

to diversify energy supplies and increase the share of renewable sources in its consumption. If both trends continue, Russia's petrol-dollar-fuelled economy will collapse due to a lack of sustainable foundations.

This gives the West a unique opportunity to employ economic pressure, an instrument that is often more powerful than arms. The Russian leadership's domestic and international policies have created perfect conditions where it could be used, and the West should take advantage of it.

In the Georgian conflict there were no winners. But Russia certainly stands out as the bigger loser. That is because its military victory over the much smaller Georgian army has been more than outweighed by the unprecedented EU foreign policy unity that the conflict created, something the EU had a difficult time achieving before the crisis. For Russia, it should serve as an important clue when it ponders a future confrontation with the West.

## **Personal Experiences from the Years of 'Late Normalization,' 1980s: Study at SS Cyril and Method's Theological Faculty in Litomerice**

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Nearly 20 years after the Velvet Revolution, and the Czech Republic (among other neighbouring post-communist countries in Central Europe) has begun to expose its recent history for public consumption. Archival documents and memories of the contemporaries have often caused upheaval widely covered by the press in these countries. One of the most current topics concerns the collaboration of religious denominations with the Communist regime.

In 1948, after the Communists - atheist by nature - seized power, the new rulers pretended that they wanted to defend constitutional civil rights and that they respected the freedom of the religious denominations in Czechoslovakia. In fact, from the very beginning of the new regime the communists deliberately placed all Churches under the strict control of the state. This was especially true of the Catholics who were closely watched and persecuted.

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<sup>4</sup> This commentary is based on a reflection of the work entitled: *Memoáry: Jan Jandourek: Studium na bohoslovecké fakultě v Litoměřicích, osobní zkušenosti z let pozdní "normalizace"*, Soudobé dějiny XIV/2-3, Praha 2007, str. 439-448.

According to former Bishop Vaclav Maly,

The Catholic leaders were, with only several exceptions, people manipulated by the StB (Czechoslovak secret police). They were mostly such people who had been affected by some weakness in their own personal lives and thus they became convenient tools for the ruling power (...)

In accordance with new Czechoslovak legislation passed in 1950 all the existing theological faculties and also non-university Protestant high schools started to be “reorganized”. The Catholic Theological Faculty was moved from Prague to a small town Litoměřice in Northern Bohemia. This faculty, with a long tradition, had been a part of Charles University founded in Prague in 1348.

The re-organization of the curriculum in 1950 meant that the majority of the professors and even many students were forced to leave the faculty. The communist press at the time however, presented this action as useful and necessary for the “improvement of theological study.” During subsequent decades – from the 1950s until 1989 – the management of the faculty was constantly negotiating for compromises with supervisors from the Ministry of Education and the local supervising officials; people extremely suspicious of and hostile to religious groups.

The remainder of this commentary is based on the memories of a former student of the Theological Faculty, Jan Jandourek, who studied at the Litoměřice from 1984 to 1989. These were the last years before the Velvet Revolution, the last phase of the “normalization” - the Brezhnev era, which had started after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The late 1980s were more relaxed in comparison to the period of Stalinism in the 1950s when all the monastic orders were banned, high and ordinary clergy persecuted and many priests and monks sent to labor camps or imprisoned. Despite the fact that the Cold War was winding down, Communist practices towards the clergy remained intact.

A candidate hoping to study theology in the 1980s had to submit two application forms, one to a secular and one to a theological faculty. The application form for theological study had to be submitted several months earlier than the secular one. The purpose was that the secret police could pinpoint applicants for theological study and gain time to exert ‘moral’ pressure on them. The applicant, Jan Jandourek, was first invited to the secondary school headmaster’s office. Here he was reprimanded by the school headmaster: “*You do not return to working people what they have invested in you*”. When the student insisted on submitting the application form to the theological faculty, the conversation with the headmaster finished with the headmaster’s rhetorical question: “*Who are you serving: the people of the Vatican?*”

As Jandourek recollected,

I did not encounter any other bullying until the end of my studies at the secondary school. On the contrary, some of my teachers and classmates were

secretly pleased that the school hard line communists and the headmaster had got into troubles.

Unlike other Czechoslovak faculties, the Theological faculty was not included in the information sheet printed annually in the official pedagogical press. The Theological Faculty was officially a state school, that is why Marxism-Leninism and Russian were obligatory from the first until the last semester.

Before the faculty's entrance examinations Jandourek was summoned to the local secret police. The same day he received a draft letter for military service in the Czechoslovak army. When he entered the police station, an StB agent ordered him to empty all the things from his pockets on the table. Afterwards, the agent left leaving the student waiting alone for a long time. Obviously this was one method of the secret police to exercise pressure. After the long wait, two other agents entered the room with Jandourek. They purportedly behaved according to the well-known 'good cop, bad cop' routine. The 'bad' cop hinted that the investigation would last for an indefinite period, and after a while the 'good cop' left the room, increasing the tension between interrogator and interrogated; yet another form of psychological pressure.

The student had been informed by his Catholic friends and classmates in advance that he could not admit that he was summoned by the StB because he wanted to study theology. He mostly kept silent pretending that he did not know why he had been summoned to the police station. He also did not accept any offer from the agents to meet again – he had learnt from other Catholics that many applicants who had met the agents again had been gradually entangled into the collaboration. The secret policemen also tried different methods combining threats and flattery: *"You are an intelligent boy, but will you be glad if something happens to your sister?"* Then the agents finished the long investigation with a threat: *"We will find you again soon!"*

The entrance examination at the Theological Faculty lasted two days. The first day every candidate had to undergo a long interview where s/he had to explain his/her decision to study theology. Meanwhile rumors quickly spread among the waiting candidates in the corridor. An applicant called Mudrunk was said to be a future secret informer. Allegedly he had been a former thief and homosexual whom the secret police recruited to spying at the faculty. Mudrunk was not accepted at the faculty, perhaps because he had been revealed, but after the change of regime this unusual name was found on the StB list of collaborators in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior.

Jandourek remembers that

We knew that there were secret informers and denouncers among us, but we did not know who they were. The students from Prague were better informed about the StB methods, but the boys from the countryside were

naive. It was easier for the StB to deceive them and drag them into the collaboration.

Students tried to guess who these denouncers could be according to their behavior. Talkative, sulky or nosey individuals were suspicious. After the fall of the regime graduates were often surprised by the names of their classmates who had collaborated. They had usually been good friends during their studies. Actually the secret police in Litomerice did not hide their recruitment. Every Thursday StB agents summoned two theology students for investigation. The agents were trying to force them to collaborate.

This practices ended between 1987-8 after mass student protests. Secret Dominicans protested by praying aloud for the investigated classmates with rosaries in their hands in front of the police station. At first the policemen shouted at them from the open windows and threatened them with a beating. The Dominicans were not intimidated and went on praying until their classmates were released. This caused a gathering of astonished people around the police station. As the theology students were not deterred by threats, the police simply stopped the investigations and recruitment of collaborators.

The students also suspected that the StB were bugging their dorms, but they could not find any. Every evening they listened secretly to the Voice of America's radio station. They used a bizarre radio set they had constructed themselves. It was equipped with four hoses so that more people could silently listen. Listening to the foreign broadcasting, particularly to the Voice of America or Radio Free Europe was strictly prohibited. Their teachers, mostly elderly gentlemen, listened too, mostly to Radio Vatican, but they did not have the improved radio sets, so the sound was terribly loud and echoed throughout the corridors. The secret police also opened students' letters.

A particularly entertaining activity for students was a sort of psycho-drama consisting of students re-playing the dialogues between StB agents and themselves, in their dorms. One of the most popular performers became, after 1989, the spokesman of the Czech bishops and an expert on the Catholic Church's public-relations.

Students were isolated from the town's daily life, because they were obliged to fulfill numerous duties during the day. They were forbidden to have tape-recorders, typewriters or bikes. Students were not allowed, even in their free time, to travel or to attend local cultural events. All had to be shaven. However, the strict regime was gradually loosened in 1986 -7 reflecting the thaw of the communist regime.

Students themselves were not sure whether they were collaborating or resisting the regime. On the one hand they could study because they were permitted by the Ministry of the Interior, on the other hand they showed open contempt for Marxist-Leninist ideology. For many common citizens in Litomerice they

were weird crackpots who had voluntarily chosen the regime's persecution. The students themselves, however, considered their faculty as "an island" of relative freedom, where they could speak and express their opinions more openly than other citizens.

The management of the faculty did not interfere or influence teaching. The managers differed in personalities and in professional level, ranging from excellent experts to nervous and noisy individuals. The faculty teachers' staff comprised also different personalities. The dean was a member of the collaborating religious association called *Pacem in Terris*, which was also under the supervision of the regime. He often wore a medal he had been given by the Moscow Patriarch. Some teachers excelled as orators or experts on biblical studies or history. Some were polyglots, some of them were mediocre, but there were also ignorant lethargic individuals.

In 1986 the last communist elections were held. Here the theology students used the opportunity and went behind the curtain, which had been unthinkable in the previous decades (the voters who went behind the curtain were suspicious in communist elections!). Here they crossed out all the names of the candidates. One of the students went to vote in his black vestment. When the superior saw him, he ordered him to change the clothes, otherwise – as he shouted he "will kick his ass". Students were forbidden to wear vestments out of the faculty. This student protested quite often in this way. He used to go out dressed in his chasuble with a backpack, provoking astonishment among the citizens of Litomerice.

From the mid-1980s the situation gradually changed compared to the previous decades. Due to the political changes in the communist bloc and liberalization, a group of secret Dominicans, who had started to study in 1987, demonstrated more frequently. All of them began with a boycott of the traditional routines dating back to the 1950s. For example all the new students had to sign a document that they were not and would not become members of any secret monastic order. However, many of them had already been members before they entered the faculty.

The Dominicans had not only refused to sign such documents but they burnt them in the dining hall in public. They also disturbed the annual ceremony in honor of the "Great October Revolution". They even made a special device from a fishing rod. When the main speaker was giving a speech about the Bolshevik revolution they pulled out a picture of St Mary behind his back. The picture bore the inscription. "Russia 1917-1987, my faith will win". None of the present officials noticed the picture, because they were sitting with their backs to it.

The curriculum at the faculty was approximately the same as it had been in the 1930s. Beside Russian, which was obligatory, classical languages or modern languages were taught but the progress was slow. German, the main

foreign language, was on a level of a basic school. Therefore many students learnt the languages in pairs or individually. The library contained some professional literature from the period before the Second World War. To visit other libraries was strictly forbidden. Students were not allowed to visit their families, except at Christmas, Easter and after the end of the semester, only a few days per year. They were also forbidden to travel to Prague, but they went to Prague secretly on Sundays. Here they sometimes managed to attend secret underground lectures given by Czech or even foreign theologians.

“SS Cyril-Method’s Theological Faculty”, which was the official name, was the only permitted institution where future Catholic clerics could be trained. The Catholic Church had to accept this fact being aware that any criticism might have brought about the prohibition of this institution. The reputation and the shortcomings of the faculty were known, but this was the way of life under “real socialism” (the expression used by the communist politician during the “normalization” period). The level of theological education was poor, but the Litomerice faculty was the only school where the clergy could graduate and afterwards work in Czech and Moravian dioceses.

On the one hand there was a lot of conforming to the regime on the part of the management of the faculty, on the other hand it was obvious that the conviction of the majority of the students was anti-regime. Everyone knew about this situation at the faculty and in the Catholic Church but no one mentioned this in public. On this point, the faculty reflected Czech society, because ordinary people behaved in the same way.

In the late 1980s the situation became more and more liberal. Students were no longer persuaded to collaborate with the secret police, they were not recruited to the collaborative association Pace in Terris, they were not forced to do the annual previously obligatory trip to Moscow. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the faculty returned to Charles University in Prague. Nevertheless, the consequences of the impaired intellectual life of the Church has, until today, been difficult to overcome. There is no doubt that other religious denominations in Czechoslovakia and other Central European countries underwent similar difficulties.