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Youth Cultures: Escape to Gospel Songs, Rock, and Punk

Introduction

From the 1960s on, many new forms of alternative mass and popular culture emerged, such as rock bands, hippies, punks, and youth cultural icons that developed their own autonomous spheres of cultural activism and criticism of the socialist regimes. Rock bands practiced a kind of criticism of the social and cultural repercussions of political repression and cultivated new models of individual autonomy and communities.¹ The youth subcultures developed various critical alternatives to socialist industrial societies (often in the context of semi-supported professional or leisure organizations). Members of these youth subcultures and consumers of popular music were often cast in state politics not as symbolic representatives of a possible way of life, but as enemies of the state, the family, youth, and socialism. The case studies in this chapter analyze the ways in which youth subcultures were represented as cultures of dissent and how their cultural representations were preserved as cultural heritage in the former socialist countries.

The construction of Eastern European youth cultures as countercultures helped foster imaginings of the West. Accordingly, the case studies in this chapter address the role of the official discourse in the construction of “youth cultures,” in part because these cultures and portrayals of these cultures by the regimes lie at the heart of identity politics concerning the younger generation at the time. The case studies also look at some of the youth subcultures that emerged in socialist Czechoslovakia and in Hungary, and they examine the ways in which the cultural productions of these subcultures were archived by private persons and later by semi-private and/or public institutions, as well as the motifs for these practices of archiving. They also examine how young people in the “East” perceived the “West” and how their interests in “Western cultures” were represented in the official discourse and in the collections which preserved the cultural heritage of these youth sub-cultures. The chapter demonstrates that the conceptual borders between the “East” and the “West” were not merely a kind of ideological Iron Curtain, but rather were elements of cultural practice with which social identities were created that

1 See: Risch, *Youth and Rock*.

mirrored the cultural opposition between East and West (socialist and capitalist), including the social identities of the younger generations. These identities were patchworks which included elements of generational conflicts, but they were also shrewdly manipulated by the regimes to reinforce political narratives. However, youth subcultures were not necessarily political, but could be apolitical (which under communism gave them a political dimension, i.e. they were cast as a rejection of the system) or could also be seen as “dropping out” cultures, especially the forms of culture and cultural identity that closely attached to musical genres.²

Accordingly, the case studies analyze the ways in which different genres of popular music became the basic components of youth subcultures and how these genres were represented as expressions of dissent in the official culture. The case study of Yvetta Kajanová constitutes a distinctive case in Slovakia: the social role of the gospel song as cultural opposition for the younger generations and the story of the events and movements attached to the history of gospel and spiritual songs during the socialist period. József Havasréti sheds light on a story of a photo collection from the 1980s, which contains photographs of the performers of contemporary alternative popular music at rock concerts in Pécs, a university town in Hungary. The third case study in the chapter, authored by Miroslav Michela, analyses the content and the history of three institutions in Prague. Michela focuses on the cultural products connected to the New Wave and Punk scenes in the Czech Republic, which were important elements of youth identities during late socialism.

The COURAGE Registry³ includes several hundred items concerning the topic youth cultures, and even some of the collections that were created not by private individuals or semi-private institutions/organizations, but by the socialist state are also included under the label “youth cultures.” For example, “The Commission for Ideological and Political Work of the People’s Youth of Croatia”⁴ (1945–1962) was crucial in the lives of young people from the perspective of the guidance and education they were given on the basis of socialist values. This Commission worked under the aegis of the Communist Party, and its primary task was to monitor all activities that were (allegedly) a form of opposition to the regime. Therefore, the numerous documents in this collection encompassing the period between 1945 and 1962 show different oppositional aspirations and activities of young people in Croatia.

The practices of youth cultures were documented by organs of the state authorities, such as party commissions and secret police departments which were created for express purpose of monitoring youth activities in the schools and universities. The response of the authorities to Western influences (such

2 See Fürst and McLellan, *Dropping out of socialism*.

3 <http://cultural-opposition.eu/registry> Accessed: August 22, 2018.

4 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Commission for Ideological and Political Work of People’s Youth of Croatia (1945–1962),” by Tatjana Šarić, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

as films, literature, music, fashion, and hair styles) helped shape new social identities and establish new norms of behavior among members of the younger generations. Accordingly, the authorities and the younger generations could interpret the Cold War as a cultural conflict and cultural practices (e.g. music and musical genres) as weapons. In this interpretation, musical genres represented the most influential weapon in this war, as new musical genres provided a resource with which young people could fashion new, rebellious identities and also led to the emergence of new cultural spaces and new cultural preferences with which young people could express their relative autonomy during the socialist period.⁵ Phil Cohen identifies four dimensions of style which characterized youth cultures: dress, music, ritual, and argot.⁶ Although one could draw distinctions between youth cultures according to their dress, ritual, or argot, the preservation of youth cultures is centered mainly on musical genres, and the collections dealing with the youth question as a generational or social conflict focus on music, even if the youth cultures with which they are associated were politicized in the eyes of the state.

The Gospel Song as an Escape from Violent Resocialization: the Slovak Case

Unlike the Czech environment, which was characterized by an active jazz and rock underground, the Slovak environment was characterized by the spread of new spiritual and gospel songs. Ideologues perceived the enemy worldwide in the new form of gospel and spiritual songs due to the resocialization of youth in the spirit of the “atheistic philosophy of Marxism-Leninism.” In the 1950s, young Christians formed a new subculture. They had specific opinions about belief and stood against the socialist system and ideology, but they were not active in producing samizdat collections or albums. They only organized illegal events, such as secret meetings with young people. After their legal performances (the band Matuzalem, 1958; The Unity of Brethren Baptist, Crédo—big beat masses in Catholic churches in Bratislava, 1968) at home and abroad (Vienna, Vatican), they realized their popularity and influence among young listeners. After the Prague Spring of 1968, these musicians developed an underground movement and became active in producing illegal albums. They recorded 37 gospel albums in studios, and they distributed them in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic during the period from 1969 to 1989. Later, samizdat collections like *Smieť žiť pre Krista* (To have the privilege to live for Christ, 1977–1982), *Miluje nás Pán* (The Lord loves us), *Pod ochranou matky* (Under the protection of our mother), *Zmŕtvychstal náš Pán* (Our Lord raised from death), and *Narodil sa Pán* (The Lord was born, 1982–1984) were

5 Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 67.

6 Cohen, *Subcultural conflict*.

issued by underground Christian groups, in which a new form of gospel song with influences from jazz, rock, and pop music was presented.

Young Christian Subculture

The young Christian subculture in the former Czechoslovakia was inspired and shaped by their sympathies with the history of oppression of African-Americans; consequently, they were interested in jazz music, spirituals, and gospel music, especially in the 1950s. The young Christian subculture in Czechoslovakia absorbed new impulses in the 1960s. The beat generation presented even freer thinking and was filled with new ideas about how to connect hard rock and Christian messages, as were young American hippies, such as Jesus Chapel and Jesus Freaks. The younger generation adopted and drew inspiration from the ideas of their parents, since their parents passed on Christian beliefs and values to them.⁷ The parents themselves mediated contacts among American, Western, and local Christian communities (in Italy, Germany, and the USA), receiving information, songbooks, recordings of spirituals, gospel music, and hard rock.

This situation was not typical of all of Czechoslovakia, but rather was particular the case in the lands of Slovakia and Moravia, where these cultural trends had parallels with cultural trends in Poland. If we compare the situation with Czech youth subcultures, like jazz, tramp, country, folk song, and rock, the most active movement against the regime was among jazz aficionados and rockers. Czech jazz fans were called “potápky”⁸ at that time (“hooligans” in the swing generation), and rockers were “bigbítníci” (“bigbeaters” in rock). They produced samizdat collections,⁹ illegal records, fanzines, and journals, and they translated poetry by forbidden poets and others. They organized illegal events—performances, workshops, and artistic parties¹⁰—where they spread their ideas about freedom and explained the political situation of the communist party and its undemocratic system of government. Sometimes, they experimented with drugs (such as marijuana and LSD).¹¹ They were organized through a group called the Jazzová sekce (Jazz section), an only partly legal organization of professional jazz musicians and fans which was founded in 1971, or they gathered around a rock band named Plastic People of the Universe (started in 1968).

7 Smolík, *Subkultury mládeže. Uvedení do problematiky*, 178, 221.

8 Koura, *Swingari a potápky v protektorátní noci: česká swingová mládež a její hořkej svět*, 10.

9 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Audiovisual Section at Libri Prohibiti”, by Michaela Kůželová, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018; COURAGE Registry s.v. “Popmuseum”, by Michaela Kůželová, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

10 Blüml, “The Jazz Section and its Influence on the Development of Regional Cultures in Czechoslovakia before 1989: The Music Scene in Olomouc,” 105–18.

11 Kříženecký, *Miki Volek: nespoutaný život krále českého rock and rollu*, 142, 177, 190.

Slovak jazz and rock subcultures could not produce any collections or samizdat at the time because their activists either emigrated¹² to the West or withdrew from the protest culture. But this was not the case with younger Christians, who were influenced by their parents, nor was it the case with authorities from different religious denominations. They did not give up. The first subcultures emerged in the Brethren Unity of Baptists, the Church of Brethren, and the Catholic Church in the 1950s. They strongly influenced the education of young people by spreading Christianity and providing basic information about human rights. There were other denominations, like the Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church, Apostolic Church, and many other smaller churches, which were still active in the underground movement in Slovakia after 1948. Although the communists attempted to destroy them by violent campaigns targeting the strongest and biggest churches, these churches continued to perform engage in forms of oppositional culture.¹³ Examples of this violent crackdown include the “Barbarian Night” from April 13 to 14, 1950, when the communists disposed of all monasteries of the Catholic Church, and the action known as “VIR,” which took place on March 27, 1983, when the State Security Apparatus [ŠtB] confiscated religious literature, liturgical objects, typewriters, and deposit cards.¹⁴

Youth Circles

Young people gathered illegally in the 1950s at regular meetings called “Kružok” (Circle, called “Stretko” in the 1970s), where they talked about the word of God, prayed, and sang songs. They did not arrange collections of music or illegal records. Gospel songs were sung by young people, and this represented a form of cultural opposition due to the atheist ideology of the socialist regime. The young people in these groups came from different social strata (the working class, farmers, and the intelligentsia), but most were from the latter, and in the 1960s this subculture included dissidents too. At first, they performed only in their local churches (1958, *The Matuzalem*, the band from Brethren Unity of Baptists, Slávo Král, leader of the band).¹⁵ When they became aware of the success and power of new spiritual songs in the spread of Christianity, they began to regard these songs as new weapons against

12 Kajanová, “Slovak and Czech Jazz Emigrants After 1948,” 49–64. Between 1948 and 1967, of 255,000 people left Czechoslovakia, while in the period 1968–1989 244,507 people emigrated. ČTK (Česká tisková kancelář, Czech News Agency) 25/1/91, SWB EE/0981 B6, 28/1/91, ČSTK (Československá tisková kancelář, Czechoslovak News Agency) 16/3/92, SWB EE/1332, B/10 18/3/92.

13 Koura, et al., *Diktatura versus naděje*, 43.

14 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Dominican Book Institute”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

15 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Brethren Unity of Baptists”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

communist atheistic ideology. They did not utilize gospel music simply as an escape from communist reality, but also saw it as a countermeasure to the violent resocialization of the educational system. Young Christians did not want to be in opposition to the socialist regime, but they found no other possibility to “do their own things their own way.”

Their activities morphed into underground phenomena somewhat against their will, and they became a form of cultural opposition due to their beliefs. They attended public performances in the Blumental church in Bratislava (see, for example, *Credo*, the band from Ivanka pri Bratislave, 1968, led by the composer and guitarist Stanislav Zibala; see the collection of the University Pastoral Centre Bratislava).¹⁶ The first big beat mass was also recorded as a documentary movie by a team of filmmakers from the newscast *A Week in film* (1968). *Credo* recorded new albums legally in the Church of the Saint Trinity in Bratislava for the Supraphon label, but immediately before public distribution, hardliners banned their activity due to the Prague spring in 1968. The group decided to distribute an album among fans illegally, and it was also broadcast by Radio Vaticana and Radio Free Europe.

The choir of the Brethren Unity of Baptists Bratislava—Palisády performed at the Stadthalle in Vienna in 1969 and at the European Baptist Conference in Budapest the same year, along with American preacher Billy Graham. When they were invited to hold a performance in Prague, Graham ordered an airplane for them, though Czechoslovakia had already been occupied by the army of the Warsaw Pact.

Encouraged by their achievements, young Christians began to organize collective issues of songbooks and to record these songs on albums. They established underground mobile studios in different private locations, recorded albums, and distributed them illegally on reel-to-reel tapes and, later, on cassettes. Albums by Loving Teenagers and Južania, for example, were created in secret locations near Prague between 1970 and 1972, in Bratislava, and, later, in Hýľov (in 1984). The musicians on the records were simultaneously founders of the collections: for instance, Anton Fabian (see the Anton Fabian Collection),¹⁷ Amantius Akimjak, Mária Wiesnerová, and others. Young people were very active in Bratislava, where the choirs Ursus Singers, Kufříkovci, Kapucíni (1968), and Céčko (1973) performed legally in churches. Because they had a following, these young people recorded and distributed tapes and cassettes illegally.

16 COURAGE Registry s.v. “University Pastoral Center Bratislava”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

17 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Anton Fabian Collection”, by Yveta Kajánová, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

Collections of Gospel Songs

In the 1980s, ecumenical ideas were also spread through Taizé songs. Their lyrics were translated into Slovak, arranged in new versions, and performed by the Kapucíni choir (including Katarína Horváthová and Pavol Kaločaj) in Bratislava. Their secretly produced body of works is held now at the University Pastoral Centre Bratislava¹⁸ since 1997 and in the Music Museum of the Slovak National Museum (since 2016). Activists recorded albums in several other centers in Slovakia, including the Schola Cantorum at The Faculty of Theology of Comenius University in Bratislava, as well as in Tvrdošín, Ružomberok (Marcel Šiškovič), Hýľov (Anton Fabian), and Partizánske (Mária “Marina” Wiesnerová, see the Marina Wiesner Collection).¹⁹ To help produce better quality recordings, Maťo Lishák created the mobile studio Svetielko in 1986 and offered its services to gospel bands. The main leaders of the Schola Cantorum events were Amantius Akimjak²⁰ and Juraj Drobný (see the University Pastoral Centre in Bratislava). Amantius Akimjak gathered gospel songs at the Faculty of Theology in Bratislava and established, between 1982 and 1984, the collection of songbooks “Miluje nás Pán” (The Lord loves us), “Pod ochranou matky” (Under the protection of our mother), “Zmŕtvychstal náš Pán” (Our Lord raised from dead), and “Narodil sa Pán” (The Lord was born). Akimjak was persecuted for this activity: he was expelled from the university as a student of the Faculty of Theology and he was summoned for an interview (or interrogation) by the State Security (ŠtB). Similarly, Marcel Šiškovič, a member of the Loving Teenagers group, did not receive state approval for pastoral work after his graduation in 1974. Akimjak’s collection of songbooks is now located at the University Library of the Catholic University in Ružomberok and at the Dominican Book Institute.

Mária Wiesnerová worked separately in Partizánske, where several musicians and teachers at the Elementary Art School (Ľudová škola umenia), collaborated with her. The community and the band were known as “Radostné srdce” (Joyful heart), and they recorded eleven cassettes in an illegal studio in Bratislava between 1983 and 1989. The Joyful heart has been linked to activities of the Blue Cross movement in Switzerland and the Community of Christians in Prague since 1983.

In 1964, the Church of Brethren Collection²¹ formed the “Misijný spevokol mladých” (The missionary choir of the youth), and in 1967 it formed the

18 COURAGE Registry s.v. “University Pastoral Center Bratislava”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

19 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Marina Wiesner Collection”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

20 See the collection of COURAGE Registry s.v. “Collection The University Library of the Catholic University in Ružomberok,” by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

21 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Church of Brethren Collection”, by Vladimír Zvara, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

children's choir "Kvapôčky" (Droplets) under conductor Milica Kajlingová. During the process of recording certain activities of the Church of Brethren and the Brethren Unity of Baptists were connected. Sometimes the different Christian denominations cooperated—especially in the project *The Christmas Alphabet* (see Juraj Lexmann: "Vianočná abeceda," mg tape, Bratislava—CB Cukrová, 1979), in which musicians and activists from the Catholic Church and the Church of Brethren also participated. Several churches collaborated on the recording *Passion* by Michael Vulpius, and they illegally spread these recordings over the course of the next two decades: the Bratislava Evangelical Choir, the Missionary Choir of the Youth, the Children's choir "Droplets" from the Church of Brethren, the Matica slovenská choir, and the Evangelical choir from Stará Turá (MG, Bratislava, 1969).

The choir "Droplets" from the Church of the Brethren focused mainly on the education of children. It provides clear proof of a double culture in which a stern atheism prevailed in the public sphere and strong Christian ideals prevailed in private life. As noted by Ivan Valenta, the main organizer and editor of the songbook "Smieť žiť pre Krista" (To have the privilege to live for Christ), "You could live and die for socialism but not for Christ at this time."²² This captures the main reason why the Christian subculture of young people became a form of cultural opposition. One of the key phrases of the socialist regime was "Build and defend the socialist country, be ready!" The motto of the marching pioneers and members of the Socialist Union of Youth was "Always ready!"

The young Christian communities presented their specific characteristics not only in their opinions, beliefs, and religious views, but also in their behavior and clothing. They did not consume alcohol and, unlike rock fans, had no experience with "grass." Neither did they frequent pubs and discos, nor did they proclaim their ideas with aggression and violence like punk rockers. Rather, they asked simply that their private pursuits and practices be treated with respect. They dressed very casually, often imitating the clothes of the religious brothers, and the women did not use makeup. This characteristic disinterest in fashion was typical of only a small group of young Christians; others preferred sport clothes. What everyone had in common was an idealistic and monotheistic belief, independent of the religious denominations to which they belonged. If the authorities asked them about their worldview and religion, they answered, "that is a private affair." This question was part of interviews at competitions, assessments, and examinations at school or university during the period of socialism. Their reply represented a new idea of freedom and human rights, and it placed them into the ranks of cultural opposition.

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, many young Christians became members of political parties like the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH,

²² Ibid.

founded in 1990), the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party (SDKÚ-DS, 2000), and Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO, founded in 2011). Sometimes, they even became active, high-level politicians (for instance Ján Čarnogurský, František Mikloško, Mikuláš Dzurinda, and Igor Matovič). Many musicians, artists, and important personalities from the underground Christian movements were influenced by these movements, including composer Daniel Matej, violoncellist Jozef Lupták, pianist Ivan Šiller, vocalists Iveta Matyášová and Jana Daňová, composer and producer Maroš Kachút, guitarist Stano Počaji, journalists Juraj Kušnierik and Štefan Hríb, poet, philosopher, and preacher Daniel Pastirčák, and many others who became leading figures in their fields.

The Photograph Collection of Ferenc Kálmándy and the Alternative Scene in Pécs: Documenting the Subcultures of the Younger Generation in Hungary

From the late 1970s until the late 1980s, photography artist and journalist photographer Ferenc Kálmándy documented the cultural life and events which took place in the alternative scene in Pécs, in particular events which were part of Hungarian post-punk and new wave music and visual arts culture. His private collection, which consists of photographs, sound recordings, and photographic records, is found in his residence in Orfű, a settlement in Baranya County. It contains some 100 print pictures, 400 negatives, and 2,000 photographic records (rock, jazz, blues, and alternative rock).²³

Pécs was the fifth largest city in Hungary, with a population of 200,000. Its university, the so-called Youth House, the Pécs Gallery, and the various community and cultural centers were sites of widely diverse underground and alternative cultural groups which were active in pop music, theatre life, literature, and the avantgarde visual arts.

The Photograph as a Document of Alternative Culture

Photographers who were interested in the Hungarian underground/alternative cultural scene took a particularly strong interest in the history of the sites where this culture blossomed. As an almost archetypal example, one could mention the work of Tamás Urbán, who was a professional journalist photographer. As a reporter for *Ifjúsági Magazin* (Youth Magazine), he took pictures of important events in the history of Hungarian rock music, including music festivals and members of the audiences which gathered for performances. János Kőbányai, a writer and sociographer who was also educated as

²³ See the COURAGE Registry: COURAGE Registry s.v. “Kálmándy, Ferenc Photo Archive”, by Lóránt Bódi, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

an attorney, was a representative of a different paradigm. As a member of the literary and musical group Fölöspéldány (Extra Copy), he used his sociographer-photographer skills to document primarily the everyday life of early Hungarian punk subculture, which drew many of its enthusiasts from the fans of the band Beatrice.

Kőbányai did not attempt to document the life of this subculture from the unbiased perspective of an external observer. Rather, he considered himself a kind of representative and standard-bearer of this culture among the intelligentsia. As a member of Fölöspéldány, he was attached both to the young, neo-avantgarde intelligentsia and young people who led somewhat vagrant lives.²⁴ In one of his essays, Dick Hebdige offers a detailed study of the iconography of the press photographs depicting British young people who belonged to the working class. Hebdige notes that, for the most part, these images were presented as illustrations of social problems, and the individuals were depicted as people who were opposed to social conventions. Thus, they created a kind of scenography out of the younger generation. The backdrops corresponded to this iconography: street scenes, provocative poses, facial expressions that seemed either offended or aggressive, and the visual signs of social deviance (shaved heads, ragged clothing, primitive tattoos, and body jewelry).²⁵ Urbán's and Kőbányai's subcultural repertoires were similar. János Vető represented a third paradigm. He was also part of the neo-avantgarde tendencies which were prevalent at the time, but he was active as someone who documented the underground/alternative scene in Budapest.²⁶ So, the photography at the time was marked by at least three tendencies: 1) the objective view of the reporter, 2) a commitment to the role of a representative of the alternative scene, and 3) aesthetic endeavors to create works of art.

If one takes the oeuvres of these three photographers as a point of departure, Kálmándy's approach to his art resembles that of Vető perhaps the most. As a professional journalist photographer and a member of the Focus photographers' group (which was drawn to avantgarde tendencies, among other things), Kálmándy both documented and shaped the milieu which was part of the alternative cultural scene in Pécs and the new wave pop music of the 1980s. In contrast with Urbán and Kőbányai, who used photography as it might be used by the reporter or the sociographer, Kálmándy and Vető at times focused quite deliberately on creating photographic compositions that were artistic in nature. These compositions, which were carefully arranged, were part of the neo-avantgarde trends in Hungarian photographic art. (Kálmándy's works and activities are not examined here as part of the history of the Focus group, so the presentation of this group is brief.)²⁷ Statements

24 Havasréti, *Alternatív regiszterek*, 233–40.

25 Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, 17–41.

26 Szilágyi, *Neoavantgárd tendenciák*, 283–85.

27 Kincses, *Focusban*.

made by members of the Focus group suggest that they considered the deliberately crafted nature of their compositions one of the most important distinctive features of their works, regardless of genre and technique. As Tamás Borbély noted, “we made pictures on given themes that were thought out and composed ahead of time.”²⁸

Between 1979 and 1982, Kálmándy worked as the exhibition designer for the Pécs Gallery, which was under the direction of Sándor Pinczehelyi. Until the mid-1990s the Pécs Gallery was one of the most influential centers of local underground/alternative cultural life. Many of the employees of the gallery played in new wave bands, which often performed in the Gallery at exhibition openings and also independently. Composer Kristóf Wéber offered the following recollection of the scene at the time: “Sometimes, the police even came, but there were never any particularly rough incidents. There were parties, of course, noise, breaking glass, that kind of thing. The cellar was used as more than just an audition space, a kind of underground club life started to take form, and more and more people would come. After one of the practice sessions, someone said that it wasn’t a try-out, it was a concert, cause there were more people in the audience than in the band.”²⁹

Pop Music, Fashion, Visual Culture

The late 1970s and early 1980s bore witness to the emergence of some striking shifts in style in the visual arts and music in Hungary. Post-avantgarde tendencies gained ground, including decorativeness, eclecticism, ironic and frivolous gestures, and the use of the symbols of pop culture as citations.³⁰ Pop music began to move away from the hard rock and progressive rock of the 1970s, and the subversive influence of punk began to be felt, followed by new wave.³¹

Music and the visual arts were by no means the only areas of culture which were undergoing a transformation. Youth fashion and clothing were also changing. These changes were palpable in Hungary, first and foremost in the world of subculture. The visual repertoire of the hobo subculture remained popular (narrow pants, a polka dotted kerchief, the soldier’s gasmask bag), but more elegant and to some extent mannered and even eclectic fashions also began to catch on, both in clothing and hairstyles. These styles rejected both the uniform fashion of the late Kádár era, i.e. jeans and a chequered shirt, and the hard rock and punk styles, for instance the torn leather jacket. This shift could be characterized as the emergence of a renewed appreciation for sophisticated dress, i.e. a kind of “anti-anti-fashion” or an attempt to move

28 Cited in *Ibid.*, 55.

29 Koszits, *Lebegő tónusú monoton zeneművek*. Cited with the permission of the author.

30 Hegyi, *Élmény és fikció*, 113–32.

31 Szőnyei, *Az Új Hullám évtizede*, 1–2.

beyond the hippie styles which drew on the colorful world of counterculture (bellbottomed trousers and mottled shirts) and the “confrontation dressing” advocated by Vivienne Westwood, which borrowed from the visual world of punk.³² These shifts were also discernible in portrait photography, which constituted one of the defining trends of neo-avantgarde photography. Works by both Vető and Kálmándy could be cited as examples.

The codifier of the new style was the network of young people and artists in Budapest which shaped the new wave visual arts, film art, pop music, and design tendencies of the era. Members of this network closely followed the shift from punk to new wave, and they represented the new trends both on the level of everyday aesthetics and in their works. The photographs by Vető and Kálmándy documented the stylistic marks of a subculture and the members of this subculture, but this group was a decidedly artistic, intellectual subculture.

Conceptual Portrait Photography and New Wave Influences

Photography occupied a prominent place in the sort of “Gesamtkunstwerk” interest which was characteristic of the new wave in Hungary in the 1980s, both as an independent genre and as raw material for, vehicle of, and complement to the new endeavors in design. The endeavors in Hungarian neo-avantgarde photography which tend to be subsumed under the term “portrait concept” offer good examples of the above processes.³³

For the Budapest underground, one of the harbingers of these changes (and someone who was actually active himself in artistic life in Hungary) was Udo Kier, an actor from West Germany. Kier worked in Hungary as one of the principal actors in Gábor Bódy’s 1980 film *Narcisz és Psyche* (“Narcissus and Psyche”), and for a short time, he became one of the prominent figures in the circle of artists which included Gábor Bódy, János Xantus, János Vető, Tibor Hajas, and György Kozma, as well as a veritable stylistic icon of the post-modern. Vető made several portraits of Kier, who at the time was best known as an actor who had worked for Andy Warhol and R. W. Fassbinder. As photography historian Sándor Szilágyi and photographer László Lugosi Lugo have observed, Kier’s hairstyle (brushed back and gelled, resembling the hairstyle of silent film star Rudolph Valentino), dress (a striped button-down shirt, jacket, and tie), and perhaps most of all his world-weary facial expression exerted a strong, even inspiring effect on the fashions of the time. “He thoroughly stirred up the stagnant waters of the art world of the Hungarian underground: his very being, his dress, his hairstyle, the way he moved in the world, it was as if he had come from some distant planet.”³⁴ According to

32 Hebdige, *Subculture*, 107.

33 Szilágyi, *Neoavantgárd tendenciák*, 231–310.

34 *Ibid.*, 284.

Lugosi Lugo, “the mannerism which found expression in Udo’s dress and his gelled hair, and which perhaps comes through in this picture, was very present at the time in Budapest.”³⁵

Vető’s portraits, both of Kier and of members of his own circle of friends, offer good examples of his visual tool box (for instance, estrangement effects, the elongation, clipping, and remounting of the picture) and of the clothing culture of the time, which in Budapest in the late 1970s only tended towards the styles mentioned above and, beginning in the 1980s, started to “catch up” with the Kier fashion. These photographs, even only in the case of the photographs taken by Kálmándy, represented a “micro-public sphere” which had been elevated to a distinctly exclusive level: the members of a circle of friends who turned inwards and closed themselves off from the prosaic world outside took their places in front of the camera and presented to the world their “membership as initiates” into a subculture.

The 1982 series by Kálmándy entitled *Barátaim és én* (Me and my friends) should be seen in this context. It is one of the most important items in his collection, a series made by Kálmándy of the familiar figures in the alternative scene in Pécs.³⁶ The first portrait is of Kristóf Wéber, one of the most prominent figures of the scene. Wéber was active in experimental/neo-avantgarde and contemporary music.³⁷ He contributed to the first album by the band Bizottság (the original name of the band was “Committee,” but it was later changed to A. E. Committee in response to objections raised by the authorities, who felt that it was a challenge to the Central Committee, one of the main organs of power in communist Hungary; the initials stand for Albert Einstein), which was entitled *Kalandra fel* (Setting out for adventure, 1983), and he later became a member of several new wave music bands in Pécs. The respectable chalk-striped jacket he is wearing in the picture offers a clear example of the shift in styles described above.

The next image shows János Rauschenberger, who served as the editor of the periodical *Bercsényi 28–30* (published by the College of Architecture at the Budapest University of Technology) between 1978 and 1980. He also did stage design for the theatre and later worked with visual artist Gyula Pauer. Rauschenberger’s portrait, like the portrait of Wéber, linked the series to the alternative contemporary arts scene. The white denim pants and loose sweater perhaps cannot be easily characterized as a “marked value” (as a structuralist would say), but the unfazed glance and facial expression and the subject’s weary posture can. Since the emergence of nineteenth-century decadence, the world-weary facial expression was an essential part of the appearance of the artist of the big city, the dandy who stood out in the crowd. The blasé attitude

35 Lugosi Lugo, *Fényképművészet*, 78.

36 Kálmándy P. Ferenc *fotói*.

37 For more on his career see Koszits, *Lebegő tónusú monoton zeneművek*.

created a kind of veil around the individual and protected him from the effects of the prosaic world around him.

Animation film director Károly Papp (“Kása”) is depicted in the next photograph. At the time, he worked as an exhibition director. His striped suspenders, which are buttoned (an old-fashioned style), and his white, linen button-down shirt, which has an almost “vintage” effect, were both clear signs of his profession. This shirt was referred to as a peasant shirt at the time, whether it came from a peasant’s chest or a bourgeois household’s wardrobe. In the 1970s and 1980s, in part thanks to the growing popularity of the dance house movement, some elements of peasant garb were regarded as familiar parts of urban dress. The appearance of these elements of peasant garb (a peasant shirt and blouse, a short, fur-lined coat, a peasant hat, a vest, etc.) cannot be attributed necessarily or exclusively to “Narodnik” sentiments. Rather, they melted into the eclectic style at the time, which was considered modern. Furthermore, they were expressions of a distaste for the products of the garment industry, which often lacked imagination. “Kása” can be seen in the same garb in a series of photographs (made at the same time as the portraits) entitled *Elszaladni késő, itt maradni kár* (Too late to run away, no sense in staying).

The last image in the catalogue is Önarckép (Self-portrait). The photographer is depicted wearing white with a sloppily tied necktie, which is an essential accoutrement of his appearance. The necktie began to become popular in the 1980s in comparison with the shabby (punk) and organic (hippie) dress styles of the previous decade. He wears a pin which is similarly important. According to him, it may have been a Nina Hagen pin. In the early 1980s, these kinds of pins began to become increasingly popular as signs which bore the names of rock bands, punk bands, and new wave performers. There were distinctive, individually made pins too, for instance mirror fragments which harmonized well with the narcissistic overtones of the new style. The pins also offered an expressive form for spectacular exaggeration. In a 1982 group picture of the members of the Focus group, Kálmándy is wearing eight pins.³⁸

In Kálmándy’s collection, the aforementioned *Elszaladni késő, itt maradni kár* from 1982 is directly tied to the concept behind *Barátaim*.³⁹ The same people are depicted in each, and the photographs were made on the same occasion. The title is a citation from a song by János Vető, which was written for Trabant, a familiar new wave band from the 1980s. The work, which is narrative and sequential but which also contains conceptual elements, offers a good summary of Kálmándy’s endeavors involving the art photography tendencies of the contemporary neo-avantgarde and the subcultural movements. The 1985 catalogue contains a composition consisting of four pictures, and the *Focusban* (In focus) album contains one consisting of six. Both compositions

³⁸ Kincses, *Focusban*, 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 130–31.

express visually the paradox of Vető's line. The objects (in reality, of course, people) depicted in the images begin to move slowly and hesitantly and then this motion is hampered, capturing the futility expressed in the song and the melancholy which was typical of Trabant's songs.

Concert Pictures, Portraits of Musicians

Kálmándy made photographs of a wide variety of performers, including the bands which were active in the subcultural scene in Pécs, Európa Kiadó (which was a "superstar" of the "Hungarian underground"), Trabant, and even the Rolling Stones. Some of his photographs document the performances in Pécs held by Trabant, Európa Kiadó, and Bizottság. Thus, they constituted professional documents of the alternative concert of life of the 1980s. His portrait of Ágnes Bárdos Deák, which was made at a concert held by the band Kontroll, won a prize at the *Rockfotó 1983* exhibition held in Miskolc. The cover of the album *Én mindig csak Pest* (I always just Pest) by the band Ági és a Fiúk (Ági and the boys) was also based on the portrait (author's publication, 2000).

At the opening in 1985 for the exhibition entitled *A három fő erény* (The three principal virtues) of works by visual artists András Wahorn, László fe Lugossy, and István ef Zámbo, who were known as members of the "Lajos Vajda Studio" in Szentendre and the band Bizottság, the band Neoszarvasbika (Neo-stag), an ad hoc group formed by the three artists themselves, performed.⁴⁰ Kálmándy made photographs which document the performance by the band (it contained a wealth of bizarre, grotesque, and Dadaist elements typical of their work) and the audience. The photographs document one of the essential aspects of the alternative cultural life of the 1980s: the *network-style* organization of this culture and its interdisciplinary and intermedial character (both of which stemmed in part from its network-like organization). Music, the visual arts, photography, and the social sphere were thoroughly intertwined, forming a distinctly *Gesamtkunstwerk* milieu that could be understood both as an aesthetic and a sociocultural phenomenon. The site for all this was the Pécs Gallery. Péter Hardy was sitting the closest to the musicians. Hardy was the front man for Bizonytalanság (Uncertainty), Gruppensex (Group sex), and Pécsi Underground Fórum, or PUF (Pécs Underground Forum).⁴¹ The situation itself was characteristic of the time. Hardy is seen recording the performance with a small tape recorder. The exchange of these kinds of "bootleg" copies was the typical and indeed one could say the only distribution method in the alternative cultural scene.

40 See *A 3 fő erény*.

41 On Péter Hardy see Gróf, *A Mecsek Legalja*, 12–19.

Punk Rock as Youth Culture in Czechoslovakia

Being a punk rocker meant a great deal of shared challenges, tastes, and attitudes for people attached to this form of culture throughout the territory of socialist Czechoslovakia. This included the ways in which the punk image itself was fashioned and the problems with which this lifestyle was associated. In a country with limited access to information from the West and limited chances for average citizens to get their hands on desired pop culture artefacts, punk rock culture established itself only very slowly. It is also interesting to compare the situation in the Czech and Slovak parts of the country, and there were also differences in local conditions and possibilities. Punks in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic originally appeared in the largest cities of the republic, and soon active groups were formed in smaller towns and rural areas. Alongside the emerging oppositional culture in Prague and Bratislava, a strong scene was created in northern Bohemia in Teplice, for instance, where there were several important music bands, and in Jihlava, where the first Czech punk samizdat, *Punk Maglajz*, was published in 1985 by the members of the punk band Hrdinové nové fronty, also known as HNF (Heroes of the New Front).

Punk came into the Czechoslovakia in 1978 through various channels about two years after its big success in the UK. The main sources of information were foreign music magazines like *Melody Maker* and *New Musical Express*, as well as the German youth magazine *Bravo*. Popular music from the West spread mainly through foreign radio broadcasts and television and music recordings. Records were prized items, and they were subsequently recorded to tape and shared extensively by music fans. Most of the Punk rock and New Wave music could not be obtained officially, so its distribution was an important part of the alternative networks of the time. In addition to personal contacts, the collection and distribution of music recordings was also done through advertisements in youth magazines and in postal communications.

The Essential Underground samizdat magazine *Vokno* (The window) published in its first issue of 1979 six pages about Punk, and it emphasized aspects shared by the underground and this relatively new subculture.⁴² In the existing underground environment, punks were given a background to play at illegal concerts and to participate in the samizdat movement. Several punks even came out of the underground environment. The first punk festival was held at an underground squat (so-called barrack) in 1979 in Nová Víska, where the band Energie G performed.

42 In case of *Vokno* see the collection of the founder in the Registry: COURAGE Registry s.v. "Cunas.cz" by Chmátal, Jonáš, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018; and for this samizdat magazine online see: COURAGE Registry s.v. "Vons.cz" by Vrtálková, Anna, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

However, in Slovakia the situation was different. Initially, Punk had firm roots only in Bratislava, where in 1979 the band Tip began to play, which later transformed into Extip and in 1980 became the band Paradox, on the ruins of which an internationally recognized band named Zóna A later formed. Slovak punks primarily liked the melodic Punk 77. In the Czech lands, a harder and faster type of music was popular. This was also reflected in the punkers' appearances. The specific interest in melodic music was also reflected in the fact that the influence of hard core music in Slovakia came later than in the Czech lands.

From the early 1980s, the security forces, which had been busy mainly with the so-called "long hair folks," began to focus on the New Wave and Punk youth as well. The state authorities defined them as non-compliant with the social environment, hostile to work, and inclined to addiction, alcoholism, and drug abuse. There were also frequent allegations of sympathy with Nazism. Also, some Western punk bands used the Swastika, and this provocative act also became a part of punk culture in Czechoslovakia. Nazi symbolism became part of the provocation and the expressions of anti-communist sentiment. Although racism and anti-Roma sentiment were not widespread, racist and anti-Roma texts nonetheless appeared in punk songs beginning in the mid-1980s.⁴³

Subsequently, the state security was streamlined, and the State Security Services launched a secret campaign called *Odpad* (Waste). Both the secret police and the criminal police used intimidation as one of their primary methods. They tried to "correct" the youngsters by making it impossible to meet and perform concerts. They also made young people with long hair cut their hair, and they ripped out their earrings and seized patches, badges, and pyramid belts. The police would make targeted calls to schools, hospitality facilities, and workplaces and hold interviews with parents as part of their normal working procedure. Vlado Lamoš recalls that they even made a punk exhibition for parents at the police station.⁴⁴

As a result of these disruptive measures, many punk and new wave bands disappeared. When Perestroika gradually arrived, the situation began to become more relaxed. It gradually became clear to the authorities that tastes and attitudes could not be changed simply through repressive measures, so the security police modified their approach. The new tactic was to try to control young people's activities with the help of the secret agents who had been recruited from within the subculture scene. Beginning in the mid-1980s, a new generation of punks emerged with new bands and an expanding fan base. Alternative literature also began to emerge. Fanzines were spread through social circles in pubs and various musical productions. Articles, for example, about

43 Polák, "Věšme židy, komouše!," 70–85.

44 Interview made for Slovak film *Závadová mládež* (Troubled youth) (2008), 8:20–9:00 min., available online: <https://youtu.be/Z1ofvtBH3dE>. Accessed August 22, 2018.

the HNF, Visací Zámek (Padlock), or Šanov 1 appeared in popular newspapers, for instance in *Mladá fronta*. An important change was announced at the official Rockfest competition at the Prague Palace of Culture: *Rockfest 1988* would include a separate punk bloc under the listing “hardcore.” In October 1989, *Punkeden*, the biggest ever hardcore festival took place at Prague–Žofín, and it was attended by some 2,500 or 3,000 participants.

At the same time, an independent scene was developing: bands were producing their own demo tapes and several independent labels emerged. Perhaps the most important labels in new wave production were Mikuláš Chadima’s *Fist Records* and *Samizdat Tapes Cassettes and Videos* (S.T.C.V.), led by Petr Cibulka. S.T.C.V. had a huge catalogue of recordings, including almost 500 titles. The end of the 1980s saw the emergence of a number of smaller labels which tended to release music by local bands from a particular city or region. These labels included *Rytmická mládež* (Rhythmic youth) (Vlašské Meziříčí), *Motherfucker Distributing Company* (M.D.C.) (Lipník nad Bečvou), *Sysifos Independent Records* (S.I.R.) (Plzeň), *Fukkavica Records* (Trenčín), and *Inflagranti Records* (Bratislava), as well as several others connected mostly with bands. Punk compilation tapes were even created to capture the best of Czechoslovak punk and hardcore.⁴⁵ Independent magazines were also emerging in this era. Punk magazines like *Schrott magazin*, *Attack*, *Oslí uši* (Donkey ears), *Šot*, and *Sračka* (Shit) appeared in the Czech lands, and *In Flagranti* began to be published in Bratislava. Underground magazines like *Vokno* and *Mašurkovské podzemné* continued to publish articles about punk music and the surrounding scene. Many articles on new wave and punk also appeared in the independent music magazines, like *Za 2 Piva* (For 2 beers) and many others.

Collections and Institutions

The dissolution of Jazz section meant there was no official non-repressive institution in Czechoslovakia to collect information and artefacts associated with punk subculture. For this reason, many historical sources and artefacts can now be found in the personal collections of key figures or private collectors. This also explains why several major exhibitions about pre-1989 punk history have drawn so extensively on artefacts originating from private collections. The first of these exhibitions was the official showing of the photographs of punk archivist Štěpán Stejskal at Youth Gallery in Brno in 1993.⁴⁶ Prague’s Popmuseum⁴⁷ organized three subsequent exhibitions: “Hit the guitar and shout! Czech punk and hardcore during the totalitarian period” (January–September 2013), “Rockfest 1986–89: Hippies and Mohawks at the Palace of

45 Fuchs, *Kytary a řev*, 232–44; Andrs, “PLAY/REC/REW: Kazetový samizdat,” 101–10.

46 Photos from Stejskal’s collection also appear in the book *Punk v obrazech*.

47 COURAGE Registry s.v. “Popmuseum”, by Michaela Kůželová, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

Culture" (April–Jun 2016) and "Write, publish, disseminate. On my own!" (February–Jun 2018).

Popmuseum's archive is a significant source of material on the history of Czech and Czechoslovak popular music.⁴⁸ The archive, which was created in 1998, drew inspiration from work on the Czech Television documentary series "Bigbít" (Big Beat; Czechoslovak term for beat music).⁴⁹ At the time, a large collection of documents and musical artefacts had been assembled, but no existing institution would display them. The current collection includes music-oriented fanzines and literature, posters, photos, recordings, and interviews, and some of this material covers the history of pre-revolutionary Czechoslovak new wave, punk, and hardcore.

The Oral History Center at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences was set up in 2000 to collect oral history interviews and make them accessible.⁵⁰ Some of the recordings in this collection come from the Center's own projects while others are from projects led by its partners. At present, there are more than 2,000 interviews in the archive. Interviews with punks (mostly members of different bands) were recorded between 2006 and 2009 as part of a project that explored social and political aspects of the emergence of indie genres in the Czech lands from the 1960s to 1989.⁵¹

Several punk-related publications can also be found in the Samizdat Collection in the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre,⁵² which houses a unique collection of samizdat literature (1972–89) that was originally collected and kept in Germany by historian Vilém Prečan and his collaborators. In 2003, the collection was donated to the Czech National Museum,⁵³ and it is now part of the museum's archive.

In terms of both size and comprehensiveness, the most valuable collections on these topics are the Czech samizdat collection and audio-visual section at Libri Prohibiti.⁵⁴ This "library of prohibited books" in Prague was founded with the aim of assembling diasporic and samizdat literature in one place and making it accessible to the public to shed light on recent Czechoslovak history. Founder Jiří Gruntorád, a pre-1989 publisher and collector of samizdat literature and a signatory to Charter 77, was twice imprisoned for

48 See Popmuseum in the Courage Registry.

49 See <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/bigbit/> Accessed: August 22, 2018.

50 Some interviews are available also in the Memory of Nations Online Collection: COURAGE Registry s.v. "Memory of Nations", by Anna Vrtálková, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

51 See: COURAGE Registry s.v. "Interviews collection of the Oral History Center", by Anna Vrtálková, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

52 COURAGE Registry s.v. "Samizdat collection of Czechoslovak Documentation Centre", by Jitka Hanáková, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

53 COURAGE Registry s.v. "National Museum of Czech Republic", by Jitka Hanáková, 2018. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

54 COURAGE Registry s.v. "Czech samizdat collection at Libri Prohibiti", by Michaela Kůželová, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018; COURAGE Registry s.v. "Audiovisual Section at Libri Prohibiti", by Michaela Kůželová, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

his samizdat-related activities. He was convinced that the library should remain private and independent and therefore decided not to give his collection to state institutions. The archive of samizdat periodicals includes more than 440 titles. The Czech samizdat periodicals in the collection were listed – along with Slovak samizdat periodicals – in UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register in 2013. Concerning punk subculture, the archive contains a very significant collection of fanzines as well as some rare individual publications. The audio-visual section of Libri Prohibiti features audio and video recordings of non-conformist music, or what is sometimes called musical samizdat. There is also a unique collection of demo tapes and recordings that were produced and distributed by independent labels and networks and were essential to the development of punk culture in the late 1980s.

An undefined quantity of materials regarding the subcultures and independent activities is held in the Security Services Archives.⁵⁵ In this respect, the police materials held in Kanice near Brno constitute a very interesting source of information which as of yet has hardly been consulted. Operative and Investigation files, materials of the regional offices of the State Security, materials of the IInd or Xth department of the counterintelligence directed against so-called inner enemies (e.g. “free youth”), and so-called Signal, Personal, and Object files which were created with the objective of controlling and disciplining punks are held in Prague. A great deal of digitalized material, mostly recordings and publications, can now also be easily accessed on the Internet.⁵⁶

For a long time, there has been no public interest in artefacts connected to the punk movement in Czechoslovakia. Therefore, no specialized collection or institution has been established on this subject. From time to time, interest among historians or among those who bore witness to this form of cultural opposition grows, but this topic is not seen as an important issue in the discussion on dissent and cultural opposition. Fortunately, several artefacts have become part of specialized collections of dissent and independent culture production, and they are now accessible for research. Documents that were created by the state and, especially, documents that were created by the state security forces constitute distinctive and informationally rich historical sources. They now can be studied because of the special law that makes them accessible to the public.⁵⁷

55 The original name is: Archiv bezpečnostních složek.

56 Two regularly updated Slovak blogs include digitalised versions of rare recordings and documents related to pre-revolutionary punk in Czechoslovakia. See: <http://muzika-komunika.blogspot.cz> and <http://zberatelp.blogspot.cz/> The very useful www.Scriptum.cz web archive also provides access to various non-commercial and online Czech diasporic and samizdat periodicals. See: COURAGE Registry s.v. “Scriptum.cz”, by Anna Vrtálková, 2017. Accessed: August 22, 2018.

57 Act No. 181/2007 of 8 June 2007 on the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Archive of Security Services and on Amendments to Certain Acts; see: <https://www.ustrcr.cz/o-nas/zakon-c-181-2007-sb/> Accessed: August 22, 2018.

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