its own material, which was nonetheless consciously imitative of the *Beatles*' style. The *Matadors* began by playing covers of songs by *The Kinks* and *Pretty Things*. Other groups found inspiration elsewhere: *Framus Five* was inspired by the music of Ray Charles, for instance, while the progressive band *Blue Effect* (sometimes performing under the name *Modrý efekt*) was influenced by rhythm and blues and later by jazz fusion. Until the mid-1960s, rock was largely a phenomenon of Prague; but at that point, Pavek Novak established *Synkopa in Prerov*, Moravia, with two bands emerging in Brno – *Vulkan* and a *Beach Boys*-style band called *Synkopy 61*.

**The Matadors.** *The Matadors* grew out of the group *Fontana*, which in turn had roots in the *Comets*. In the late 1960s, the *Matadors* were considered one of the three best rock groups in Bohemia, alongside *Olympic* and *Flamengo*, although the *Primitives* had a loyal following attracted to that group's psychedelic arrangements, fiery explosions, and flying fish and birds (Maderová, ND).

Initially, *the Matadors* performed only in East Germany, but in April 1966, they made their Czech debut to an appreciative audience. Their style reflected the influence of some of the top British bands of that time: *The Kinks* (as already mentioned), *The Searchers*, *The Who*, *The Yardbirds*, *Pretty Things*, *The Spencer Davis Group*, and *Them* (Opekar, 2013: 328). *The Matadors* released several records during the years 1966–68, including an LP with Supraphon. In autumn 1968, some of the musicians left to join the production team of the musical "Hair" in Munich; the rest established or joined new bands, such as *Blue Effect*. One can get an impression of *the Matadors*' performance art from the following extract from their song *Perhaps I will give it to you* (*Snad jednou ti dám*):

I put my head in your arms  
Your deep-set eyes make me fall to the ground  
Your deep-set eyes make me fall before your feet  
I do not even ask if I may  
I am sorry it's just a dream  
Making my mouth sweet and my pillow enchanted  
I'd put my head in your lap if you were here  
And then I would sleep in your arms.<sup>7</sup>

**The impact of the Rolling Stones.** In 1966, the youth magazine *Mladý svět* published an article announcing "Western rock has a new sensation: *The Rolling Stones*. What happens during their performances goes beyond all the rioting we read about in relation to the *Beatles* ..." (quoted in Blüml, 2105: 259). In spite of that rave, *the Rolling Stones* failed to make the Czechoslovak chart of top hits *Houpačka* in 1965–1966, even though their song "(I can't get no) satisfaction" was making the charts in Britain and the USA. Nor did the *Stones* fare any better with Czechs with their songs "Lady Jane" and "Paint it Black". Music journalist Jiří Černý speculated that "Although *the Rolling Stones* have given it their own form, it is essentially still black music with those detuned guitars, wailing mouth-organs and screaming as singing, closer to the spoken word" (quoted in Blüml, 2015: 261).

But gradually the *Stones*' style found enthusiasts. In particular, the Prague band *Donald* replicated the musical style and the on-stage body-language and gestures of the *Stones*. Curiously, *Donald*'s lead singer, Pavel Černocký, confessed at one point that he would prance about on stage and gesticulate according to how the music moved him, i.e., without having seen how Mick Jagger and the *Stones* performed. Later, when Černocký finally had a chance to see clips of the *Stones*, he saw that Jagger's movements were the same as his own movements had been! (Blüml, 2015: 263). What Czechs understood – perhaps immediately – was that *Rolling Stones* rock represented a clear alternative to the norms of the communist cultural bosses. Not surprisingly, in the 1970s, the *Stones* were elevated to cult status among Czechoslovakia's younger generation.

<sup>7</sup> The song may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq2uZT8z060>.

## 5. The second phase: “normalization”— part one, 1968–1979

The late 1960s marked a turning point in Czech rock with the launch of three groups: *The Primitives*, *Plastic People of the Universe*, and *Progres 2*. *The Primitives*, a psychedelic band based in Prague, began performing in 1967, playing covers of songs by *the Doors*, *the Fugs*, *Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention*, *the Grateful Dead*, *the Animals*, *Pretty Things*, and *Velvet Underground* (Mitchell, 1992: 196). When the *Primitives* broke up in 1969, its members joined the *Plastic People of the Universe*, which had been founded in Prague the previous year and which inherited the *Primitives*' mantle as the vanguard of the spirit of Czech underground culture. Influenced, as the *Primitives* had been, by *Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention* and the *Velvet Underground*, among others, the *Plastic People* have always been stridently nonconformist, performing music which must have left straight-laced communist authorities scratching their heads. Finally, 1968 saw the founding of the third aforementioned rock group — Brno's *Progres 2* which, in 1978, staged a rock opera inspired by the music of the British group *Pink Floyd*. *Progres 2* ran into trouble with the authorities in 1980, when the group wanted to include a song “Planeta Hieronyma Bosche” (The Planet of Hieronymus Bosch) on its album *Dialog s vesmírem*. The problem was that the song dealt with heroin use. The censors advised the group that the text to the song was unacceptable. So the band recorded the song leaving out some of the consonants!<sup>8</sup>

In the years that followed the Soviet bloc invasion in August 1968, the authorities let would-be rockers know that soft pop was good, hard rock was bad, and by “pop”, the authorities meant, in the first place, that the song texts should be free of politics and, in the second place, that the music should flow along gentle melodic lines (Prokop, 2018). The authorities also banned singing in English; Czechs should sing in the Czech language! Above all, the music should be *healthy*, as defined by the communists, and people should be trained to appreciate “healthy” music. A document issued at the end of the fifteenth Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1976, put it this way:

We have to focus on music education of people in order to cultivate their music taste in a proper way. It means to restrict the life-destroying effects of some types of current popular music genres [rock, folk, country, etc.] that are unhealthy for the young generation especially due to the unacceptable excessive levels of noise. This threatening danger is now confirmed by medical research. We know that the aforementioned level of noise causes permanent damage of the auditory system and that it has neurotic consequences for the youth (quoted in Husák, 2017: 314).

Among the remedies suggested by the members of the party's Central Committee were “de-commercialization ... and a return to professional and ideologically pure standards” (Husák, 2017: 314).

In the harsh political climate associated with the General Secretaryship of Gustáv Husák (Ulč, 1979: 201–213), new groups continued to emerge, including: the underground Prague band *DG 307*, which was influenced by psychedelic currents; the hard rock band *Katapult*, founded in Plzeň (Pilsen) in 1974; the hard rock band *Citron* (Lemon), founded in Ostrava in 1976, later switching to heavy metal; and *Pražský výběr*, a Prague-based band founded by keyboardist Michael Kocáb in 1976, that has evolved from classic rock to jazz rock to new wave, emerging as a powerful voice for the anti-establishment movement. When he first assembled his band, Kocáb did not have a name for it. A friendly saxophonist suggested naming the band after a local cheap wine — *Prague Selection*, or *Pražský výběr*. Kocáb thought this was a hilarious solution and the band has been known, ever since, as *Pražský výběr* (Kocáb, 2018). The band brought out its first album, *Žízen* (Thirst), in 1978; four years later, the band recorded its aforementioned album, *Straka v hrsti*. *Pražský výběr* is discussed at greater length in the section devoted to the years 1979–1989.

One of the last groups formed in the 1970s was *Psí vojáci* (Dog Soldiers), established by singer and keyboardist Filip Topol in Prague. Influenced by classical music and punk, the band made its debut at the IX Prague Jazz Days in 1979. Topol, the oldest member of the band, was just 14 years old at the time; the rest were 13. The authorities took notice of the *Psí vojáci* and banned them from performing in public again. Until 1989, the *Psí vojáci* performed only at private venues, such as Václav Havel's farmhouse in Hrádeček. The group's best-known song is “Žiletky” (Razors), which includes the following mystifying lines:

When the moon is in Utah  
we grab our heads  
embedded in lead  
we fall on our mouths in tiredness  
Feelings like razors  
razors of my bullet girl  
and now on a lonely day

<sup>8</sup> For the original version of this song, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efX4TJH-JSQ>. The band later rerecorded the song with the consonants as well as the vowels. For this version, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KOpQapTuao>.



lonely nipples ...<sup>9</sup>

**Plastic People of the Universe.** Founded by bass player Milan “Mejla” Hlavsa in 1968, less than a month after the Soviet bloc invasion of Czechoslovakia, the *Plastic People of the Universe* took their name from a song entitled “Plastic People”, which had been included on the album *Absolutely Free*, brought out by Frank Zappa’s *Mothers of Invention* in 1967. The influence of Zappa’s band, but also the American band *Velvet Underground*, is clear (Mitchell, 1992: 196–197). In spite of their musical non-conformism, the *Plastics* were initially granted a license to perform. But in 1970, the communist regime revoked the *Plastics*’ license, claiming that their music was having a “negative social effect” (quoted in Hunt, 2007). The band continued to play at underground (illegal) venues and for private occasions, such as wedding parties, often playing covers on rock songs they loved. As they continued to perform, their reputation grew.

In 1973, band member Vratislav Brabenec returned from an overseas stay. Brabenec wanted the group to stick to performing original material and to sing in Czech (Vulliamy, 2009: 3 of 8). Among the *Plastics*’ early songs in Czech is their Zappaesque song “*Podivuhodný Mandarin*” (The Wonderful Mandarin), which they performed while attired in Roman-style togas.<sup>10</sup> One can only imagine the mixture of confusion and consternation gripping the communist censors upon hearing the lyrics to this song:

You will spread your legs your whole life  
so that a Wonderful Mandarin may enter in-between  
You will stitch your clothes from vanity and guilt  
You will search for the Wonderful Mandarin  
And in your head a rush of blood, in your eyes shadow of the night  
You will only wish for the Wonderful Mandarin to come  
You’ll want to breathe in some gas  
Because it wasn’t the Wonderful Mandarin again this time  
When you get all tired in your forties, you’ll be all broken  
And you’ll find out that life is just God’s will.<sup>11</sup>

Then, in 1974, Ivan Jirous, at that time the band’s manager, organized what he called the First Music Festival of the Second Culture – and, by “Second”, he meant as opposed to the regime’s totalitarian culture. The event drew hundreds of young people, in spite of their awareness that the regime was hostile to the idea of an alternative culture. Two years later, in March 1976, Jirous and the band tried to hold a Second Music Festival of the Second Culture, but this time the authorities were ready: police swooped in and arrested 27 musicians, mostly members of the *Plastic People of the Universe*. Four defendants were put on trial in September for “vulgar lyrics” and “organized disturbance of the peace”; all four were found guilty and received prison sentences ranging from eight to 18 months in length (Spysz, ND; Yanosik, 1996: 4 of 8). The trial became an international sensation and immediately rocketed the band to worldwide fame.

The authorities had been watching the band closely and, among the songs which the regime considered problematic, was one which included the following lines:

What do you resemble in your greatness?  
Are you the Truth?  
Are you God?  
What do you resemble in your greatness?  
A piece of shit, a piece of shit,  
a piece of shit ... (quoted in Škvorecký, 1984: 12 of 19).

As much as the *Plastics* protested that they were not singing political songs, it is clear that they were construing the word “political” in a narrow sense. In the broader sense of “political”, as the communists understood it, this song was clearly political.

Playwright Václav Havel (later serving as president of Czechoslovakia, 1989–92, and as first president of the Czech Republic, 1993–2003) was outraged by the trial and, together with a small group of fellow intellectuals, put together a protest

<sup>9</sup> The lyrics accompany the song at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZ5nfVwIVXs>.

<sup>10</sup> The song may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXUIAqGFYNw>.

<sup>11</sup> English translation of “*Podivuhodný Mandarin*”, at <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/podivuhodn%C3%BD-mandarin-wonderful-mandarin.html> [accessed on 31 July 2018]. We have made a few grammatical and spelling corrections to the translation.

movement called Charter 77 which, over the following decades, issued periodic bulletins addressing not only cultural freedom but also religious freedom, the right to unobstructed historical research, and other subjects (Ramet, 1995: 123–127). The band's first album, *Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned*, was released in London without the Plastics' foreknowledge. Derived from tapes recorded in 1973 and 1974, the collection consisted entirely of songs written by poet Egon Bondy.<sup>12</sup> A second album, *Passion Play*, consisted of music composed by saxophonist Vratislav Brabenec and was released in 1980 in Canada (Mitchell, 1992: 198).

The *Plastic People* broke up in 1988; some of the band's members now formed a new group, *Půlnoc* (Midnight) which, nonetheless, never attained the cult status of the Plastics. In 1997, at the urging of President Havel, the *Plastic People of the Universe* reunited and have been performing across the globe since then. Curiously, the post-communist Czech authorities did not revoke the band's criminal charges from 1976 until 2003! (Vulliamy, 2009: 2 of 8).

**The punk scene.** Punk rock in Czechoslovakia can be traced back to the 1970s. The earliest punk bands, based in Prague, were *Extempore* (1974–81), *Zikkurat* (1978–82), *Antitma 16* (1978–79), and *Energie G* (1979–81). In the late 1970s, there was only one punk band outside Prague – a band called *Hlavy 2000*, based in the Moravian town of Havířov (Fuchs, 2002: 4–5 of 30). At the dawn of the 1980s, punk bands such as *Jasná Paka* (Patent) and *Letadlo* (Airplane) could hold a number of concerts in Prague. But by 1983, the regime's line had hardened. This was signaled, among other ways, by an aggressive article signed by Jan Krýzl (a pseudonym), appearing in *Tribuna* in March 1983. Rock and punk, according to the *Tribuna* article, promoted

passivity and a retreat from reality into a dream world .... Be indifferent to the life around you, do not go with anyone and be against anything! Nothing has any meaning! This should become the creed of the young generation. The enforcement of this creed was, and is, to be aided by the so-called punk rock, crazy rock, or repugnant [previt] rock .... The aim is more than obvious – to ... instill in young people's minds the philosophy of 'no future' and attitudes, conduct, and views that are alien to socialism (*Tribuna*, 1983).

This line of musicians playing punk music as the "new wave" represented essentially the third generation of artists who in their music, their lifestyle, and in their visage positioned themselves against both previous generations of Czechoslovak rock musicians and political establishment of the country, according to Miroslav Vaněk (2010: 276–279). Hence, they dismissed rock music as being "too soft, not in line with the changing times, and often being too far from real life," while the communist political elites of Czechoslovakia were essentially "unable to understand young generations of Czechoslovaks who felt estranged, misunderstood, and repressed in an increasingly complex world" (Vaněk, 2010: 276–279). It is important to mention that, at that time, the punk scene was not but a mere copy of its Western counterpart, but that it managed to increasingly acquire local contours and shades by basing its music on chiefly three different musical sources: Czechoslovak folk, the then active underground scene, and the alternative scene that had developed in the 1970s (Opekar and Vlček, 1989: 24–28). This approach made punk music appealing to young, predominantly urban, generations that easily related to the highly sarcastic, yet often very simple, punk lyrics dissing communist politics in songs followed by peculiar and rebellious performances and visual effects (Vaněk, 2010: 284–290). Czechoslovak communist authorities targeted punk groups and bands by leading attacks against them, putting pressure on band members using various psychological and at times physical means, and confining them to often illegal and make-do clubs where these bands were allowed to perform (Vítek, 2018; Váně, 2018). Additionally, state authorities were at any time free to ban those bands that they considered unfit: fear of the authorities induced some punk bands, very much like their rock counterparts, to withdraw "deeper underground" (Vítek, 2018), as Jamiroquai put it in his popular song with that title, and effectively made the bands' maneuvering space extremely limited.

In his recent book on youth subcultures, Josef Smolík has argued that it was the young urban population, in most cases students studying vocational schools and young uneducated workers often abusing large amounts of alcohol, who were the most frequent visitors to punk concerts (Smolík, 2017: 179). Hence, Czechoslovak punk was, very much like its Western counterpart, essentially an urban affair and remained such throughout the 1980s, but at the same time it was an underground affair that was gradually losing both its importance and its appeal with an already limited young urban audience (Vaněk, 2010: 294–296). While being remaining popular with the aforementioned small audiences in several major urban hubs, punk remained on margins of the music scene, being essentially underground rather than mainstream at any point of its existence, and it was only after 1989 and the Velvet Revolution that some punk bands tried to move from their original nihilism and absurdity in both texts and appearance and tried to become more mainstream (Smolík, 2017: 182–183). In that regard, Smolík has claimed that punk bands in the 1990s started appearing in media much more often, even published books and held numerous concerts, often featuring foreign bands and coopting foreign influences (Smolík, 2017: 182). However, punk has been marginalized on the music scene in the now independent Czech state, and, though it partially penetrated the world of fashion, for instance, and left its specific mark there, it has never managed to attract wider audiences (Smolík, 2017: 182). Hence, it has remained restricted to its own 'Punk's Not Dead' subculture that pretty much lives its own existence with a festival *Pod Parou* which has been held in the Czech Republic since 2003, having replaced the Antifest that existed till 2007 (Smolík, 2017: 179–181).

<sup>12</sup> Reissued on CD by Kissing Spell KSCD 803.

## 6. The second phase: “normalization” – part two, 1980–1989

This phase in the development of Czech rock was characterized by mounting bans introduced by the communist authorities against numerous bands with politically charged lyrics (or those thought to be such) which Víték has described as being “the coldest, hardest normalization,” where foreign influences were extremely restricted and limited to surrounding communist countries (Víték, 2018). Additionally, the music scene started to transform, in the words of journalist Vojtěch Lindaur, into very much an “intuitive” one, reflecting mainly genuine domestic influences and developments rather than any foreign ones (quoted in Hrabalik, NDa). This metamorphosis is quite understandable, given the fact that the regime’s repression of bands seen as unfit to perform (due to being supposedly anti-socialist) hardened at the beginning of the 1980s and lasted right up to the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Petr Hrabalik writes that bands with new and often short and provocative names (such as *Katapult*, *Orient*, *Benefit*, *Pražský výběr*, *Letadlo*, *Jasná Páka*, and *Garáž*) appeared on the music scene, ushering new style of sound delivered in short, yet quite sarcastic and often very critical and socially-engaged, lyrics (Hrabalik, NDa). In response, the communist authorities maintained constant surveillance of the music scene that was, in their eyes, swarming with anti-socialist elements (Hrabalik, NDa).

The most influential, and often dubbed the most popular and gifted, band of this particular era was definitely *Pražský výběr* (Pražský výběr (2018)). Led by the now-legendary Michael Kocáb, who, in the 1990s, headed a state parliamentary commission to ensure the departure of Soviet troops who were often reluctant to leave, as he described them in his book (Kocáb, 2009: 50–68; Kocáb, 2018), the band embodied anti-communist protest and has to this day remained one of the symbols of resistance to the communist repression against Czechoslovak musicians.

**Pražský výběr.** Although the band started off its career in 1976 by playing mostly jazz rock, which was at that particular time quite popular on the respective scene, it was in the early 1980s that the band hit its stride by successfully finding its way into the “new wave” (Pražský výběr, 2018). This rebellious and at times seemingly aggressive, band with very colorful performance styles in both dress and music quickly made an enemy of the communist regime that already in 1982/1983 targeted it and introduced a ban lasting for 5 years (Kocáb, 2018). A group of authors using the aforementioned pseudonym of Jan Krýzl, as the unofficial “spokesperson” for the communist elite, frequently criticized the rock scene in the press, including most notably in *Tribuna* magazine, expressing deep dissatisfaction with the supposedly anti-socialist agenda of the “new wave” (Krýzl, 1983; Hrabalik, 2018). Hence, an article entitled “New Wave but Old Content” (*Tribuna* 12/1983) dismissed *Pražský výběr*’s music as nothing more than “primitive texts associated with primitive music, disgusting dress, provocative behavior, obscene gestures, rejection of all things normal,” essentially introducing a “propaganda of alcoholism and drugs, vulgarized relations between girls and boys” (Krýzl, 1983). Additionally, one of the band’s performances in Hradec Králové, a town in the north of the country, was characterized as illegal by the communists because the band had supposedly “played more concerts than allowed,” even “selling its posters for financial gain” (Hudema, 2009). The band’s promising album *Crow in the Hand*, instead of being released in 1982, was banned and released only in 1988, having survived in the intervening years by means of secret recordings illegally distributed (Kocáb, 2018; ABYSSTV, 2012). The band’s successful venture into the “new wave” was thus in many ways hindered, its members had to work on recordings not associated with their name, and their activity in the music scene was interrupted until 1986–1987 (Kocáb, 2018). The full strength of Kocáb’s rebellious and dissident attitude, which remained undefeated by the years-long communist ban of his band, was reflected in the singer’s courageous stand at a popular music festival *Děčínská kotva* in 1988 when he declared that “every nation has the government it rightfully deserves” (Kocáb, 2018).<sup>13</sup> A song that beautifully reflects the band’s peculiar and highly appraised music style, as well as the band’s criticism of communist politics, is, among others, “Pražákům, těm je hej” (“Praguers have it all right”):

Praguers have it all right,  
They never get lost,  
Alone with a backpack  
I’m looking for my uncle Carl.  
Praguers have it all right  
They never get lost,  
Praguers have it all right,  
They never got lost  
Praguers have it all right,  
They won’t see me around here anymore.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See and hear the original recording of this particular moment at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxCbANd9Mbc> [last accessed on 30 January 2019].

<sup>14</sup> The song may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAzETRKtaeE> [accessed on 16 August 2018].



Having survived the communist ban, the band split as a result of disputes between its leading members; the result was an interruption in the band's career lasting for several years. But despite some of its members having left it in the meantime, *Pražský výběr* has remained to this very day one of the most prominent Czech rock bands. This claim is very much supported by the fact that, upon their last visit to the Czech Republic in July 2018, The *Rolling Stones* had the band perform as guests of honor at their immensely successful Prague concert. This performance was characterized by Kocáb as being “the greatest honor and the very top of the band's music career” (Špulák, 2018). Kocáb's friendship with then president Václav Havel, his politically engaged career in which he served in the government, and the band members' incessant pursuit in creative terms have made the band into one of the most recognizable on the Czech music scene.

**Katapult.** *Pražský výběr* was not alone in producing politically and socially engaged music in the 1980s. Another band prominent in the 1980s was the mainstream band *Katapult*, for instance. Starting back in 1974 and playing music that may be characterized as transitioning between rock, hard rock, and pop, the band's popularity grew considerably in the 1980s (Gratias, 2018). The band's anti-regime stance, chiefly reflected in the attitude of its lead singer, Oldřich Říha, who was not afraid of occasionally speaking out against the regime at the band's concerts, resulted in the band experiencing several communist bans and facing prosecution (Tauer, 2010; Katapult, ND). The behavior of the band's fans at concerts, behavior which the communists considered improper, only contributed to the regime's hostility toward *Katapult* (Katapult 2019). Říha adamantly refused to sing songs pleasing to the communist authorities and refused to be used by them, which resulted in the band retreating to small venues, such as private parties, in order to, very much like many other banned musicians at that time, record their music privately, so that it might be distributed illegally at various music venues (Katapult, 2019).

Unlike politically engaged music, one part of the scene was occupied by bands whose creative output rarely, if at all, collided with the communist ideals. For instance, *Elan*, originating from Bratislava, with its catchy tunes, impressive stage performance, and effective lyrics, was easily the most successful Slovak band with Czechs. *Elan* was immensely successful in commercial terms playing at the biggest venues both in communist Czechoslovakia and in the Czech Republic and Slovakia after 1993, but refused any sort of political engagement (Vítek, 2018). This band managed to secure a successful transition after the Velvet Revolution and has continued to be quite well-received even to this very day (Vítek, 2018). The once legendary band *Olympic*, enormously popular in the 1970s, is still popular today. Hrabalik, for that matter, has characterized the band's members as “rock dinosaurs” due to their huge popularity (Hrabalik, NDb). The band's relationship to the former communist regime, however, still remains a matter of considerable debate. In that respect, the band has often been criticized for having played on a few occasions at communist-organized festivals in mid-1970s, whereby the strictly apolitical nature of *Olympic* music and the band's acceptance of the politics of “normalization” under Gustáv Husák continue to be criticized (Když skupina, 2014).

## 7. The third phase: “return to Europe,” or “capitalism rules”

It is essential to keep in mind that in this particular phase mainstream rock, in the now independent states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, lost its ideological foe with the fall of communism and remains largely politically disengaged to this day (Vítek, 2018; and Váně, 2018). Pavel Váně, whose bands *Synkopy 61* and *Progres 2* were quite successful back in the day, has claimed that the post-1989 period has introduced a void in quality rock in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where artists have found very little against which to rebel (Váně, 2018). Vítek has also supported this claim by stating that the relatively well-off, or at least starting to be well-off, Czech society since the 1990s has been without any social, political, or economic blocs exerting negative influence on musicians and artists in general (Vítek, 2018).

Interestingly so, it is quite the opposite with punk, which, in terms of politically charged lyrics, has been able to “come out in the open” since the 1990s, thus remaining politically charged. This does not mean that all punk bands have been politically engaged, but a considerable number of these have been somewhat politically charged in the post-1989 era, particularly in bashing capitalism as their greatest main enemy (Vítek, 2018). Thus, while rock in many ways has embraced (capitalist) freedom (in entrepreneurship), punk has remained on the fringe (in influence) in terms of their music and texts.

Two noteworthy “fringe” bands, offering new styles, should be mentioned here: *XIII. Století*, a gothic band, formed in Jihlava in 1989, which has gained its greatest following in Poland and Russia, rather than in the Czech Republic<sup>15</sup>; and a band called *Pipes and Pints*, combining punk and rock elements with bagpipes and being led by, interestingly enough, an American singer singing songs in English rather than in Czech (Vítek, 2018). The latter band has been partly politically engaged particularly against, in their own words, rising xenophobia and racism in the Czech Republic and abroad (Michal, 2010). Both represent interesting, yet not that commercially successful, examples of new trends and styles emerging in the post-communist era (Vítek, 2018).

Last but not least, it is worth noting that the bands *Wanastowi Wjacy* (created in 1988 as a studio project in Prague) and *Čechomor* (playing Czech traditional music in rock arrangements) have been quite successful in commercial terms (Vítek, 2018). While the former has played music based mostly on different elements of punk combined with generally mainstream pop-rock motives (Vítek, 2018), the latter has been characterized as a band “playing in the original spirit of Czech, Moravian and Slovak folk songs” (Čechomor, ND) yet also very much reflecting the spirit of the post-1989 period, very much

<sup>15</sup> The band's song, «Transylvanian Werewolf» may be heard here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BW7t0M\\_FQ6A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BW7t0M_FQ6A).

politically charged and quite a popular band with a substantial following and well-represented in both TV/radio and at music festivals (Vítek, 2018; Gratias, 2018).

Additionally, it is important to note that the Czech rock scene after 1989 started functioning in similar ways as in the West, with the Velvet Revolution signaling an embrace of capitalism: thus, instead of one agency used for promoting concerts as in the socialist era, (Pragokonzert), a myriad of privately-owned ones quickly appeared, thus giving musicians an opportunity to choose with whom to work (Vítek, 2018; Gratias, 2018). This particular point seemed to have influenced the rise of those bands and musicians that had remained either in the underground in communist times, or had been (heavily) marginalized or less popular at that time, or simply had their music banned, as was the situation with many metal bands. For instance, *Citron*, a partially underground metal band, which was heavily influenced by *Iron Maiden*, *Judas Priest*, and *Accept*, was able to come out in the open in the 1990s, in the process becoming quite commercially successful and popular (Pařízek, 2018). There was relatively little politics behind *Citron*'s music or texts, which focused mostly on everyday life issues (Pařízek, 2018). Truth be told, this band had been banned in the 1980s in certain parts of the country when the band's song "Garden party" and its album, *The Tropic of Cancer*, encountered official disapproval (Pařízek, 2018). Radim Pařízek, years-long leader and drummer of this band, claims that the band in the 1980s saw its fair share of bans, never faced jail time, and managed to survive and be quite commercially successful, having recently celebrated over 40 years of its existence (Pařízek, 2018).

Among the best known Czech mainstream rock bands, the aforementioned *Katapult* has remained quite popular after the Velvet Revolution by playing music with elements of both hard rock and much softer sounds, including pop-rock (Gratias, 2018). The band is said to have been playing mostly larger venues ever since and has to this day remained commercially very successful (Gratias, 2018). Another mainstream band, *Kabát*, formed in Teplice in 1983, sings apolitical songs mostly about sex, drugs, and the rock lifestyle rather than anything else (Vítek, 2018). Petr Gratias, a well-known Czech music journalist and writer, says that *Kabát* represents a typical 1990s product of the Czech rock scene, with music made for the masses, with little to no intellectual content, but with music delivered in a very appealing way. He further characterizes this band as a "typical stadium rock band," with considerable musical talent, being quite influential in the music scene, and with having a major following (Gratias, 2018). Last but not least, a mainstream band called *Lucie*, that started off in the late 1980s by being a cover band for the at that time well known singer Michal Pink, is currently one of the most commercially popular Czech bands still performing, with their musical style combining elements of hard rock, pop-rock, and even partly alternative rock (Gratias, 2018). In 2008, Radio Prague referred to *Lucie* as "one of the definitive Czech bands of the '90s" (Velinger, 2008). In 2002, the band took a creative break but staged a comeback concert in August 2018 (Fraňková, 2018).

## 8. Conclusion

In many ways, the Czechoslovak rock scene in the communist era was typical of the rock experience throughout Europe's communist world. As in other communist countries, Czechoslovakia's younger generation in the 1950s and early 1960s tuned in to the music broadcasts of Radio Luxemburg and then did their best to replicate the songs they had heard, sometimes producing confused and mangled approximations of the English lyrics. Like their fellow rockers elsewhere in communist Eastern Europe, they were inspired initially by *the Beatles*, *the Rolling Stones*, *Chubby Checker*, and *Bill Haley and the Comets*. Later, they were also influenced by *The Who*, *The Doors*, *Led Zeppelin*, *Jethro Tull*, and others. Like rock musicians elsewhere in the communist world, the Czech rock musicians initially took it as a given that English was the language of rock and, thus, even when they started to write their own songs, they automatically chose to write in English. Like fellow rock musicians elsewhere in communist Europe, they encountered obstruction from the authorities, bans of concerts and albums, and criticism from unsympathetic commentators in the national press. And like their fellow rock musicians elsewhere, they had to obtain licenses from the authorities and were expected to respect a conservative dress code as per the Soviet groups *Veselye rebyata* (Jolly Guys) and *Samotsvety*, and desist from singing depressing or pessimistic songs (Ryback, 1990; Ramet, 1994a,b; and Ramet et al., 1994).

Like their rock counterparts, the rockers of Czechoslovakia eventually switched to writing their songs in the local language. Like rockers in other communist countries, some of them took on the mantle of the country's conscience, singing songs that at least hinted at people's concerns and complaints, if not addressing them directly. And, as elsewhere, there were Czech rock musicians who so upset the authorities that they were put on trial and sent to prison, as happened also elsewhere in the region (Ramet, 1985, 1994; Troitsky, 1988; Ryback, 1990; Maas and Reszel, 1998; Steinhalt, 2003; Zhuk, 2010).

There were both musical and political factors producing a characteristic syndrome in communist Eastern Europe. In political terms, the restrictions imposed by the regimes, even at times in socialist Yugoslavia, both induced some groups to tread carefully while provoking other groups to adopt defiant postures, singing songs sometimes explicitly opposed to the regime (as in the case of Hungary's *Coitus Punk Group*, which called for the communists to be hanged (Ramet, 1995: 259)), at other times subtly insinuating a critique of the communists without being explicit that their barbs were directed against the communists (as per Slovenia's industrial band *Laibach* (Ramet, 2003: 183–185), or simply irritating the communists with lyrics they could not understand (as with the Czech band *Plastic People of the Universe*). Rockers in the Czech Republic, like

those in Poland and elsewhere, remember the 1980s as their heroic age, when some of them found the courage to defy the communists.

Since the collapse of communism, rock performers have found new paths. The unauthorized *Pussy Riot* concert in Moscow in 2012 is still remembered and usually regarded as a conscious affront to both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Putin regime.<sup>16</sup> In Poland, after years of mocking the communist authorities, the punk group *Dezerter*, as noted above, has taken to singing anti-clerical songs (Ramet, 2018). In Croatia, Marko Perković “Thompson” sings for a radical right audience.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere in the region, one can find Christian bands, such as Dariusz “Maleo” Malejonek’s *2Tm2,3*<sup>18</sup> in Poland, trying to spread the Gospel, pop-satanic bands trying to undermine the authority of the Church, such as the Polish band *Behemoth*<sup>19</sup> (Ramet, 2018), bands bringing folk melodies into the rock, and, of course, also bands offering a purely escapist fare.

Today, Czech rockers are no longer part of a regional communist syndrome but are part of the global rock scene, with its centers in the USA and Western Europe. Among the currents of rock which one may find in the Czech Republic today are mainstream (or hard) rock, alternative rock, art rock, folk rock, heavy metal, indie, punk, post-punk, progressive rock, and psychedelic rock. In other musical genres, rap and hip hop can also be found in the Czech Republic today. What cannot be found is a strong articulation of anti-regime lyrics or oppositionist posturing or, for that matter, panegyric rock toadying to the authorities.

## Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to the Department of Sociology and Political Science of the Norwegian University of Science & Technology (NTNU) for a grant permitting the authors to conduct on-site interviews in Prague during the period 6–13 May 2018.

## References

- ABYSS TV webpage. (2012), at <http://retro.abyssszine.com/recenze/2012040021-prazsky-vyber-straka-v-hrsti/> Accessed on 14 August 2018.
- Blüml, J., 2015. Reception of the Rolling Stones in Communist Czechoslovakia. *Rock Music Studies* 2 (3), 257–279.
- Cechomor webpage ND, at <http://www.cechomor.cz/en/> Last accessed on 30 January 2019.
- Cushman, T., 1995. *Notes from the Underground: Rock music and counterculture in Russia*. SUNY Press, Albany.
- Fraňková, R., 2018. Popular Czech Band Lucie Makes a Comeback. *Radio Prague* (26 August). <https://www.radio.cz/en/section/sunday-music-show/popular-czech-band-lucie-makes-a-comeback>. Accessed on 4 September 2018.
- Fuchs, F., 2002. The History of Czechoslovak Punk. <https://diyconspiracy.net/the-history-of-czechoslovakian-punk/>. Accessed on 15 May 2018.
- Hrabalik, P., 2018. Nová vlna se starým obsahem. <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/vyhledavani/nova%20vlna/clanky/188-nova-vlna-se-starym-obsahem/>. Accessed on 14 August 2018.
- Hrabalik, P. NDa. Česká nová vlna začátku 80. let, at <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/ceskoslovensko/punk-hardcore/clanky/160-ceska-nova-vlna-zacatku-80-let/> Accessed on 9 August 2018.
- Hrabalik, P. NDb. Olympic, at <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/kapely/2694-olympic/> Accessed on 31 August 2018.
- Hudema, M., 2009. Michael Kocáb: Muž mezi hudbou a politikou. Prosadil zvolení Václava Havla a řídil odsun sovětských vojsk. *Reflex*, 29 January, at <https://www.reflex.cz/clanek/causy/73648/michael-kocab-muz-mezi-hudbou-a-politikou-prosadil-zvoleni-vaclava-havla-a-ridil-odsun-sovetskykh-vojsk.html>. Accessed on 30 January 2019.
- Hunt, K., 2007. Egon Bondy: Dissident Czech writer and lyricist for Plastic People of the Universe. *The Guardian* (20 April), at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/apr/20/guardianobituaries.obituaries>. Accessed on 18 April 2018.
- Husák, M., 2017. Rock Music Censorship in Czechoslovakia between 1969 and 1989. *Popular Music Soc.* 40 (Issue 3), 310–329.
- Katapult, 2019. Jak šly roky. *Katapult.cz*. <http://www.katapult.cz/jak-sly-roky>. Accessed on 30 January 2019.
- Katapult ND. Bigbit, at <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/kapely/2697-katapult> Accessed on 30 January 2019.
- Když skupina, 2014. Olympic hrála normalizačním komunistům, poslechněte si. *Reflex* (21 January), at <https://www.reflex.cz/clanek/kultura/54068/kdyz-skupina-olympic-hrala-normalizacnim-komunistum-poslechnete-si.html>. Accessed on 31 August 2018.
- Kocáb, M., 2009. *Když nebyl čas na hraní*, 1. vyd. Daranus, Řitka.
- Krýzl, J., 1983. Nová vlna se starým obsahem, as quoted at ABYSS TV webpage (2012). <http://retro.abyssszine.com/recenze/2012040021-prazsky-vyber-straka-v-hrsti/>. Accessed on 14 August 2018.
- Kürti, L., 1994. “How Can I Be a Human Being?” Culture, youth, and musical opposition in Hungary. In: Ramet, S.P. (Ed.), *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Westview Press, Boulder, pp. 73–102.
- Leitner, O., 1983. *Rockszena DDR. Aspekte einer Massenkultur im Sozialismus*. Rowohlt Verlag, Hamburg.
- Leitner, O., 1994. Rock Music in the GDR: An epitaph. In: Ramet, S.P. (Ed.), *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Westview Press, Boulder, pp. 17–40.
- Lloyd-Jones, A., 1985. The Nature of Official Documents Concerning Control of Vocal/Instrumental Groups and Discotheques. *trans Survey* 29, 172–179. No. 2 (Summer).
- Maas, G., Reszel, H., 1998. Whatever Happened to...: The decline and renaissance of rock in the former GDR. *Popular Music* 17 (3), 267–277. October.
- Machovec, M., 2017. *Views from Inside: Czech underground literature and culture (1948–1989)*. Karolinum Press, Prague.
- Maderová, B. (ND). Rock Music in Czech Lands from the 1960s till 2013. *Rock Music in Czech*, at <https://www.zubynehty.cz/rock-music-in-czech/> Accessed on 28 July 2018.
- Michal, O., 2010. Pipes And Pints – Říkáme lidem, že být nácek je špatný. *Musicserver.cz* (17 February). <http://musicserver.cz/clanek/28936/pipes-and-pints-rikame-lidem-ze-byt-nacek-je-spatny/>. Accessed on 31 August 2018.
- Mitchell, T., 1992. Mixing Pop and Politics: Rock Music in Czechoslovakia before and after the Velvet Revolution. *Popular Music* 11 (2), 187–203. May.

<sup>16</sup> See the video of Pussy Riot’s attempted gig at the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow in 2012 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grEBLskpDWQ>. See the video of Pussy Riot’s provocation on Red Square in 2012 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xpC-Rd1TH4>.

<sup>17</sup> See Thompson’s militaristic video from 1991 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnatpcrTYdw>.

<sup>18</sup> See the group’s setting of Psalm 51 to music at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vva2K0tTfPM>.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Behemoth’s video “Blow Your Trumpets Gabriel”, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Czx-OlyrQwQ>.

- Opekar, A., 2013. The Matadors: A difficult approach to songwriting for a Czech rock group of the 1960s. In: *Situating popular musics: IASPM 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference Proceedings*. C:/Users/ramet/Downloads/53-229-1-PB%20(5).pdf. (Accessed 30 January 2019).
- Opekar, A., Vlček, J., 1989. *Exentricki v přízemí*, 1. vyd. Impuls, Prague.
- Pražský výběr, 2018. at <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/kapely/1176-prazsky-vyber/> Accessed on 9 August 2018.
- Ramet, P., 1985. Rock Counterculture in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. *Survey* 29 (2), 149–171 (Summer).
- Ramet, P., 1988. The Rock Scene in Yugoslavia. *East Eur. Pol. Soc.* 2 (2), 396–410 (Spring).
- Ramet, S.P. (Ed.), 1994a. *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Westview Press, Boulder.
- Ramet, S.P., 1994b. Rock Music in Czechoslovakia. In: Ramet, S.P. (Ed.), *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Westview Press, Boulder, pp. 41–53.
- Ramet, S.P., 1995. *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation*, second ed. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Ramet, S.P., 2003. Shake, Rattle, and Self-Management: Rock music and politics in Socialist Yugoslavia, and after. In: Ramet, S.P., Crnković, G.P. (Eds.), *Kazaaam! Splat! Plouf! The American impact on European popular culture since 1945*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md, pp. 173–197.
- Ramet, S.P., 2018. Muzyka rockowa a polityka w Polsce: poetyka protest i oporu w tekstach utworów rockowych. *Civitas Hominibus* 13, 109–139.
- Ramet, S.P., Zamascikov, S., Bird, R., 1994. The Soviet Rock Scene. In: Ramet, S.P. (Ed.), *Rocking the State: Rock music and politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*. Westview Press, Boulder, pp. 181–218.
- Ryback, T.W., 1990. *Rock Around the Bloc: A history of rock music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, 1954–1988*. Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York.
- Sheridan, F., 2011. Political and Social Implications of Changes in Rock Music in Prague since the Late 1960's. Master's Thesis. International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague. [http://C:/Users/ramet/Downloads/DPTX\\_2009\\_2\\_11230\\_JDIP01\\_18685\\_0\\_89052%20\(2\).pdf](http://C:/Users/ramet/Downloads/DPTX_2009_2_11230_JDIP01_18685_0_89052%20(2).pdf). Accessed on 24 July 2018.
- Skilling, H.G., 1989. *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ohio State University Press, Columbus.
- Škvorecký, J., 1984. Hipness at Noon. *New Republic* (17 December). <https://newrepublic.com/article/99364/hipness-noon>. Accessed on 15 June 2018.
- Smolík, J., 2017. *Subkultury mládeže: Sociologické, Psychologické a Pedagogické Aspekty*, 1. vyd. Mendelova Univerzita v Brně, Brno.
- Spysz, A. ND. RocknRoll Revolution. Local Life, at <https://www.local-life.com/prague/articles/plastic-people> Accessed on 30 January 2019.
- Spulák, J., 2018. Pražský výběr považuje koncert před Rolling Stones za vyvrcholení své dráhy. *Novinky.cz* (12 June). <https://www.novinky.cz/kultura/474783-prazsky-vyber-povazuje-koncert-pred-rolling-stones-za-vyvrcholeni-sve-drahy.html>. Accessed on 16 August 2018.
- Steinhalt, Y.B., 2003. You Can't Rid a Song of the Words: Notes on the hegemony of lyrics in Russian rock songs. *Popular Music* 22 (1), 89–108 (January).
- Szemere, A., 2001. Up from the Underground: The culture of rock music in post-socialist Hungary. Penn State University Press, University Park.
- Tauer, V., 2010. Říha: Katapult se zrodil ze zákazů. *Deník.cz* (8 August). <https://www.denik.cz/hudba/riha-katapult-se-zrodil-ze-zakazu20100806.html>. Accessed on 31 August 2018.
- Tribuna, 1983. 23 March, 5, trans. in Joint Publications Research Service, no. 83438 (10 May 1983): 21–22.
- Troitsky, A., 1988. *Back in the USSR: The true story of rock in Russia*. Faber & Faber, London.
- Ulč, Otto, 1979. One Decade of Post-Invasion Czechoslovakia. *Survey* 24, 201–213. No. 3 (Summer).
- Vaněk, M., 2010. Byl to Jenom Rock'n'Roll? Hudební alternativa v komunistickém Československu 1956–1989, 1. vyd. Academia, Prague.
- Vaníček, A., Naninka, 1997. *Passion Play: Underground Rock Music in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1989*, A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. Graduate Programme in Ethnomusicology, York University, North York, Ontario. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp04/mq22882.pdf>. Accessed on 24 July 2018.
- Velinger, J., 2008. Lucie – one of the definitive bands of the '90s. *Radio Prague* (30 November). <https://www.radio.cz/en/section/music-profile/lucie-one-of-the-definitive-czech-bands-of-the-90s>. Accessed on 4 September 2018.
- Vulliamey, E., 2009. 1989 and all that: Plastic People of the Universe and the Velvet Revolution. *The Guardian* (6 September). <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/sep/06/plastic-people-velvet-revolution-1989>. Accessed on 18 April 2018.
- Walker, S., 2018. Hungarian nationalist rock opera to retell 1920s grievances. *The Guardian* (22 June). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/22/hungarian-nationalist-rock-opera-to-retell-1920s-grievances>. Accessed on 31 January 2019.
- Yanosik, J., 1996. *The Plastic People of the Universe*. <http://www.furious.com/perfect/pulnoc.html>. Accessed on 10 June 2018.
- Zhuk, S.I., 2010. *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, identity, and ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960–1985*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

### Interviews & email communication

- Brabenec, Vratislav, Janíček, Josef, members of Plastic People of the Universe, 2018. Interview with SPR and VĎ, Prague, 9 May.
- Gratias, Petr, 2018. Interview with VĎ, Brno, 1 June.
- Kocáb, Michael, leader of Pražský výběr, 2018. Interview with SPR and VĎ, Prague, 7 May.
- Pařízek, R., 2018. Email communication of 11 May. Pařízek is the leader of the band.
- Prokop, Michal, leader of Framus Five, 2018. Interview with SPR and VĎ, Prague, 8 May.
- Váňe, Pavel member of Progres 2 and Synkopy 61, 2018. Interview with VĎ, Brno, 16 March 2018.
- Vítek, Tomáš, Spark magazine, 2018. Interview with SPR and VĎ, Prague, 10 May 2018.