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Czech Intellectual Jiří Němec and Austrian-left Catholicism Thought

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Keywords

Austria, left Catholicism, Catholicism, Catholic thought, Central Europe, 20th century

DOI

10.31577/forhist.2023.17.2.3

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Cite

HOLUB, Ondřej. Czech Intellectual Jiří Němec and Austrian-left Catholicism Thought. In *Forum Historiae*, 2023, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 28–39, doi: [10.31577/forhist.2023.17.2.3](https://doi.org/10.31577/forhist.2023.17.2.3)

Abstract

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The presented study aims to define the origin and character of transnational intellectual relations between Czech Catholic philosopher and essayist Jiří Němec and the intellectual group of Austrian left Catholics in the 1960s. The article traces the impact and influence of Austrian left Catholicism on the thought and spiritual development of Jiří Němec. Additionally, the study identifies notable intellectual aspects, significance, and the history of Austrian left Catholicism in the 20th century, as well as its relation to Czech Catholicism, notably during the period of the Second Vatican Council. Austrian left Catholicism developed in response to the crisis of society, national identity, and statehood in Austria during the 20th century. Its intellectual and spiritual aspirations, however, extended beyond the Austrian horizon, with its intellectual legacy resonating throughout Central Europe. Respected figures of Austrian left Catholicism, such as August Maria Knoll, Wilfried Daim, or Friedrich Heer, were public intellectuals who addressed critical issues of the modern era, such as democracy, equality, and social revolution, envisioning the synthesis of democracy and modern Catholicism. The study aims to answer the question of how their vision corresponded with the religious and political thought of Jiří Němec, the most distinctive Czech Catholic intellectual in the second half of the 20th century.

Jiří Němec (1932–2001), idiosyncratic Catholic philosopher, essayist, editor publicist, and psychologist, belongs among the leading personas of political opposition to the repressive state apparatus of the Czechoslovak socialist dictatorship during the 1970s. With his wife Dana (1934–2023), he was also among the first signatories of Charta 77, a program and collection of principles Němec helped to articulate.

However, any attempt to sum up the complexity of the life and public work of Jiří Němec with the single, synthesizing term “dissentism” is necessarily insufficient. Multitalented and polyphonous in his very intellectual temper, Jiří Němec aspired to new spiritual horizons from the beginning of the 1960s. The vibrant echo of *aggiornamento*, a condition of radical preparedness for reformed Catholics to “move beyond” the rigid boundaries of the ecclesiastical community and confront the world through a dialogical approach,¹ certainly defined a new phase of aggregation between theology, Catholic morality

1 HROMÁDKA, Lukl Josef. Druhý Vatikánský koncil. In *Křesťanská revue*, 1966, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 57–60.

and the social praxis from the start of the decade,² and definitely transformed both the spiritual axis and multiple aspects of Němec's public activities. The moment the Second Vatican Council entered a gateway to a sort of "opened Catholicism"—a new mode of dynamic, pluralist and dialogical reflection towards social and spiritual affairs³—Jiří Němec embraced such ideas of "openness" as a guiding principle for all sorts of his own engagement, and has never left this path ever since.

Inspired above all by the work of Teilhard de Chardin, Jiří Němec strove for the "realization of [the] Christian mission in the modern world, the world divided into political blocs."⁴ From the example of Catholic intellectual groups in Poland, such as the PAX and Znak lay movements, Němec endeavored to formulate a program for public activism by Catholics in a socialist state, which presumed a "genuine and honest relationship to socialism and to the intentions of the Communist Party."⁵ His degree of public and spiritual engagement reached such a point that in the fall of 1967, State Security identified Jiří Němec as one of the leading personas of the ecumenical movement in Czechoslovakia.⁶

As co-editor of the *Křesťanská revue* (*The Christian Review*), *Tvář* (*The Face*) and a member of the *Vyšehrad* publishing house editorial board, Jiří Němec developed a well-grounded, prolific attachment to the extensive varieties of non-Marxist thought, primarily to Christian existentialism, personalism and neo-Thomism. He frequently confronted the dominant Marxist intellectual hegemony, either as a translator or commentator on Teilhard de Chardin's⁷ or Martin Heidegger's work,⁸ or as co-founder and active participant of the Ecumenical Seminary at Jircháře (Prague). Rather casual yet still intellectually enterprising, this Seminary represented a sort of autonomously established "think-tank," a multipolar community or open platform for interfaith and inter-ideological dialogue, which dynamically upended the lines between different credos and opened new horizons for the mutual synchronicity of ideas, partnership and intellectual transparency.⁹ For years, Němec was a leading "spiritus agens" of the Seminary.

Throughout the 1960s, Jiří Němec approached an extensive range of intellectual positions with a particular interest. While some of those currents of thought could be classified as milestones for his personal belief system, most notably "teilhardism" and "mounierism," others remain rather unnoticed or

2 LOCHMAN, Milič Jan. Světová konference o církvi a společnosti. In *Křesťanská revue*, 1966, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 85–89.

3 GARDAVSKÝ, Vítězslav. *Bůh není zcela mrtev*. Praha : Československý spisovatel, 1967, pp. 131–132.

4 NĚMEC, Jiří. *Zápisníky I (1960–1964)*. Praha : Triáda, 2018, p. 118.

5 NĚMEC 2018, p. 119.

6 Archiv Bezpečnostních složek (ABS), Prague, Czech Republic, fund (f.) Operative Files, Counterintelligence Files Group, Files Nr. č. 749386/ I, Němec, Jiří (18 October 1932), Report from 4th and 20th November, 1967, p. 1.

7 TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, Pierre. *Místo člověka v přírodě: Výbor studií*. Translated by Jiří Němec and Jan Sokol. Praha : Svoboda, 1967.

8 HEIDEGGER, Martin. *O pravdě a bytí (Vom Wesen der Wahrheit)*. Translated by Jiří Němec. Praha : Vyšehrad, 1971.

9 HEJDÁNEK, Ladislav. Vzpomínka na přítele (K úmrtí Jiřího Němce). In *Křesťanská revue*, 2001, vol. 68, no. 10, pp. 269–271.

marginalized, though they also played quite a significant role in broadening Němec's spiritual horizons.

The current study deals with one such ideological perspective: Austrian-left Catholicism (*Linkskatholizismus*). While the dominating influence of modern French Catholicism upon Jiří Němec's thinking is more than apparent and well-recognized, the progressive, radical appeal of Austrian *linkskatholizismus* and its spiritual agency within Czech Catholic and ecumenical thinking should not be underestimated. Some aspects of Austrian-left Catholicism—as far as the main characteristics can be defined within the works of such publicists as Friedrich Heer (1916–1983),¹⁰ Wilfried Daim (1923–2016)¹¹ or August Maria Knoll (1900–1963)¹²—had intertwined with and responded to some of the philosophical opinions of Jiří Němec. It is the aim of this study to analyze each accordingly, using Jiří Němec's published diaries¹³ as the primary source. The diaries are one reason why the present study covers mostly the period of the 1960s, when some of the most noticeable works of Austrian Catholic leftist intellectuals were published and simultaneously also when Jiří Němec came to some valid conclusions about his own *topos* regarding Catholic reformism.

Searching for the intellectual and social sources of the ambiguous phenomenon labeled as “left-Catholicism” is certainly a complex task. A pathway for radical action was always somewhat present within the social and political history of Catholicism, giving both a voice and a stage to such different perspectives of radical transformation as liberation theology in Latin America or Catholic trade unionism in Europe. In the postwar era of late industrial modernity—throughout the dynamic era of the 1960s—radical and reformist voices echoed and intertwined significantly across the globe, while the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965) “unquestionably provided a tremendous impetus for change.”¹⁴ Encyclicals like *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) or *Populorum progressio* (1967) provided new hope for millions who were marginalized and exploited, and set new conditions for democratic and emancipatory actions.¹⁵

According to Brian Wicker: “The first emphasis that needs to be given to any account of the work of the Catholic left is that it is tentative, exploratory, hypothetical. It is [...] experimenting with unfamiliar conceptual frameworks in an atmosphere of freewheeling discussion and argument.”¹⁶ As such, it is standing in fierce opposition to orthodox scholasticism and ecclesiasticism. Though, as is apparent in the case of Austrian *Linkskatholizismus*, this non-conformist and unorthodox tradition of spirituality took many particular

10 Austrian public intellectual, publicist, writer and professor of cultural history at the University of Vienna, and co-editor of the renowned *Die Furche*, an open and reformed Catholicism journal. Esteemed author of such titles as *Europäische Geistesgeschichte* (1953).

11 Psychologist and psychotherapist, publicist and public intellectual. Well-versed in the Austrian tradition of psychoanalysis, he sought to synthesize some aspects of modern psychology with the ethical dimension of open Catholicism.

12 Jurist, Sociologist and theoretician of reform and social Catholicism. Professor of religious sociology at the University of Vienna.

13 NĚMEC 2018; NĚMEC, Jiří. *Zápisníky II (1965–1969)*. Praha : Triáda, 2020.

14 MCGOVERN, F. Arthur. *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment*. New York : Maryknoll, 1989, p. 5.

15 DE BROUCKER, José. *Helder Camara*. Praha : Vyšehrad, 1971, p. 98.

16 WICKER, Brian. *First the political kingdom: a personal appraisal of the Catholic Left in Britain*. Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press, p. 1–2.

forms, which all depended on the unique cultural and historical conditions in different countries. This study deals with only one select period in the history of Austrian-left Catholicism, as far as this period applies to the purpose of the present study.

The intention is to define how Němec himself reflected the life and work of the abovementioned Austrian intellectuals, and in what sense he could find the intellectual position of the Austrian Catholic left inspirational for his own spiritual path. The goal is a case study which aims to uncover some entanglements in the history of reform Catholicism in 20th century Central Europe.

The Case of Austrian-left Catholicism

A decisive factor in the evolution of the Austrian Catholic left was the nature of Austrian cultural and spiritual life as a whole and its complex universe of thought, which had developed for centuries. When considering the general characteristics of the intellectual history of Austria, historians Mark E. Blum and William Smaldone use the term “intersubjective human proportion” to depict a “great cultural tradition” manifested as interpersonal and inter-institutional dialogue that governed the political life of Austria as a role model of public administration, at least from the late Middle Ages and early modern period to the mid-20th century.¹⁷

For decades, the culture of intersubjective human proportion functioned as a dominant paradigm for Austrian politics, bringing a communal sense of consensus and dialogue. Such imperative of intersubjectivity left a decisive imprint on the political landscape of modern Austria, while the renowned politics of social partnership, corporatism and cameralism are the best-known, but not the only examples of such political culture. Regarding the contemporary political thought of modern Austrian Catholicism, the archetype of intersubjectivity led to a tendency for quite non-conventional forms of political alliances and actions. These unions were mostly meant as a response to the continual crisis of Austrian statehood and national identity in the 20th century.

This was particularly the case of *Österreichische Aktion* (Austrian Action), a Catholic lay movement established in 1927 by a group of Catholic social scientists including Ernst Karl Winter, August Maria Knoll, Josef Dobretsberger and others. *Österreichische Aktion* denied the forms of Austrofascist Catholic totalism as well as traditional scholasticism. Instead, the intellectuals of *Österreichische Aktion* promoted the idea of social monarchy, imagined as an “alliance of throne and landed nobility with the industrial proletariat.” As he was very well aware of the fragility and asymmetry of such an intended political partnership—which at the same time was presented as the only possible solution for modern Austrian statehood—Ernst Karl Winter coined the motto “to stand on the right and to think with the left” as a principal idea for the kind of “progressive” Catholic thought he was expressing.¹⁸

17 BLUM, E. Mark – SMALDONE, William. *Austro-Marxism: The Ideology of Unity: Austro-Marxist Theory and Strategy*. Leiden : Brill, 2015, p. 12.

18 DIAMANT, Alfred. Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 1918–1934: A Study in Anti-Democratic Thought. In *The Western Political Quarterly*, 1957, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 603–633.

Being a left-wing monarchist himself, Winter embodied the political culture of the intersubjective human proportion, while also synthesizing different ideological perspectives and condemning antisemitism and racism, both of which were overwhelmingly common within the Austrian Catholic circles in the 1930s.¹⁹ For a short period of time as Vice-Mayor of Vienna following the February 1934 civil war, he actively stood for the politics of “building the bridges” between politically and socially opposed groups of the divided nation.²⁰ Although his vision appeared quite peculiar to many and as such, remained rather secluded, what Winter tried to achieve could be perceived as Catholic momentum in the politics of intersubjectivity, and also as a formative moment in the history of the Austrian Catholic Left. This is a legacy that quickly found successors in the postwar era.

Stricken by the horrors of the Second World War, 32-year-old historian Friedrich Heer championed *The Dialogue of the Enemies* (*Gespräch der Feinde*, 1949) with perhaps even greater urgency than Winter did fifteen years ago.²¹ In the next three decades, with a reputation that extended far beyond the borders of Austria, Friedrich Heer advocated for the principal idea of dialogue as the essential foundation of European spiritual culture and history. In his *Offener Humanismus* (*The Open Humanism*, 1962) Heer anticipated upcoming global trends in the field of world economy, technology and culture. What he foresaw, quite similar to Teilhard de Chardin, was the dynamic, ever-changing and pluralist society of the “open world,” where all faiths and ideologies would intersect and communicate with each other. In such an open world, as Heer stated in *Offener Humanismus* (*The Open Humanism*), only “open Catholicity” could represent a dynamic, vibrant and inspirational worldview.²² In a pluralist and open society, the archetypal ideal of the Christian soldier—the Catholic knight—was no longer desirable or possible. Only a praxis and a culture of dialogue could represent the Catholic mode of being in the modern industrial and urban society.²³

Like Heer, the psychologist, therapist and publicist Wilfried Daim also admitted that “his main ideas matured gradually during [the] three years (1942–1945) he spent in military service.”²⁴ He received a degree in psychology and anthropology from the University of Vienna in 1948, and ten years later founded the Institute for Political Psychology, “whose main task consisted in carrying research of collective neuroses, psychoses and pathological disturbances of [the] political and social organism.”²⁵ Faithful to the classical Freudian and post-Freudian methods of psychoanalysis, Daim nevertheless integrated the

19 CONNELLY, John. Catholic Racism and Its Opponents. In *The Journal of Modern History*, 2007, vol. 79, no. 4, pp. 813–847.

20 WINTER KARL, Ernst. The Rise and Fall of Austrian Labor. In *Social Research*, 1939, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 316–340.

21 KNOLL, H. Joachim. Friedrich Heer (1916–1983): Eine intellektuelle Biographie. In *Zeite für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 1998, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 173–177.

22 HEER, Friedrich. *Offener Humanismus*. Bern : Alfred Scherz Verlag, 1962, pp. 340–345.

23 HEER 1962, p. 342.

24 DAIM, Wilfried. *Depth Psychology and Salvation*. New York : Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1963, p. 10.

25 DAIM 1963, p. 10.

perspectives of Scheler's anthropology, Husserl's phenomenology and existentialism, and combined certain aspects of all of them with the religious background of Catholicism as he constantly pursued the idea of restoring human existential integrity and spiritual wholeness.²⁶

For most of his career, Daim applied the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis and humanist anthropology to determine how social oppression and authoritarianism are related to social pathology, and how they both could be addressed through therapy. He spent years researching the pathological and intellectual origins of modern totalitarianism and oppressive systems of belief. His 1957 book *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (*The Man who gave Hitler the Ideas*) "revealed the sinister background of Nazism" in the fin-de-siècle esotericism.²⁷ As a Catholic of progressive conviction, Daim was particularly interested in researching the origins, context and historical development of authoritarianism and oppression in the Catholic Church.

For Daim, the Church in its primal sense is the "totality of believers," the body consisting of all of its members, while some of the believers are possessed by limited authority in the field of faith and religious praxis. Though, as the church grows and expands to the point when it reaches full acceptance by legal authorities—like under the rule of Emperor Constantine—comes the moment when, as Daim assumed, "the church lapses into hardly avoidable corruption and [...] its dignitaries grow accustomed to enjoying the advantages of the upper classes." The whole system of power relations they created—the feudal system—is now serving the purpose and needs of those who dispose of the economic and political might. Consequently, the original totality of Catholic "communion" was broken down. However, in the history of the Catholic Church, there always were the rebellious forces of dissenters, the plebeians and the left Christians, who are "the champions of the egalitarian principle" and who fight for universal brotherhood and against all slavery.²⁸

Much of Daim's view was inspired by a critique of scholasticism and Catholic totalism that Ernst Karl Winter and August Maria Knoll stood for in the years prior to the Second World War. Ernst Karl Winter died at the beginning of 1959, but Knoll cooperated further with the younger generation of Austrian-left Catholics. In 1962, he published a book called *Katholische Kirche und scholastisches Naturrecht* (*The Catholic Church and the scholastic Natural Law*), developing a former critique of scholasticism. Knoll deduced that the traditional scholastic idea of natural law basically paralysed the Catholic Church in all essential matters related to important social questions, notably the problems of social justice, freedom and human rights and, above all, turned into an "instrument" that led the Church to social and political passivity.²⁹ If the Church is ever to abandon this passivity, it must find a way to combine two "ideal types"

26 DAIM 1963, p. 11.

27 WAGENER, Siegfried. Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann der Hitler die Ideen gab*. In *Books Abroad*, 1959, vol. 33, no. 4, p. 439.

28 DAIM, Wilfried. *Christianity, Judaism, and Revolution*. New York : Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1973, pp. 134–139.

29 KNOLL, Maria August. *Katholische Kirche und scholastisches Naturrecht*. Wien : Europa Verlag, 1962, p. 10–11.

in its social teaching: Saint Paul, the preacher, who represents the spirit and Spartacus, who is the “Tribune of the plebs,” the archetypal figure of a rebel. The Missionary and The Rebel describe a pair of interrelated fields of the Christian social question.³⁰

In 1963, Daim, Heer and Knoll published a book together called *Kirche und Zukunft* (*The Church and the Future*). In a time when the Second Vatican Council had only just begun and his legacy was more than uncertain, Daim called for a “Return to the Brotherliness” and even proposed a “de-feudalization” (*Entfeudalisierung*) of the Catholic Church, which consisted of 29 paragraphs. Among other things, Daim requested immediate cancellation of all honorable titles and “court manners,” the radical simplification of liturgy and the abolition of celibacy. Above all, Daim demanded the complex democratization of the Church on a full scale, with bishops to be voted in by laymen in a standard election process. The notion of brotherliness, Daim believed, represents the “original and revolutionary explosive” (*Sprengstoff*) that Christianity possesses, and it stands in the center of all emancipatory movements.³¹

Due to such unconventional propositions, the majority of Austrian society tended to see left Catholics as merely a crypto-communist group, or as a fifth pillar of Soviet geopolitics in Central and Eastern Europe. This impression only grew stronger when Wilfried Daim or Friedrich Heer publicly expressed a belief that communist rule in the Eastern European bloc could be humanized, and for that reason, dialogue with communist representatives should no longer be avoided. In 1964, Wilfried Daim was invited to the Soviet Union to deliver a lecture at Lomonosov University in Moscow, in an attempt to raise a matter of dialogue between Catholics and communists in Europe. At the same time, an uncompromising opposition towards all relicts of National Socialism was declared.³² Daim openly criticized “the vast majority of Austrian Catholics” who persisted in silence and “meekness” when Adolf Hitler, “a fellow Austrian, began to organize the most gigantic mass murder in all history.”³³ In postwar Austria, where the official public discourse continues to portray the land solely as the “first victim” of Nazi politics³⁴ and where also a significant portion of the adult male population were members of veterans’ associations and had served actively in Wehrmacht or even in the Waffen-SS,³⁵ statements like this were confronted with utmost rejection and suspicion.

For years, the Austrian-left Catholics stood firmly for the cause of Austrian neutrality.³⁶ As definitive antifascists, they saw themselves as pioneers of the idea

30 KNOLL 1962, p. 89.

31 DAIM, Wilfried – HEER, Friedrich – KNOLL, August Maria. *Kirche und Zukunft*. Wien : Europa Verlag, 1963, pp. 15–36.

32 DAIM, Wilfried. *Linkskatholizismus*. Wien : Europa Verlag, 1965, p. 9.

33 DAIM 1973, p. vii.

34 NIEDERACHER, Sonja. The Myth of Austria as Nazi Victim, the Emigrants and the Discipline of Exile Studies, In *Austrian Studies*, 2003, vol. 11, pp. 14–32.

35 PAUL BERG, Matthew. Challenging Political Culture in Austria: Veterans’ Associations, Identity and the Problem of Contemporary History. In *Central European History*, 1997, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 513–544.

36 KUBAL, Jan. Rakousko, Finsko a nepřátelé neutrality. In *Tvorba*, 1961, vol. 25, no. 50, p. 1182.

of democratic Austrian nationalism.³⁷ Regardless of the rejection sometimes faced at home, some achieved international recognition as the principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation became a standard in international politics and law during the 1960s.³⁸ Dialogue between Marxists and Christians of all denominations was in “full swing” during the sixties, and occurred throughout the whole of Europe.³⁹ Czechoslovakia was no exception, and so Jiří Němec soon became more familiar with the thinking of Austrian-left Catholics.

Jiří Němec and the thought of Austrian-left Catholics

Throughout the 1960s, Němec defined his own conception of Catholicism in terms of service to the public good.⁴⁰ In doing so, he reflected some of the ideas of the Austrian-left Catholics. In the winter of 1962, he was reading Heers *Offener Humanismus* and came to appreciate its “magical, mystical thought.”⁴¹ Two years later, in the summer of 1964, he made a note in his diary on the book *Kirche und Zukunft*, indicating he was well aware of Daim’s radical proposal for the de-feudalization of the Church.⁴²

Around the mid-1960s, Němec paid quite a lot of attention to the ideas of August Maria Knoll, particularly to his book *Katholische Kirche und scholastisches Naturrecht*. At the beginning of August 1964, Němec wrote a letter to Ladislav Hejránek calling Knoll’s book “groundbreaking” and an example of a “well evidence-based contribution to the dialogue about the natural law.” As Němec admitted, he was initially rather skeptical about what he saw as the dualistic proportion that Knoll was supposed to attribute to the relationship between the figures of Spartacus and Saint Paul, “but then,” continued Němec, “I realised that it could be an excellent practical outlet in the whole Catholic environment [...] a feasible way to build a lay theology opens up here.”⁴³ Knoll even inspired Němec further in the creation of his own scheme for the role of lay Catholics in the Church. Brought to its full consequences, Knoll’s conception would mean, as Němec saw it, that theology itself would become a domain of laymen.⁴⁴

A year later, Jiří Němec had the occasion to establish actual connections with Austrian-left Catholic intellectuals and meet in person. The connection was their mutual professional affiliation to modern psychoanalysis. During the fall and winter of 1965, Němec was working at an internship in Vienna, where he participated in seminars and lectures of the expert Working Group for Depth Psychology (*Wiener Arbeitskreis für Tiefenpsychologie*). What Jiří Němec learned there, among other things, were the current and new principles

37 Možnosti přátelské spolupráce. In *Lidová demokracie*, 9 October 1965, p. 3.

38 LIPSON, Leon. Peaceful Coexistence. In *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 1964, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 871–881.

39 DUNMAN, Jack. The Marxist and Christian Concept of Man. In *Science & Society*, 1968, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 278–287.

40 ABS Prague, Counterintelligence Files Group, Files Nr. 749386/I, Němec Jiří, “The visit at Dr. Němec,” 23th June, 1962.

41 NĚMEC 2018, p. 152.

42 NĚMEC 2018, p. 277.

43 NĚMEC 2018, p. 274.

44 NĚMEC 2018, p. 276.

of group therapy and options for their application.⁴⁵ As he reported, in Vienna he not only met Wilfried Daim and Friedrich Heer, with whom he shared an intellectual preoccupation for matters of depth psychology, but he also actively negotiated with official Czech authorities the possibility of inviting Friedrich Heer and Wilfried Daim to Czechoslovakia. As Němec argued in a discussion with Josef Kočí, a representative of the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Vienna, such an invitation was not intended only for professional impact. As Němec suggested, both Daim and Heer are long-time supporters of the dialogue between the West and the Socialist Bloc, as well as between Christianity and Marxism, so their public lectures in Czechoslovakia would have some political significance.⁴⁶

The abovementioned problem of mutual dialogue between different perspectives preoccupied Němec's mind more and more, and apparently played a significant role in his relationship to Austrian-left Catholicism. Shortly before his arrival in Vienna, in the summer of 1965, he reflected on a matter of convergence between the autonomous yet deeply connected positions of science and Christianity. As every position has its own adequate form of presence in the modern world, they nevertheless tended to reach a new horizon of complementarity in the pluralist and complex world.⁴⁷ Němec gradually came to the knowledge that the problem of the East-West relationship would also become a key factor in the solution of such convergence, and thus represents the central issue in solving the conditions of human freedom in general.⁴⁸

At the same time, Němec paid a lot of attention to the philosophical consequences of human subjectivity and inwardness, and was collecting material for a monography on the subject. He intended to write a book titled *The Paradoxes of Action*, dedicated to the problems of "morality, plurality and power" and their mutual positions and interactions.⁴⁹ The relationship between authority and truth seemed to be a subject of the utmost importance for Němec. Authority, he claimed, can only be realized in its full effectivity if it is continually reflected. The essence of the truth is the manifestation of power, which is not coercive and oppressive but captivating and impressive.⁵⁰ In this way, Němec clearly associated the issues of faith and authority with the perspective of depth psychology and psychoanalysis according to his professional affiliation. He reached exactly the same area of interest that Wilfried Daim aimed to address, and regarding the events that followed, this mutual interest was probably the actual basis for continual reflections of Daim's thinking in Němec's work and public engagement.

On 9 November, 1966, Wilfried Daim indeed appeared as an invited lecturer at the Ecumenical Seminary at Jircháře. Who actually organized the invitation remains unclear, but based on what Jiří Němec stated in a personal report from Vienna, we can assume that Němec himself asked Daim to deliver a speech in Prague, or at least he was possibly involved in the invitation. The actual content

45 NĚMEC, Jiří. Zpráva Jiřího Němce o studijním pobytu v Rakousku [Report of study internship at Vienna, Austria] (1965), p. 12. The original, non-inventoried document provided by Mr. Robert Krumphanzl.

46 NĚMEC 1965, Zpráva, p. 6.

47 NĚMEC 2020, p. 12.

48 NĚMEC 2020, p. 20.

49 NĚMEC 2020, p. 17.

50 NĚMEC 2020, p. 25.

of Daim's lecture is known to us due to diary entries by Ladislav Hejránek, who attended the lecture and made some notes for his personal record, describing Daim as "an expert on the socio-psychological aspects of Christianity."

Daim spoke on the subject of "Christianity and the Revolution," claiming that the entire spiritual history of Christianity unfolds from the archetypal clash of its reactionary and "progressive" aspects as they took form in the early days of biblical Judaism. In a confrontation of this kind, the prophets are always portrayed as progressive, rebellious figures who advocate for the radical message of God's word against the religious establishment. The very nature of dispute concerns the rehabilitation and application of universal brotherliness, a central tenet of the Christian message overall. It was in the era of Emperor Constantine that the idea of universal brotherliness was suppressed, the Church feudalised and pluralism of any kind was marked as a heresy.⁵¹

Some passages of Daim's lecture may have sounded quite provocative to some participants, especially concerning the relatively recent period of persecution of the Catholic Church in socialist Czechoslovakia. This applies in particular to those parts of the speech where Daim depicted the figure of Holy Mary as the embodiment and "program of all revolutions," or where he described Jesus as an "anti-feudal, proletarian figure, who is solidary to the oppressed."⁵² However, according to Václav Frei, Czech physicist, teacher and translator, the lecture resonated quite distinctively among Czech Catholics.⁵³ Němec himself did not leave any commentary on the given lecture, but as is apparent from his diary notes, he held the same view regarding the general and recent history of the Catholic Church. The true nature of every state is repressive suggested Němec, and it was also a characteristic of Vatican politics even in the prior decade of the 1950s. The basis for the repressive nature of all politics, Němec thought, is "sublimed paternalism," which is to be replaced by acceptance of a true eschatological dimension of Christianity.⁵⁴

Some traces of the influence that Austrian progressive Catholics left upon Catholic thinking in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s is evident in a polemic, which was printed in the *Křesťanská Revue* in October 1967, under the title *The Dialogue about Revolution*. In a discussion in which both Němec and Hejránek took part, the problem of revolution in the modern world was considered as a sensitive, but highly topical issue for the world of Christianity. As Jiří Němec alleged in a debate:

If we are convinced that there is a notion of universal brotherliness in a very essence of the Christian message [...] then is evident that a demand for a change, not only a change in the individual sense, but a social change as such, is truly embedded in a Christian mission. We could not approach the issue of revolutions as it would be an abstract issue, we must ask ourselves, whether the actual sociological structure of the Church allows, or, on the contrary, prevents Christianity from being applied in its social dimension as well.⁵⁵

51 Archiv Univerzity Karlovy, Prague, Czech Republic, f. Ladislav Hejránek, box 49, Signature (sign.) 3/7/1, The Diary of Ladislav Hejránek, The Jircháře Seminary, 9. 11. 1966 – Daim, The Christianity and the Revolution / Zápisník Ladislava Hejránka, Jircháře 9. 11. 66 – doc. Daim, Křesťanství a revoluce.

52 Archiv Univerzity Karlovy, Prague, f. Ladislav Hejránek, box 49, sign. 3/7/1, The Diary of Ladislav Hejránek / Zápisník Ladislava Hejránka.

53 FREI, Václav. Kritika a kritičnost v Církvi. In *Křesťanská revue*, 1968, no. 4, p. 83.

54 NĚMEC 2020, p. 42.

55 Rozhovor o revoluci. In *Křesťanská revue*, October 1967, p. 185–189.

Němec added, that some “adapted forms” of feudalism within the church still exist and these forms “sanctify the social status quo, the repressive apparatus of the established society.”⁵⁶ It is necessary then, to speak up against those who are defending the status quo and at the same time, to address the common people with a message of deeper understanding of their actual needs and efforts.⁵⁷ As Ladislav Hejránek further pointed out, to adapt such a radical approach means to “take a burden of nonconformity” and to abandon the spiritual legitimacy of the “Constantine era,” when revolutionary tendencies were unnaturally separated from the evangelical message.⁵⁸

The above-cited statements of Ladislav Hejránek and Jiří Němec indicate a noticeable degree of influence that Austrian-left Catholicism maintained on the Czech Catholics in the 1960s. Published diaries of Jiří Němec reveal both Němec and Hejránek to be devoted readers of August Maria Knoll. In a mutual debate on Christianity and revolution, they actually reproduced some of the original ideas of Knoll and Daim, whether we are talking about the Constantian phase of feudalization of the Church or the concept of universal brotherliness. As far as we can rely on Jiří Němec’s diary entries as the utmost original commentary on his own intellectual inclination, it is obvious that Němec himself was closest to Wilfried Daim in his grasp of reformed Catholicism, which was probably due to their shared professional interest in the social dimension of depth psychology.

With Daim, Němec shared a mutual vision for Catholic public engagement in a political world. For Němec, the sphere of professional and “real” politics was mainly determined by the technique of power manipulation. The distinctive political stance of Christians nevertheless anticipates the alternative form of politics; politics as socio- and psychotherapy, the purpose of which is a mutual recognition and understanding of politically opposing, differentiated groups. Such a conception of politics was considered by Jiří Němec to be closest in its essence to his own spiritual and political foundation, but as he acknowledged, it was the same concept that Wilfried Daim had also held since the early 1960s.⁵⁹ During the Prague Spring of 1968, Jiří Němec continued to promote this concept as the programmatic basis for the action of Catholics in the reviving civil society, while also referring directly to Daim.⁶⁰ It can therefore be assumed that the program of universal brotherliness and the deconstruction of authoritative social hierarchies advocated by Austrian-left Catholics was shared and adopted by Jiří Němec and implemented into his own social and political engagement in the years that followed.

Conclusion

Austrian-left Catholicism represents a cultural type of reform Catholic thought whose intellectual sources are to be found within the so-called inter-subjective human proportion of modern Austrian culture. As a phenomenon,

56 Rozhovor o revoluci 1967, p. 187.

57 Rozhovor o revoluci 1967, p. 187.

58 Rozhovor o revoluci 1967, pp. 187–188.

59 NĚMEC 2018, p. 69.

60 NĚMEC 2020, p. 150.

Austrian-left Catholicism rose mostly from the contradictions and crises of interwar Austrian society. The leading representatives of Austrian-left Catholicism, Ernst Karl Winter, August Maria Knoll, Friedrich Heer and Wilfried Daim, were social reformers and social scientists with significant intellectual backgrounds in sociology, philosophy and psychology. From the perspective of social reformism, they opposed traditional scholasticism, ecclesiasticism and Catholic orthodoxy. Such mutual professional affiliation to psychology and psychotherapy became the basis for close relationships between Němec, Friedrich Heer and Wilfried Daim, particularly since the fall of 1965 when Jiří Němec was at an internship in Vienna.

The concepts of de-feudalization and democratization of the Catholic Church in the manner presented by August Maria Knoll and Wilfried Daim particularly strongly influenced the political thinking of Jiří Němec in general, and helped to formulate his stance on such concepts as democracy, social revolution or the role of Catholic laity in modern society. The influence of Austrian-left Catholics on the thinking of Jiří Němec' can therefore be considered an outstanding example of intellectual transfer in the post-Stalinist era of peaceful coexistence.