

9 Rock Music and Counterculture

Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole State, and ought to be prohibited; when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the State always change with them. —Plato, The Republic, Book IV

Rock music is an organic inseparable part of the sociocultural consciousness and activity of a society. Rock music, therefore, both reflects and contributes to the ideas of the age and the changes taking place in consciousness and behavior. In the context of Eastern Europe more specifically, rock music played a role in reinforcing the steady growth in the demand for freedom and in providing outlets through which alternative political ideas could be expressed and nurtured. As Goran Bregović, leader of the Yugoslav rock group White Button, told me in 1989, "We can't have any alternative parties or any alternative organized politics. So there are not too many places where you can gather large groups of people and communicate ideas which are not official. Rock 'n' roll is one of the most important vehicles for helping people in communist countries to think in a different way."¹ By the same token, the passage of communism has created a crisis for rock musicians in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and, for as long as it still existed as a separate entity, East Germany.

This chapter will trace the dissenting role played by East European rock in the 1970s and 1980s, and suggest some reasons why the tolerance level for rock music differed from regime to regime during those years. It will close with some thoughts about the present status of rock music in the region.

Students of political culture are fond of reminding us that the self-perpetuation of systems is contingent upon the successful socialization of the young. Political culture—"the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the [context] in which political action

takes place"²—is the attitudinal environment in which governments function, and may be either supportive, corrosive, or indifferent to authority. The superstructure of communist regimes is attuned to the task of molding a "new communist man and woman," that is, to the task of transforming political culture and instilling specific values and attitudes in the younger generation.³

The task of "building communism" signified that communist regimes saw themselves as the managers of programmatic and purposive social change. While there may be some dispute as to whether there was any purposive social change being pursued at all in Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia by the early 1980s, in the abstract the cultural goal pursued under communism would embrace both behavioral and attitudinal patterns; therefore, any alternative culture or set of patterns would be unwelcome. Archie Brown argued in 1977 that changes in culture generally and political culture in particular are likely to be accomplished by changes in social structure, thus confirming Plato's observations in *The Republic*.⁴ This says nothing about causality, which presumably would operate in both directions, but it does underline the fact that neither aesthetic nor attitudinal variables are politically innocent. The interest demonstrated by Soviet, Bulgarian, Romanian, and other communist regimes until the end of the 1980s in encouraging the development and spread of a common culture and political culture⁵ indicates that at least some communist elites operated on that premise.

Differences in regime levels of toleration of rock music seem to roughly parallel differences in toleration toward religion, ethnic subcultures, dissent, and the scope of autonomy allowed to writers and journalists. These differences may be traced, as Andrzej Korbonski has observed, to the presence and extent of six background conditions:

- (a) alienation of intellectuals and youth;
- (b) political reforms;
- (c) economic difficulties;
- (d) divisions within the party;
- (e) contacts with the West; and
- (f) anticommunist attitudes.⁶

Rock music is clearly relevant to variables (a) and (e), and arguably also to (f)—all variables relevant to political culture and socialization. Rock music may thus express and articulate the alienation of youth, with the danger that articulation of disaffection will serve to sustain and deepen it. Moreover, rock music overtly promotes contacts with the West: directly,

when Western rock groups tour Eastern Europe, indirectly, when indigenous groups sing Western songs and imitate Western styles; and vicariously, through the proliferation of Western rock records and associated paraphernalia from Michael Jackson sweatshirts to punk fashions.

Finally, while there is nothing intrinsically anticommunist in rock music, despite occasional charges to the contrary in the bloc press, rock music has, empirically, often served as the vehicle for protest—a feature that is scarcely unique to the communist world. The evidence for this statement will be provided later, but by way of an explanation of this phenomenon, there are several aspects that in fact make music in general an ideal vehicle for social criticism and political protest. First, music is a kind of esoteric language whose messages, however clear to the target audience, may be excused as “entertainment” where unsympathetic listeners are concerned. Second, music creates a feeling (whether limited or intense) of collective solidarity among concert-listeners: Woodstock serves as an obvious example, or the “Polish Woodstock” at Jarocin as a less well-known one. Third, music has always served as a kind of escape valve (as the blues genre exemplifies), with the possibility always existing that an escape valve may be transformed into a beacon for mobilizing opinion.

Counterculture may be defined broadly or narrowly. Broadly defined, any culture which challenges the party's official culture, which is premised on the concept of a single, legitimate general interest, can be seen as a *counterculture*. More narrowly defined, counterculture could be seen as a set of ideas, orientations, tastes, and assumptions which differ systematically from those of the dominant culture, recognizing that *dominant* culture and *official* culture are not the same.⁷

Under the broader definition, one can identify four broad categories of counterculture, at least within the context of communist politics: political dissent and opposition, including peace movements, feminists, and ecological groups;⁸ religious alternatives, insofar as religious organizations propound alternative explanations of the purposes and meaning of social life;⁹ criminality and social deviance, chiefly insofar as these represent and further stimulate the desocialization of their practitioners;¹⁰ and foreign culture importations, usually via youth.¹¹ This chapter is concerned with a specific aspect of the last of these.

Music will be treated here as symbolic language—that is, as a medium of communication of given meanings. In some ways music is less precise than a spoken language; in other ways it is more precise. The nature of the communication process may in fact differ, but it is communication all the same. As such, music depends on conventions to convey its meanings.

These conventions may be specific to a given culture, subculture, or group, and those outside the reference group or lacking familiarity with its conventions will not be able to understand the music except as opaque confusion. To put it another way, those who listen to rock music habitually and those who avoid it necessarily *hear* rock differently.¹²

The Politics of Rock

The political effect of rock music depends on explicit (or perceived) messages in the lyrics and includes reinforcement of political attitudes through reference to the peer group.

Music has always lain within the sphere of the politically relevant for communist regimes. When the Bolsheviks first seized power, they were convinced that it would be necessary to create “a totally new culture, one that would eventually permeate every aspect of life and art.”¹³ Symptomatic of this orientation were the establishment in 1923 of the Association of Proletarian Musicians for the purpose of spawning ideologically approved music, and the activity of the Blue Blouse movement between 1925 and 1929, which, under director Boris Yuzhanin, took party views on events and issues of the day and set them to dance and song.¹⁴

Soviet wariness of popular music began with the fox-trot, which, like jazz, was seen as a “capitalist fifth column” aimed at subverting the forces of progress. The Soviets changed their minds, however, when the Nazis condemned the genre. If the Nazis hated it, the Soviets rationalized, perhaps it was not so bad after all; and besides, they were starting to develop a liking for jazz.

The emergence of rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s confronted the Soviets and their allied East European regimes with a new challenge. The Soviets feared that the overt rebelliousness of rock ‘n’ roll would have deleterious effects on the political consciousness of the young, and rock music was banned. “When the Beatles craze hit Russia in the mid-sixties, efforts to reinforce the ban were strengthened.”¹⁵ This proved untenable. A constant refrain—repeated by Soviet Politburo member Konstantin Chernenko in June 1983—was that through Western rock, “the enemy is trying to exploit youthful psychology.”¹⁶ As recently as 1988 the ultraconservative journal *Rabochaya gazeta* wrote that rock was “the devil’s work, morally corrupting, antinational and ideologically subversive.”¹⁷ In orthodox communist eyes, Western rock seemed to encourage the withdrawal from social engagement to a focus on personal feelings; the glorification of the West; the infiltration of political skepticism, if not outright dissidence; the introduction of cul-

tural standards, fashions, and behavioral syndromes independent of party control, and a general numbness thought to foster political indifference and passivity.

The focus on personal feelings, encouraged by songs about "feeling good" and "doing your own thing," was clearly unwelcome in the more strident regimes of Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and, until Gorbachev, the Soviet Union. Curtis notes that in the process of obsolescing big bands, rock 'n' roll encouraged "a new sense of the singer as an individual," a sentiment that after 1964 would grow into adulation of specific rock figures. This symbolic individualism also has its psychological counterpart in the stimulation of narcissism noted by Curtis.¹⁸ The Prague newspaper *Tribuna* commented, in this vein, that "individualization of life as a program does not have anything in common with a socialist way of life. It is motivated by old egotism; it is accompanied by petit bourgeois mentality."¹⁹ Similarly, *Sovetskaya Kultura* attacked rock idol Michael Jackson in June 1984 for being "apolitical in the extreme, a vegetarian, sentimental, and a religious believer,"²⁰ while *Literaturnaya gazeta* blasted Donna Summer for singing songs full of "vulgar sexual shrieks," describing her as a "marionette" of the "ideological masters" of the United States.²¹ The Soviets' refusal to issue a visa to Boy George in mid-1984 probably reflected a related concern—that is, that Boy George's transvestism might stimulate transvestism in the Soviet musical scene.

Glorification of Western culture is a latent feature in Western rock when transplanted to the communist world. Even if not consciously, Western rock promotes certain values and behavior which are associated with Western society, and there is a historical tendency for urban youth throughout the world, and perhaps especially in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, to be attracted to things Western, and to believe that the West is culturally superior. As an intellectual position, this orientation has a long history in Russia.²²

East European youth, including members of official youth organizations, commonly wear blue jeans, and sometimes stars-and-stripes emblems and crucifixes. The East German government forbade the wearing of blue jeans,²³ viewing the fashion as a potential "Trojan horse." American university sweatshirts became so popular, moreover, that by the late 1970s the Yugoslavs were making their own facsimiles and selling them in the stores. In Romania, however, the popularity of American university sweatshirts and of T-shirts with pictures of American pop singers was seen as evidence of "moral pollution."²⁴ Similarly, in Czechoslovakia, an official commentator warned that Western paraphernalia in music and fashion convert their

buyers into "walking advertising pillars for Western companies" and thereby "shape and nourish illusions about the Western way of life and the superiority of the capitalist social system and impede the shaping of a socialist life-style."²⁵ In Bulgaria, where only about a third of "pop music" broadcast on Bulgarian television and radio was native (the rest being mostly American or British), young people started making and wearing exact facsimiles of Western military uniforms in the early 1980s, American and British being the most popular.²⁶

The infiltration of political dissidence is a more serious problem, however, and East European rock groups repeatedly drifted toward social criticism and political commentary. One of the best-known rock groups in Eastern Europe was a Czech group, Plastic People of the Universe. This outspoken group was put on trial in 1976 after releasing an album titled *Egon Bundy's Happy Hearts Club Banned*.²⁷ The album came with a sixty-page softcover booklet entitled "The Merry Ghetto," and included a song with the message, "war is hell." The album was banned by the authorities.²⁸ A similar fate befell the East German Renft Combo (see chapter 2).

Among rock groups of the 1980s, the now-defunct Yugoslav band Pankrti (Bastards), based in Ljubljana, was one of the more daring. In open mockery of the partisan mythology, the group proposed to release an album showing a young man hugging a war monument, and to call the album *The Bastards in Collaboration with the State*. The producer circumspectly disallowed the title and refused to run a picture using any monument from World War II. The Bastards therefore staged the same pose using a monument from World War I, and titled the album *Bastards—Lovers of the State*.²⁹

The fourth epiphenomenon associated with rock music is *the propagation of cultural standards, fashions, and behavioral syndromes independent of party control*. To the extent that they persist in spite of party antagonism, they become implicitly antiparty, quite independently of any political messages being propounded. Punk and heavy metal countercultures penetrated the USSR, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, imposing a cultural specificity in fashion with rejectionist and nihilist overtones. In the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, punk brought cultural neonazism in tow, with the now-defunct Slovenian punk group 4-R (Fourth Reich) appearing attired in Nazi uniforms.³⁰ The Albanian party paper *Zeri i popullit* put it this way:

To accept the extravagant bourgeois and revisionist mode of dress is to create an appropriate terrain for undermining socialist attitudes, behavior, and convictions. To think that long hair and narrow pants or

miniskirts have nothing to do with one's world outlook, one's ideology, is as naive as it is dangerous. Not to fight alien fashions means to give up the fight against the penetration of the degenerate bourgeois and revisionist ideology.³¹

Finally, rock music is seen to produce a *general numbness*, blurring concentration. Party spokesmen sometimes argued that the passivity and retreat into indifference fostered by certain bands was a deliberate ploy by "the bourgeois manipulators of thought, ideologues, and subversive centers" of Western capitalism.³² Czechoslovak communist newspapers compared the "new wave of rock" to a drug, arguing that the "deafening noise, monotonous tunes, and primitive, often vulgar texts" are well chosen to *inculcate* nihilism and cynicism.³³

The bottom line for more orthodox elites, as phrased by Albanian communist spokespersons, was that liberal attitudes in arts and fashion (underpinned by an ultraliberal philosophy expressed in songs) lead to liberal attitudes in morals, which in turn lead to liberal attitudes in politics. Political liberalism thus undermines communist rule, which could lead to the overthrow of the communist power monopoly.³⁴ It seemed only logical for Vladimir Makarov, writing in the Krasnodar youth newspaper *Komsomolets Kubani*, to link Western rock with a CIA master plan to subvert the communist bloc. Indeed, claimed Makarov, Allen Dulles once "said that if we teach young Soviet people to sing our songs and dance to them, then sooner or later we shall teach them to think in the way we need them to."³⁵

The Polish Rock Scene

Rock music and fashions have hit every East European country to one extent or another (probably even including Albania). Their most tangible impact has been in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The three most popular rock countercultures in Poland in the late 1980s were punk, popper, and hippie (possibly in that order). The Polish punk scene is diverse. There were at least seven types of Polish punks, including punks and skins, skanks, Krasowcy, skinheads, and others. There were probably well over three hundred active rock groups in Poland in 1984, including numerous punk bands, in such cities as Warsaw, Gdańsk, Nowa Huta, and Kraków.³⁶ Polish Radio broadcasts as much as twenty-four hours of *Western* rock per week on channel 3, and ten hours per week on channel 4. And a survey conducted in 1982 by Leszek Janik found that listening to rock music was the most popular form of recreation for young Poles, and

that more than 70 percent of Polish high school students were "well acquainted" with rock music and culture.³⁷

Polish rock is infused with politics, and many of the leading rock bands have taken overtly political names, such as Delirium Tremens, The Fifth Column, SS-20 (renamed, under pressure, The Deserter), Pathology of Pregnancy, Verdict, Crisis, Shortage, Paralysis, and Protest. Other well-known groups include TSA, Republika, Perfect, Kombi, Exodus, and Turbo. Where punk is concerned, this trend may have been reinforced, in particular, by the despondency created by the suppression of Solidarity and numerous other independent structures in December 1981. The regime is especially sensitive to punk, but uncertain how to cope with it.

In August 1984 the fifteenth annual Jarocin rock festival attracted nearly 19,000 youth to listen to sixty Polish groups perform. Three hundred groups had applied for regime permission, but only sixty were approved after submitting their songs for clearance. The uncertainty in such a procedure is illustrated by the case of the approved group, Perfect, which had properly submitted the texts of its songs to the authorities. At the concert, the approved line "we want to be ourselves" was replaced with "we want to beat ZOMO,"³⁸ and the approved line "don't be afraid of anyone" was replaced by "don't be afraid of Jaruzelski."³⁹ The group was subsequently disbanded by the authorities, but staged a comeback at the 1987 Jarocin rock festival.

Most new wave bands were unable to obtain official clearance to cut a record, but private tapes of garage performances proliferated. Although Polish punk is a Western import, Polish punks felt they represented a purer, even superior, strain of punk culture. "Those in Britain sing 'no future,'" said a leading Polish punk vocalist. "But I'd like to be on welfare payments there! If you want to know what is 'no future,' come to Poland!"⁴⁰

This bleakness colored the lyrics sung by Polish punk bands in the mid-1980s. The punk band WC, for instance, offered a nihilistic vision in one song:

Posers, fetishists—destroy them all!
A generation of conformists—destroy them all!
Your ideals—destroy them all!⁴¹

And in another song, WC mocked the coercive foundation upon which the post-Solidarity regime was built:

I am a tank, I am a tank.
I am strong, I am healthy.
I can only beat everyone . . .

I can go only [straight] ahead
 And I do not need to eat.
 I am afraid of nothing,
 You are tight—so what[!]⁴²

Other bands, with names like Cadaver and Clinically Dead, projected despair that deepened into resignation and apathy. Another band, Manaam, won critical acclaim in 1983 for the release of an album called *Night Patrol*. One of its songs was set against the background of wailing sirens and the sounds of breaking glass, and, in a dispassionate falsetto, described daily life in martial-law Poland in these terms:

Shadows in the dark city
 Linger through the night.
 Danger lurks by your doorway,
 Don't turn out the light . . .
 Don't go out alone
 Evil is prowling . . .
 Night patrol's alert
 Making sure that you're OK
 That you don't get hurt,
 Anxious to protect you.
 Everything's all right.
 Shadows in the sad city
 Bleed through the night.⁴³

Lyrics like these have drawn charges of "fascism" from the party dailies *Żołnierz Wolności* and *Trybuna Ludu*.

Manaam's lead singer, Kora Jackowska, was among the most outspoken, and won prizes from the youth weekly *Sztandar Młodych*, and the magazine *Jazz Forum*. Jackowska also came to the regime's attention, and for good reason, since she has not shied away from searing commentary. In one criticized song, for example, she sang:

Treason, treason
 Cunning, cold, calculating . . .
 Broken promises, broken light,
 White is black and black is white . . .
 Don't talk back, turn the other cheek . . .
 Talk out of line if you dare.
 Don't make me look, I don't want to see.

Is everyone a traitor or is it just me?
 Treason sneaks into your bed.⁴⁴

What happened in Poland, as this song reflects, is that the nihilism and skepticism of much of rock, and of punk especially, became more focused, more clearly antigovernment. Rock culture in Poland was thus overtly political.

In the early 1980s Polish rock had an antiregime edge, and tended to blame the regime for society's pathologies. By the late 1980s rock groups began to sing a new song: people were responsible for their own problems and had enslaved themselves.⁴⁵

To deal with the groundswell of "social pathology" (as the regime called it) among Polish youth, Warsaw issued directives in January 1984, advising school teachers and administrators to compile lists of punks, hippies, "fascists," and social "misfits."⁴⁶ These lists were turned over to the police, and those thus identified were placed under surveillance. In addition, the Ministry of Education drew up a set of "social preventative and resocializing measures" aimed at "eliminating the causes of poor social adaptation" and "protecting children and young people from the effects of social pathology."⁴⁷

In the West, punk is already passé. Not so in Poland, where punk became a favorite vehicle for expressing youth's complete despair of the system. The punk group *Insects*, for instance, boasted that it took the name "because you can't kill off all the insects." Another group, *Göring's Underpants*, combined a coquetry with nazism with outright ribaldry—an odd combination. Their motto: "the underground must piss against the wind!" Another group took the name *Trybuna Brudu* (Dirt Tribune), which rhymes with *Trybuna Ludu* (*People's Tribune*), the communist party paper. General Secretary Jaruzelski confessed on Polish television that he did not understand all this "screchy youth music."⁴⁹ So much the better, as far as punks were concerned.

Aside from punks, a satanist movement has also emerged within the Polish rock scene. The rock group *Kat*, which revels in satanic imagery and whose most recent album (1987) is titled *666*, is in part responsible for this trend. Polish satanists dress in black adorned with satanic emblems (such as 666 or the devil's pentagram, a star within a circle), and wear chains and an upside-down cross pendant. A group of one hundred satanists attended the 1986 Jarocin rock festival, where they burned a large cross and celebrated a black mass.⁴⁹

Straight-laced in Czechoslovakia

The Czechoslovak rock scene presented a striking contrast to that in Poland. In communist Czechoslovakia, the kind of noisy defiance displayed by Polish groups was out of question. Lyrics had to be more subtle if the band planned to stay out of prison, and the singers had to be content with irony or, at most, ridicule and ambiguous sarcasm. An untitled Czech number from the early 1980s illustrates this quite clearly:

Women leave me unmoved
 Emotions I scorn
 I'm well liked at work
 My record stays clean.
 I welcome after-hours chores:
 The bosses always get my vote.
 I ask for extra duties free
 And hope they will take note . . .
 I'll miss [my] date
 But not the meeting—
 Union of Youth, you know.
 Sessions and lectures
 All day long.
 Friends of Cremation
 Have asked me to call.⁵⁰

By contrast, the Czechoslovak group Šafrán produced a song entitled "Prison," in the late 1970s:

As we eat our bread in prison,
 each of us can be certain,
 that he has perpetrated terrible things
 and therefore sits behind bars.
 Leave me in peace with politics,
 I am a criminal:
 I could not keep my mouth shut,
 Now I am a prisoner.⁵¹

These lyrics clearly went beyond irony and ambiguity, as did the regime's response. Šafrán members Jaroslav Hutka and Vlastimír Třešňák were arrested, abused by the police, brought to trial, and eventually deported to the West, despite thousands of letters of protest from young fans.

Rock music arrived in Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s and quickly

took hold. The Comets, a Prague-based group, gave Czechoslovakia's first major rock concert in spring 1962, and in 1963 Czechoslovakia saw the launching of *Melodie*, the country's first rock magazine. By 1964, there were 115 big-beat groups in Prague alone, and by 1985 more than 1,000 such groups country-wide. In Bratislava a young man who called himself George L. Every put together the James Bond Club, whose members, generally twenty-year-old university dropouts, wore jeans, let their hair grow, and gathered together to listen to rock music.⁵²

During the liberal phase of Dubček's rule in 1968, a Prague psychedelic band called the Primitives graduated from "fire-and-light" shows to generally crazy "animal happenings" in which the musicians had special costumes and everybody pelted everybody else with fish and birds. During the "Fish Fest," band and audience also hurled water at each other, so that the extramusical elements finally became more important than the music itself.⁵³

The end of the Dubček era meant the end (until 1989) of liberalism in official policy toward rock, among other things. For twenty years, the Prague regime was to remain suspicious of *all* rock music. Yet certain groups were the beneficiaries of official sanction, such as Olympus, Abraxus, and Catapult, though the last of these was banned in 1983 from performing in central Bohemia, including Prague. Another group, the Yellow Dog Band, changed its name in 1983 to The Musical Entertainment Group of O. Hejma, and adjusted its repertoire in order to stay off the blacklist. The straight-laced Czechoslovak regime thus forced the more daring music underground.

Yet even among those groups that received official support, lyrics could be provocative. If they had not been, it is difficult to see how they could have established any credibility among youth. An example is the rock band Bronz, which performed a rock opera in Prague with official support. One of its songs included the line, "Our master is king; his name is heroin."⁵⁴

The 1976 suppression of Plastic People of the Universe and DG-307, two of the most popular groups in their day, was followed by a general clampdown on the rock scene.⁵⁵ From 1976 to 1981 Czechoslovak authorities kept a tight rein on rock music. The bureaucrats decided what was permissible and what was not, though these decisions were not taken on the basis of aesthetic training or expertise. As a rule, authorities were most concerned about lyrics, but two talented musicians, Vladimír Merta and Vladimír Mišík, ran into trouble after authorities decided their music was "too inventive and interesting."⁵⁶

In the late 1970s avant-garde groups like Electrobuss, Extempore, Stehlík (Goldfinch), and Žába (Frog) began to strain the prescribed limits in

semiofficial concerts. Their performances played havoc with rhythm and melody, interspersed periods of silence between songs (in one case for half an hour), and naturally attracted the attention of the police. It was not until 1981, however, that punk, by then five years old, reached Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovak punk bands such as *Jasná Paka* (Patent), *Letadlo* (Aeroplane), and *Pražský Výběr* (Prague Selection) were able to hold a number of concerts in Prague by mid-1982. Their songs dealt with sexual problems and the drab and depressing life in Prague apartment buildings.⁵⁷ Various student clubs also began to organize punk concerts about this time. Since every concert had to be cleared by a party official, it appears that some of the supervisors of musical tastes were inclined to ease up.

In March 1983, however, an aggressively abusive article by Jan Kryzl in *Tribuna* signaled a stiffening of resolve on the regime's part. Rock music, charged Kryzl, encouraged

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.⁵⁸

Patent and other bands were banned, and many groups were stripped of their managers and sponsors. The official blacklist of "unrecommended" rock groups, which contained thirty-six entries in 1981, was tangibly augmented, and by September 1983 the blacklist for the central Bohemia region alone listed twenty-seven bands.⁵⁹ Punk bands came to be considered "public enemies."

Melodie, the officially supported pop music journal which had established a substantial following among devotees of the rock scene, fell into disfavor. The entire, highly qualified editorial staff was ejected, and replaced by people lacking the appropriate professional credentials.

The crackdown stimulated public outcry. *Tribuna* was flooded with letters of protest, and the issue which had carried Kryzl's rather overstated article became a high-demand commodity. The Jazz Section of the Czech Union of Musicians published a reply to Kryzl in May 1983, linking punk with *left-wing* politics and pointing out that the increase in social violence in Czechoslovakia attributed to punk predated its arrival in that country.

The dissident movement Charter 77 also spoke out on behalf of Czechoslovak rock groups. *Tribuna* itself, in a series of follow-up articles, mused ambiguously on the "lack of knowledge" of Czechoslovak youth⁶⁰ and even seemed to back off: "[L]eading officials, who are usually people belonging to the older generation, should realize that their notions of music and its 'correct' form are not necessarily always adequate and realistic," hence there should be "greater tolerance of the divergent tastes of different generations. . . . We should support searching, the raising of questions, critical reasoning, and the solution of real problems, even if this entails taking risks."⁶¹

Public outcry had only the slightest impact, however, on regime policy. The protesting Jazz Section of the Czech Union of Musicians, which had published a history of Czechoslovak rock, was subsequently harassed, and eventually ordered to disband in October 1984.⁶² A rock festival planned for June 1983 in the village of Zábčice was cancelled by the authorities at the last minute. The blacklist was enforced, and recalcitrant bands retreated to garage performances. An exceptional relaxation came in spring 1984, when Czechoslovak authorities allowed British rock star Elton John to play in Prague. He had already been booked to perform in Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.⁶³

As of late 1986 there were more than fifty popular rock groups in existence in Czechoslovakia, including punk bands enjoying large followings, and an estimated two hundred lesser-known bands, many playing illegally. In June 1986 the government allowed the musicians to hold a rock festival at the Palace of Culture in Prague. Some eighty rock groups took part, including two Prague bands, *Bossa Nova* and *Vitacit*, Brno's *Z Kopce*, *Genesis* from eastern Bohemia and *Yetti* from northern Bohemia.⁶⁴ Zdenko Pavelka, evidently an advocate of rock music, wrote that the success of the festival showed that "it [was] not necessary for rock music to languish somewhere in dark corners."⁶⁵

But for a rock group in Czechoslovakia to emerge out of the "dark corners" and obtain a professional license, its members had to pass a written test covering topics ranging from musical theory to the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, this test proved an obstacle for many groups.

East Germany: Echoes of Stirner

Philosophical nihilism like that espoused by punk counterculture is not new to East Germany. On the contrary, Berlin is its original home. It was here that Max Stirner (1806–56) penned his famous work, *The Ego and His Own*, in which he denounced socialism, communism, liberalism, philan-

thropy, altruism, religion, law, government, and morality.⁶⁷ Stirner's incantations—"The people is dead—Up with me!"⁶⁸ "Everything sacred is a tie, a fetter,"⁶⁹ "My freedom becomes complete only when it is my might,"⁷⁰ and "All truth by itself is dead. . . . Of itself it is valueless"⁷¹—find resonances in contemporary punk. It may be further noted that a nihilist-anarchist movement in Germany in the 1890s was heavily influenced by Stirner's ideas.⁷²

Rock music "invaded" East Germany in 1957, when young people at an unprecedented Leipzig concert heard the music of Little Richard, Fats Domino, Bill Haley and the Comets, Peter Kraus, Hazy Osterwald, and Ted Herold.⁷³ But it was only in the 1963–64 period that East German rock music, as such, got off the ground. In the meantime, authorities had passed a resolution concerning "Appearances of Decadence and Decay." The regime press and media attacked rock music sharply for several years, but the genre was never expressly forbidden. Only in the late 1960s did the authorities' attitude begin to soften;⁷⁴ yet, as early as 1960 the regime had given its approval to an initiative from Canadian Perry Friedman to stage a hoote-nanny in Berlin's Sports Hall. The event proved a success and was repeated the following year. It became an annual event, and in 1966 led to the creation of the national Song Movement within the framework of the Free German Youth (FGY) organization.⁷⁵ The new beat could, authorities calculated, add vigor to "progressive" impulses.

With Erich Honecker's accession to the SED leadership in early 1971 came a new approach, embodied in the newly developed concept of "youth dance music" by which authorities now proposed to refer to rock. The ministry of culture explained that young people clearly wanted a new dance genre, but insisted that this genre could be developed without overlays of "Western decadence."⁷⁶ The annual Festival of Political Song was launched in 1971, and over the years has drawn folk, pop, folk rock, and rock groups from all over the world, including the West. At the fifteenth Festival of Political Song in 1985, for example, the Polish rock duo Urszula and Budka Suflera sang a song about Auschwitz taken from a larger rock song cycle, while the eighteenth Festival in 1988 included a song dedicated to Sandinista Nicaragua.⁷⁷

Rock music remained political in East Germany. In 1974, for instance, the Dresden-based Lift put on their "Solidarity Concert" for the people of Chile on the first anniversary of the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende. That same group produced the symphony-length "Che Guevara Suite" in 1978. There have also been a number of rock concerts for peace.⁷⁸

The banning of the Renft Combo in 1974 (see chapter 2) may have sent a chill through the East German rock scene, but it neither stifled musical creativity nor ended the careers of that group's component musicians. Renft members Peter "Caesar" Glaser (vocals, guitar, flute) and Jochen Hohl (keyboards) went on to found the highly successful rock quintet Karussell, which received a variety of state awards and decorations, including the FGY Prize for Art and the Diploma of the Ministry of Culture.⁷⁹

Indeed, despite the close watch of the authorities, East German rock groups occasionally sent out subtle messages, albeit typically with restraint. The mood was one more of resignation, however, than of protest. Take, for example, rock composer Kurt Demmler's lines,

They deny me any laughter
They deny me any song
They deny me land and life
Which passes me by.⁸⁰

The mood is one of helplessness. Or again, there is the musically innovative group Silly, considered by many to be one of the best groups in East Germany. On a 1985 album, *Liebeswalzer*, the group sings,

I look so fondly in the distance
with my binoculars.
I look so fondly in the distance,
that makes me happy.
The distance is a nicer place
though when I'm there, it turns its face.
The distance is, where I am not.
I walk and walk and do not get there.⁸¹

For a nation divided in two, with families split by a political boundary and condemned to follow West German events on television, this text was not so innocent.

The best-known East German group is probably the Puhdys. With fifteen albums to their credit by 1988, including one of 1950s American rock favorites sung in English, the Puhdys were one of East Germany's longest lasting groups (established 1965) and one of its most decorated, having won the National Prize for outstanding artists in 1982.⁸²

Rather than turning its guns on all rock indiscriminately (like the Czechoslovak communists), East German communists tried to encourage *tame* rock, and to put it to use. A decree on discotheques issued in 1973 required "discothequers" (disc jockeys) to enroll in a course on ideological

and political thinking. Once they graduated, discothequers were expected to ensure that at least 60 percent of the music they played originated from the bloc, and to intersperse topical information and "positive" political commentary between hits.⁸³ The FGJ operated 5,000–6,000 discotheques in the early 1980s, and most discothequers were also functionaries of the youth organization. The FGJ even organized a major public rock concert in October 1983. For as long as the communists held power in Berlin, it would appear that their policy paid off. In contrast to neighboring Poland and Czechoslovakia, there was a sense that rock music was not bad in and of itself. In fact, by the 1980s East German educators included selected rock "classics" in their lesson plans in order to teach youngsters about an important aspect of social and cultural life.⁸⁴ This qualified acceptance of certain kinds of rock—though not of punk—created a "grey zone" in which many East German youth found it possible to function.

The Yugo-Rock Scene

Of the remaining East European countries, it is clearly Yugoslavia which has the liveliest rock scene. It is also politically the most innocent, partly because of the tangibly more liberal disposition of the regime in the cultural sphere. Much of the "Yu-rock" scene is either new wave or a local synthesis of "old wave," new wave, and indigenous innovations. Croatian groups like Dee Dee Mellow (which has made use of Peruvian and Indian folk melodies) and Psihomodo-Pop, and the Slovenian group Videosex, serve up a lighter fare—though Videosex's explicit treatment of lesbianism, sadism, and voyeurism created a sensation. In the mid-1980s break dancing (*brejkdens*) hit Yugoslavia too.⁸⁵ A Belgrade group called In Trouble became one of the most popular rock groups in the country by pointedly shunning social messages and scandals. In Trouble's lead singer, Milan Delčić, disarmingly confessed to *Vjesnik*, "We wanted to escape the [Balkan shock] style and be just an ordinary rock group."⁸⁶

The degree of acceptance of rock in Yugoslavia is implicit in the wide coverage given to rock music in Yugoslav periodicals. The Zagreb free-lance writer Darko Glavan started a regular column about rock music for *Vjesnik* in 1972, and *Politika* began similar coverage a few years later.⁸⁷ *Borba*, *Politika ekspres*, and the Macedonian newspapers *Nova Makedonija* and *Večer* have also established regular columns devoted to rock music, with occasional articles appearing in the magazines *Start* (Zagreb), *Danas* (Zagreb), and *Mlad Borec* (Skopje).

There are also numerous magazines catering to the rock audience. The

best known is *Pop-Rock* (formerly *Rock*, Belgrade). *Disko Selektor* (Skopje) appears in three languages: Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, and English. A third magazine, *Ritam*, began publication in February 1989. Teenagers have a special magazine of their own—*Ćao* (which replaced the now-defunct *ITD*).⁸⁸ There are also regular rock columns in *Iskra* (Split), *Val* (Rijeka), *Valter* (Sarajevo), *Naši dani* (Sarajevo), *Polet* (Zagreb), *Studentski list* (Zagreb), *NIN* (Novi Sad), *Mladina* (Ljubljana), *Ekran Revija* (Skopje), and *Una* (Sarajevo). Rock records have also become big business, and most major cities (including Sarajevo, Skopje, and Split) can boast local groups.

As of 1982 there were roughly three thousand professional and amateur rock groups in Yugoslavia. As of 1987 there were thirty to fifty professional rock groups in the country, and perhaps as many as five thousand amateur groups.⁸⁹ Among these groups one finds a wide variety of subgenres ranging from rockabilly (Tonny Montano) to punk (Pankrti, now defunct) to industrial rock (Borghesia) to protest rock (Fish Soup) to heavy metal (Wild Strawberries) to folk rock (Plavi orkestar) to various strands of new wave and hard rock, and a specifically Vojvodinan strain called "šogor rock," which blends traditional Hungarian folk music with a soft rock beat.⁹⁰

The most controversial rock group in Yugoslavia today is surely Laibach, a Slovenian group with a greater following in the United States and Western Europe than in its native country. The members of Laibach wear nazi-style brown shirts, uniforms, and jackboots in their concert appearances, festoon the halls with banners bearing the hammer and sickle, the red star, the swastika, and the iron cross, and distribute maps showing an enlarged Slovenia. Their music is unabashedly fascist in inspiration, imitating nazi music-making and Wagnerian music drama. Their lyrics are often nonsensical or tautological, as in the nearly endless repetition of the refrain "Life is life" in the song of that title (on the album *Opus Dei*, released in 1988). Their performances are not designed to be entertaining but to appeal more directly to the psychic space where the libido comes into contact with the superego, and accomplish this through evocative cult celebrations of the collective.

In a 1984 "Resolution" Laibach alleged that its purpose was to contribute to the construction of a world totalitarian system:

Laibach takes over an organizational system of work after the model of industrial production and totalitarianism—which means, not the individual, but the organization speaks. Our work is industrial, our language political. [Laibach's] organizational activity is an intense agitation and a constant systematic ideological offensive. Any social activity

affects the mass. Laibach functions as a creative illusion, with a censored program. Laibach's musical approach is a move to the area of pure politicization of sounds, a means of manipulating the masses. When, in politically and economically complicated situations, the antagonisms in society become strained, only force remains as the ultimate *ratio* of social integration. [This] force must take the form of systematic physical and psychic terror. For the totalitarian government, the systematic terror becomes a constitutional instrument of authority.

Through the mystic, erotic, mythological sound, constituted in an ambivalence between fear and fascination, which rudimentarily affects the consciousness of people, through stage performances of ritualized demonstrations of political power, and through other manipulative means, Laibach practices systematic psycho-physical terror, in order to effectively discipline [the masses], which results in a state of collective aphasia, which is the principle of social organization. By darkening the consumer's mind, [Laibach's music] drives him into a state of humble contrition and total obedience. By destroying every trait of individuality, it melts individuals into a mass, and mass into a humble collective body.⁹¹

Although the resolution was melodramatically overstated to the point of suggesting tongue-in-cheek, Laibach's music unmistakably evokes an interest that is not purely satirical but is best seen as a sublimated form of "pop fascism" enabling aggressive instincts to be channeled innocently, rather than as the literal instrument of a real fascist movement, as Laibach pretends. At any rate, the liberal-minded local authorities in Slovenia have taken all this in stride. Whether Laibach intends its message as a critique of communism or as an advocacy of fascism or as thought-energizing art, the authorities (both communist and postcommunist) have felt comfortable knowing that Laibach is unlikely to stir up a neofascist movement.

The Serbian group Fish Soup has far greater resonance among the Yugoslav public and treats political themes in a way that reflects Yugoslav thinking much more accurately. Led by published poet⁹² and "master of verbal terrorism"⁹³ Bora Djordjević, Fish Soup does not shy away from politically provocative themes. In its 1987 album *Ujed za Dušu*, the group sings a satirical song equating the communist party with the Mafia.⁹⁴ Djordjević hurls himself headlong into controversy, whether in his songs, his poems, or in regular columns for the magazine *Duga*. In one of the latter he tackled the sensitive problem of Kosovo, offering an independent perspective. His poetry is often scatological, sexual, or political. In

one poem he assailed the mythology of the National Liberation Struggle (NOB):

Some were really in the NOB,
but by now they are all buried.
Those who are concerned with the NOB today
are only concerned with themselves.⁹⁵

Djordjević has also been outspoken in numerous interviews with the press, predicting civil war in Yugoslavia on at least one occasion.⁹⁶ In 1987 Djordjević provoked the authorities with a fifteen-minute reading of some of his provocative poems before an audience of four thousand that included the mayor of Belgrade and other party dignitaries. He created a stir, and was later taken to court on charges of three verbal misdemeanors. The judge threw the case out of court, praising Djordjević as a "true poet, who loves his people."⁹⁷

Among male solo vocalists in Yugoslavia, one may mention Oliver Mandić, a Belgrade musician who created a small storm in the mid-1980s by appearing in drag, and Rambo Amadeus, a kind of PDQ Bach of rock music, who once created a concert piece for twelve vacuum cleaners.⁹⁸ The best-known female solo vocalist is Snežana Mišković Viktorija, a Belgrade-based musician who was named top female vocalist by *Pop-Rock* readers in a 1988 survey.⁹⁹

Among other groups in the Yugoslav rock scene one should mention Leb i Sol (based in Skopje and generally recognized as the best instrumental ensemble in the country), Bijelo dugme (Sarajevo, the "Beatles" of Yugoslavia), Belgrade groups Bajaga and YU-Group, Indeksi, and the now-defunct bands Azra and Kornjaci. The newest sensation in 1988 was YU-Madonna, alias Andrea Makoter of Maribor, who began imitating her Western namesake, copying everything from singing style and mannerisms to makeup and attire.¹⁰⁰

Increases in the popularity of heavy metal have also been noticed,¹⁰¹ but neither the old LCY nor the postcommunist elites have betrayed any serious concerns, either with this subgenre or with rock music in general. The consensus among the elite seems to be that rock music is merely an innocent diversion, at worst an ineluctable form of escapism. Besides, Yugoslavia has long been open to Western cultural penetration to a far greater extent than other countries in Eastern Europe; hence, the specter of a new strain of influence is intrinsically less threatening in the Yugoslav case.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe

In Romania and Bulgaria, by contrast, a true rock scene has been slower to develop. Discotheques have become popular in both countries,¹⁰² and groups like Sphinx in Romania and Crickets in Bulgaria have built up enthusiastic domestic audiences. By the mid-1980s even punk rock had penetrated Bulgaria and Romania.¹⁰³

The Bulgarian communists were not friendly to rock music, especially Western rock records. Hence, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers issued a decree on 17 February 1984 aimed at Bulgarian radio and discotheques that popularize Western music,¹⁰⁴ Georgi Dzhagarov, vice president of the State Council and chairman of the Standing Commission on Spiritual Values, went so far as to declare that "the whole country has been disquieted by the muddy stream of musical trends sweeping away all the true values of music."¹⁰⁵ The solution, as the Bulgarian Communist Party saw it at that time, was to revive Bulgarian folk music and dances.

Bulgaria's earliest rock 'n' roll groups—Bandi's Boys (Bandaratsite) and the Silver Bracelets (Srebarnite Grivni)—were inspired by British bands, especially the Beatles and the Searchers. These groups continued to be influential in the Bulgarian rock scene well into the 1970s.

The leading Bulgarian bands today are the Crickets (established in 1966), FSB (Formation Studio Balkanton, composed of session musicians who obtained permission to put together a group), Tangra (formed in 1982), LZ, Diane Express, Factor (a hard rock group), and Signal. Dr. Doolittle (a progressive rock group from Varna) and heavy metal groups Lucifer (also from Varna) and Era (from Sofia) are also popular.¹⁰⁶ The Crickets created a commotion at a 1980 concert at Sofia's University Hall with their song "Wedding Day," which lamented the loss of freedom. Exactly what kind of freedom the group *really* had in mind was insidiously suggested by the fact that the lyrics were set to the melody of the old Beatles' song, "Back in the USSR." The audience became wild, the police told the audience to sit down, and when the audience failed to respond, the police turned on all the lights in the hall. In protest, the Crickets abandoned their approved program and played only Rolling Stones and Beatles for the rest of the night, forcing the police to retreat to the sidelines. After that concert, the Crickets were out of sight for some time, possibly as a result of an "administrative" decision. Similarly, Signal fell afoul of the authorities in 1982 by stirring up "excessive excitement" at a concert in the Black Sea port of Burgas.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps surprisingly, in 1987 *Narodna kultura* (a magazine published by the Committee of Culture) and *Pogled* (the weekly organ of the Journal-

ists' Union) ran articles stating that emergent informal groups of punks, heavy metalists, rockers, neo-hippies, and *discari* (disco fans) should not be seen as pathological, and that party officials and schoolteachers should accept young people on their own terms and not engage in sterile monologues.¹⁰⁸

One of those associated with this tentative liberal view of rock culture was Vasil Prodanov, a professor of philosophy. In an article for the 24 July 1987 issue of *Otechestven Front*, Prodanov warned that in the absence of tactical liberalization, these informal groupings could develop into centers of opposition to the party.¹⁰⁹ The party daily *Rabotnicheskoto delo* seconded this suggestion with a prominent article by Dragomir Dakov and Mariana Mihaylova, which cited the opinions of experts on youth policy and rock performers, including members of heavy metal bands Lucifer and Era. As Stephen Ashley notes, *Rabotnicheskoto delo*

entirely supported Prodanov's plea for tolerance and concluded with a series of recommendations that would revolutionize party policy toward hard rock music and "informal" youth groups. It called, in short, for official acceptance of heavy metal and punk music and for the relaxation of youth club regulations to abolish membership schemes, drop entrance charges, and permit a more diverse range of nonpolitical and recreational activities. The authors proposed that television and radio allot more time to hard rock music and encourage amateur Bulgarian groups. It advocated the establishment of a national rock concert agency to organize performances throughout Bulgaria on behalf of professional, semiprofessional, and amateur musicians. Lastly, it called for the improvement or construction of facilities for performing rock music in every region of the country.¹¹⁰

It is vital to keep in mind that this is a form of tactical liberalization, in which the *instruments* and *methods* of policy are changed in order to ensure the best chance of realizing an unchanged policy *goal*—in this case, the effective socialization of Bulgarian youth. In line with this new thinking, Bulgaria's cultural czars allowed the punk group Kontrol to record an album with the state-owned Balkanton label in 1989,—the first time a nonprofessional rock band in Bulgaria was granted that opportunity.

This tactic notwithstanding, Bulgarian rock performers have become more outspoken about social issues since 1986, and have sung about such topics as AIDS, drug abuse, ecological problems, the powers of the bureaucracy, adolescents' conflicts with their parents, and young Bulgarians' frustrations over the lack of personal and economic independence.¹¹¹

In keeping with its general neo-medievalism, the situation in Romania was much more difficult for rock groups while Ceaușescu was in power. During Romania's "mini-Cultural Revolution" in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ceaușescu suppressed the rock scene wholesale.¹¹² Subsequently the rock scene reemerged, but it was drawn into "patriotic" currents supportive of Ceaușescu's cultural line. Ceaușescu dreamt of witnessing the creation of a specifically Romanian rock genre that would underpin his official policy of national chauvinism, but a 1975 Romanian study found that young people were increasingly drawn to American-style folk music rather than to traditional Romanian music.

The leading Romanian rock bands in the 1980s were Phoenix and Post Scriptum (both symphonic rock ensembles), Sphinx (which evolved from symphonic rock to "sympho-pop"), and Progressive TM (a reference to the once-proscribed practice of transcendental meditation). There are also heavy metal bands in Romania, specifically Domino, Compact, and Iris.¹¹³

Ceaușescu's twenty-four-year rule was deadly to Romanian rock music. It was bad enough that high-quality instruments were unavailable except through the black market or overseas, but Ceaușescu's energy conservation plan was especially deadly. As one Westerner observed, "How could you expect roll-and-roll to survive in a country where there is barely enough electricity to power a light bulb, let alone drive an electric guitar?"¹¹⁴

With the fall of Ceaușescu in December 1989 Romania opened up somewhat. Between January and March 1990, Hungarian rock groups crossed the border repeatedly to perform for their ethnic kin in Transylvania. Meanwhile, in February 1990 several Yugoslav rock groups staged a mammoth three-day rock festival in Timișoara before 20,000 enthusiastic fans. Among the groups performing were Valentino, Viktorija, Galija, Bajaga and the Instructors, and Fish Soup.¹¹⁵

Finally, there is the more relaxed atmosphere in Hungary, which brought in the film version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in June 1983, staged a mammoth rock concert in the village of Pilisborosjenő in August 1983 (in connection with the filming of a rock horror film, *The Predator*), and premiered the first Hungarian rock opera, *Stephen the King*, on 20 August 1983, St. Stephen's Day.

Disco had already become big business, with some four hundred licensed youth clubs in Budapest by early 1982, and additional dance clubs in almost every town and village.¹¹⁶ But it was *Stephen the King* that stirred the most discussion. Based on the play by Miklós Boldizsár, the opera relates the story of Stephen's founding of the Hungarian kingdom in 1001 and his conversion to Christianity. It opened to an impressive crowd of 10,000

spectators. The opera is unabashedly nationalistic and "ends with a poignant scene in which the music celebrating the newly crowned king changes almost imperceptibly into the national anthem, and a large Hungarian flag appears over the crest of the hill. A provincial daily reported that the applause that followed [one performance] lasted for 45 minutes."¹¹⁷ The production drew an emotional response from Hungarian audiences, and the work was quickly contracted for performances for both record and film. And while dramatist Boldizsár denied any interest in using the opera as a vehicle for commentary on the present,¹¹⁸ opera director Gábor Koltay told an interviewer that part of the opera's popularity is attributable to the continued relevance of its themes: "the question of how a small nation finds its way to survive is always valid."¹¹⁹

Only four bands were able to achieve national acclaim in the three decades from 1960 to 1989: Illés, Omega, Metro, and Locomotiv GT. These commercially successful bands eschewed politically delicate or socially critical subjects, and stuck to safe lyrics about love and sex.¹²⁰ Groups like Beatrice and Coitus Punk Group filled the void where lyrics were concerned.

New groups emerged in the 1980s, and "teeny-bopper" groups like R-GO, Hungaria, Dolly Roll, Kft, and P. Box drew large crowds of young fans.¹²¹ Heavy metal bands such as Edda Works, P. Mobil, P. Box, Von Band, and Piramis have consciously modeled themselves on West European bands. Also worth mentioning is the art rock group Solaris, which in 1984 issued a rhythmic and strangely fascinating album entitled *The Martian Chronicles*. Composed by Solaris members Róbert Erdész, István Cziglán, and Attila Kollár, *The Martian Chronicles* is arranged in six movements as an instrumental suite.¹²²

In the context of Hungary's more relaxed atmosphere, the groups which attracted the most criticism from the communists were those playing punk, described by certain Hungarian authorities in 1983 as having a "pernicious effect on the morals of the young."¹²³ Hungarian punk groups have at various times insulted the dignity of Romanian party leader Nicolae Ceaușescu (a favorite Hungarian pastime anyway), expressed the desire to indulge in corporal dismemberment, evoked a phrase calling forth the defecatory bombardment of the planet, and endorsed extermination of the Gypsies. It was the punk group Mosoly which, in an unadvertised appearance at a February 1983 concert, expressed the latter sentiment:

The flame thrower is the only weapon
with which I can win;
I destroy every Gypsy, adult and child!

Annihilate them altogether,
 When we have dispatched them,
 we can put up a sign:
 Gypsy-free zone!¹²⁴

In a country which still retains lively memories of World War II, such lyrics have a positively nightmarish quality. Worse yet, that nightmarish quality is deliberate.

The two best-known punk groups in Hungary are still Beatrice (which broke up in 1981) and Coitus Punk Group (whose members were given eighteen- to twenty-four-month jail sentences in 1984). Beatrice addressed the everyday concerns of young people and consciously rejected any prefabricated values, including those of the regime. Beatrice sang about waiting for an apartment, relating to one's boss, official peace demonstrations, and the economy. And its audience responded. During concerts Beatrice habitually threw bags of milk at the audience; the practice was utterly devoid of symbolic content, but was a huge success with audiences. The authorities tried to buy out Beatrice with offers of promotion and an album, but its members did not want to be tamed, and when the group folded in 1981, it did so without having released a single album.¹²⁵

Coitus Punk Group (CPG) was a more difficult case from the authorities' point of view since, unlike Beatrice, it wanted, very deliberately, to be provocative. Instead of bags of milk, CPG would tear apart live chickens on stage and throw the bleeding chicken parts at the audience. Instead of merely reflecting on social reality, CPG passed judgment on it. The very titles of their songs—"Rotten Angels," "Our King Is a Puppet," "Pigsty," and "Everyone Is a Louse"—were designed to be provocative. And their lyrics clearly strained against the limits of the allowable. In "Everyone Is a Louse," for example, CPG sang:

I will be free.
 What I want is this:
 Not to be governed by a stupid beast.¹²⁶

In the same song, the group predicts the coming of anarchism; the political context is quite explicit. Again, in "SS-20," CPG challenged the taboo against anti-Soviet "propaganda":

The Soviet atom is also an atom,
 I can't stand this totalitarianism.
 The police is always hassling me.
 We have SS-20s in the East,

They have the neutron bomb in the West.
 SS-20, SS-20, SS-20 in the East.
 In the East and in the West,
 The almighty power is the test.¹²⁷

Those lyrics were obviously unacceptable, as CPG itself clearly knew. It could only be a matter of time before the authorities would move to silence the group.

But CPG did not stop there. In "Standing Youth," the group used the nonsense word *duli* to adorn some explicitly anticommunist lyrics:

In the meadow a young shock-worker is standing.
 He had just come from a Communist Saturday meeting
 Duli-dul-balalajka, duli-dul-balalajka.
 Statues, pictures—you schematic bandit,
 The workers' hero has to play along with it.
 Duli-dul-balalajka, duli-dul-balalajka.
 Rotten stinking communist gang—
 Why has nobody hanged them yet?¹²⁸

While singing this song, the group's leader tore up the familiar chicken and slashed his own face and arms with a razor blade. This was too much for the authorities and led directly to the group's trial and imprisonment in 1984. Three band members received two-year sentences, while the fourth received an eighteen-month jail sentence.

Yet the case of Coitus Punk Group is exceptional. Although there are punk groups and heavy metal groups and other "outlandish" fashions in contemporary Hungary, seeking above all to express their rejection of the world as it is, the authorities by and large take a disinterested view. Even where punk is concerned, the Hungarian political establishment is, at most, divided over the best policy response, if any should be needed.

The first attempts to politicize rock music in the mid-1970s ran into trouble. Spions was forced to disband after a 1976 concert which touched on political subjects, while Galloping Morticians was frozen out of the major concert circuits after a similarly sensitive concert in 1978. Attila Grandpierre had signalled the tone of the 1978 concert when he told his audience: "We are not here to entertain you. Don't even think that you'll be having a good time at this concert. If you want to have a good time, get lost. Go home and watch TV. Now you'll have something different."¹²⁹ Not good times, but politics. By the 1980s the new "political" music was increasingly prominent in the Hungarian rock scene.

Conclusion

I am very much inclined to agree with László Kürti that there was a direct connection between the growing decay of communism in Eastern Europe and the emergence of politicized rock in the late 1970s and 1980s. The former led directly to the latter, and the latter applauded and reinforced the former. Rock music offered itself as a form of counterculture, an alternative reference point, which shifted the terms of discourse.

Of course, not all rock music is conceived as counterculture per se. New wave, for instance, seems better described as self-assertion; on the other hand, the whole point of punk is to reject everything that civilized society offers. A Polish punk explained punk philosophy in these terms:

Sometimes I am a pacifist; other times I am a vulgar cad. I provoke through my appearance. I want others to feel that here is still a bit of freedom. [The adults] want to profit from us, to organize us, and I do not want to be a prisoner. I am going to evade them. . . . I joined the punks to protest against constraint.¹³⁰

The spread of rock counterculture in the communist states of Europe has, as in the West, been associated with increased drug abuse, outlandish fashions, and a self-conscious striving to be "socially deviant."¹³¹

The collapse of communism throughout much of Eastern Europe by mid-1990 had consequences for all spheres of social activity, including rock music. In Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, record sales slumped drastically—in Yugoslavia, primarily for economic reasons, in Poland and Hungary for both economic and sociopolitical reasons. With the success of the popular rebellion, there is no need for the music of rebellion; hence, Eastern Europe's musicians, especially those in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, are groping their way to a new commercialism.

The East Berlin industrial band Pankow, which built its reputation on songs about alienation and pollution, disbanded in 1990. Pankow's lead singer, Andre Herzberg, explained, "We are no longer relevant. I'm not sure what I'm going to do now."¹³²

In Poland, the Riviera-Remont Club, which once hosted punk rock concerts, now offers its space to computer fairs and flower markets. Many Polish rock musicians have either left music or left Poland. Others have taken jobs playing soft-pop at the Marriott Hotel. "Rock is dead in Poland," said Zbigniew Holdys, band leader of Perfect, in sadness. And for the time being, that assessment may be accurate.

In Hungary and Yugoslavia, attendance at rock concerts is down, and

as a result, rock bands are not able to schedule as many concerts as before.

Rock has lost much of its political role in Eastern Europe in a matter of months. But in the annals of rock history the 1980s will go down as a heroic age in both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The spirit of the age is perhaps best captured in the famous "Get Out of Control," first sung by the Leningrad rock group Televizor at a 1986 concert:

We were watched from the days of kindergarten.
Some nice men and kind women
Beat us up. They chose the most painful places
And treated us like animals on the farm.
So we grew up like a disciplined herd.
We sing what they want and live how they want.
And we look at them downside up, as if we're trapped.
We just watch how they hit us.
Get out of control!
Get out of control!
And sing what you want
And not just what is allowed.
We have a right to yell!¹³³