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Pastoral Care of Youth in the Czech Republic — Legal Aspects

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The situation under the communist regime

The explanatory memorandum of the first “post-revolutionary” law on churches and religious communities, valid in the Czech Republic between 1991 and 2002, states the following: “Combination of legal norms and complementary secret administrative regulations enabled widespread repression, arguably the most severe in the countries of the so called socialist camp.”¹ As the regime set the priority of educating youth in the spirit of its materialistic ideology, it was far more worried about the churches’ impact on the youth than on the other population groups. While people in retirement age were tolerated in their “religious anachronisms,” young people were to be isolated from the impact of religion in any possible way. The regime gradually proceeded to the destruction of

¹ Zákon č. 308/1991 Sb., o svobodě náboženské víry a postavení církví a náboženských společností: Důvodová zpráva — Obecná část [Act No. 308/1991 on the freedom of religion and the position of churches and religious communities: explanatory memorandum — general comments].

church schools,² religious education taught at school,³ and continuously bullied those ministers who succeeded in attracting the youth. An effective tool of eliminating such priests was the infamous provision of Church Law of 1949 dealing with the removal of the state approval with the exercise of pastoral ministry.⁴ It was a totally wilful administrative act without any legally understandable criteria. Even when the removal was not actually carried out, church secretaries appointed by the state put pressure on the ordinaries of the Catholic church to redeploy ministers with comradesly relationship towards the youth.

Under such circumstances one could hardly talk about a systematic care for the youth. On the other hand, the situation led many ministers or the young people themselves to confessional courage, to the creation of cohesive atmosphere and to concentrating on the *unum necessarium*. Also, one should not forget the bully-like restrictions of female religious orders and communities and the illegal elimination of the male orders and communities, which in Czechoslovakia between 1950—1989 operated only underground and in secrecy. Men and women religious under risky conditions involved young novices into the noviciate, both male and female.⁵ When looking at the activities of the Salesians, we should mention the practice of the so-called cottages (*chaloupky*), essentially a con-

² “The intention to nationalise church schools after February 1948 succeeded completely, regardless the protests of bishops and the laity. In terms of the legislature, the basis for the destruction of church schools was the Act No. 95/1948 about the general reform of unified education (also known as “the School Law”) from 21 April 1948. — P. JÄGER: *Svoboda vyznání a právní postavení církví a náboženských společností v letech 1948—1989*. In: *Komunistické právo v Československu. Kapitoly z dějin bezpráví*. Ed. M. BOBEK, P. MOLEK, V. ŠIMÍČEK. Brno 2009, pp. 802—803.

³ “Until the beginnings of the 1950s, religious education remained a graded subject (the grade was given as the next-to-last on the school report, before physical education). This state of things was changed as late as in 1953 (Act No. 31/1953). At that point, religious education became a voluntary and non-graded subject. Churches and their members were subsequently subject to massive limitations and extensive bullying precisely in this area.” — J. R. TRETERA: *Nová právní situace církví a náboženských společností v roce 1950*. In: *Stát a církev v roce 1950*. Eds. J. HANUŠ, J. STŘÍBRNÝ. Brno 2004, pp. 28—29.

⁴ Zákon č. 218/1949 Sb., o hospodářském zabezpečení církví a náboženských společností státem, §7 odst. 1 [Act No. 218/1949 Coll., on the economic provision of churches and religious communities by the state §7 par. 1]: “Ministerial (preaching or similar) activity in churches and religious communities can be carried out only by persons who possess the approval of the state and who have performed a vow. The wording of the vow will be determined by a governmental decree.” — I. A. HRDINA: *Texty ke studiu konfesního práva — III. Československo*. Praha 2006, p. 190.

⁵ “In the 1970s and 1980s, some orders were awakened, especially the Dominicans, Sisters of Mercy of St Charles Borromeo and the Franciscans and started to accept new members. Underground theological studies were also founded.” — J. BALÍK: *Diecézní centra mládeže. Vznik, spiritualita, výhledy*. Praha 2011, p. 137.

spiratory form of youth ministry organising holiday camps with Christian formation.⁶

The renewal of Salesian pastoral care for youth

After 1989, in the whole of Czechoslovakia, legally organised religious life is renewed, both in terms of canonical status, but also in relation to the organs of the state. The Salesian province in Prague is registered as a legal person by the Churches Department of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic,⁷ individual Salesian youth centres (*Salesiánská střediska mládeže*) are registered as charitable trusts under a special provision.⁸ The practice of the “cottages” has been so inspiring that its impact goes beyond the actual Salesian order. A civil society organisation *Casula* (Latin for “a small house, a cottage”) is organised in the ordinary parish ministry at Prague — Lhotka parish.⁹ An interesting experiment to integrate the youth from foster homes together with children from integral families is presented for example by civil society organisation “*Campamento*”, which loosely cooperates with other parishes in the archdiocese of Prague.¹⁰

At the time when “cottages” were organised, that is, towards the end of the existence of the totalitarian regime, a magazine called “Reading into the rucksack” (*Čtení do krosny*) was launched, which started to be published legally under the title *Anno Domini* after the Velvet Revolution. The ecclesial approval of the religious superiors granted this magazine the subtitle “Catholic monthly for the youth.” This subtitle, however, shifted form the cover page into the imprint and was gradually abandoned. Some contributions in the magazine aroused open resentment of the bishops,

⁶ The topic has been covered in J. VRACOVSKÝ: *Chaloupky. Salesiánské prázdninové tábory v době totality*. Praha 2002.

⁷ Registered in the Index of legal persons under the case number 8/2—29/1994.

⁸ Zákon č. 248/1995 Sb., o obecně prospěšných společnostech a o změně a doplnění některých zákonů [Act No. 248/1995 on charitable trusts and on changing and complementing certain laws].

⁹ Although the title reads “civil society organisation,” the community is registered legally in the Commercial index of companies [*Obchodní rejstřík firem*] under the identification number 649 36 65 51.

¹⁰ Founded in 1999 as a civil society organisation *Campamento* '99; the civil societies founded in accordance with Act No. 89/1990 on civil association have now been — in accordance with the new Civil Code — transformed obligatorily into the legal form of “associations” (*spolky*).

especially the archbishop of Olomouc, Jan Graubner, and the bishop of Litoměřice, Josef Koukl, the latter of whom banned the distribution of the magazine in his diocese. The issuing of the magazine was subsequently definitively stopped in 2003, because the number of subscribers and readers gradually went down and the issuing of the magazine stopped to be of benefit to the Salesian publishing house Portál.¹¹ Nevertheless, a similar magazine called *Zrno* (literally “The Seed”, in fact also an abbreviation for “maturity, hope and orientation”, *Zrelost, Nádej, Orientácia*) in more religious Slovakia also stopped being issued. Publishing house Portál publishes works from the field of pedagogy and psychology, many of which help the wardens and youth workers. Moreover, the Salesians also look after the training of the altar boys via their press apostolate: magazines *Nezbeda* (“The Imp”) for young boys and *Tarsicius* for teenagers serving at the altar. The Salesians also stood at the birth of the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice.¹² Until 2006 this city also hosted their novitiate.¹³ In correspondence to their orientation on the youth, the faculty opened a study field of “leisure time pedagogy.”¹⁴

Ecclesial movements and the Youth Department of the Czech Bishops’ Conference

Apart from the congregation of the Salesians, it is also some other spiritual movements (*movimenti*), whose adherents or members systematically

¹¹ Portál, s. r. o. [Ltd.] is a Czech publishing house founded in 1990. Its seat is in Prague-Kobylisy, and their owner is the Salesian Province Prague, the regional legal person of a Roman Catholic congregation of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

¹² As an institution founded on the basis of Canon Law, it was confirmed by the decree of the Roman Catholic bishop of České Budějovice on 31 December 1991, following Canon 821 CIC as a higher institute of the religious sciences.

¹³ The activities of the Salesians in Bohemia and Moravia have been covered in M. R. Křížková: *Kniha víry, naděje a lásky*. Praha 1996.

¹⁴ “From its birth, the *Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia (Teologická fakulta Jihočeské univerzity — TFJU)* focused primarily on providing theological studies for the laity. From among the candidates of the priesthood, only the members of the congregations of the Salesians and the Petriens [...] pursued their studies in České Budějovice. In the course of time, the scope expanded: to the original subjects of theology, religious education and pastoral assistance, new study fields were added, such as Humanities [*humanistika*], leisure time pedagogy [*pedagogika volného času*], social and charity work [*sociálně-charitativní práce*] and the subsequent M.A. programmes, such as the theology of service [*teologie služby*] etc.”— Z. HORÁK: *Církev a české školství*. Praha 2011, p. 233.

look after the youth within the conditions of the Catholic Church in Bohemia and Moravia and the scope of their activities goes beyond ordinary parish ministry. Already before 1989 two movements operated in this area, Focolare (Work of Mary) and the Charismatic Renewal. The harbinger of the future diocesan centres for youth was the parish in North Bohemian Pířchovice administered by a priest, member of the Focolare movement, which obviously could not achieve official status given the conditions of the totalitarian state. In fact, it came under scrutiny of the secret police (StB).¹⁵ Following the change of the political situation in November 1989, it was vital to keep in contact with young people, encourage new people and offer them concrete help for them to see a church which is interested in them and counts on their activity. This was a task beyond the possibilities of any religious order, community or movement. Following this development, the Department of Youth of the Czech Bishops' Conference [*Sekce pro mládež ČBK*] was founded in 1990. The Department greatly benefited from the opportunity to establish ties with the universal church and to cooperate especially with the Pontifical Commission for the Laity. With the borders open, the youth could attend World Youth Days which were later inspirations for huge nationwide or regional gatherings of the youth in the context of the Catholic church in Bohemia and Moravia.

Already in the 1990s, diocesan centres for the youth were founded in the individual dioceses and their existence was stabilised in terms of their canonical status, for example, as regards the “Nazaret” centre in Prague.¹⁶ Although in the Catholic Church in Bohemia and Moravia, there operate many other movements than Focolare and the Charismatic Renewal (Community of John the Baptist — *Komunita Jana Křtitele*, *Chemin Neuf*, *Comunione e Liberazione*, Neocatechumenal Way — *Neokatechumenátní hnutí*, The Ark — *Archa*, *Taizé*, Oasis — *Oázy* — *Fós Zoê*), the key orientation of the youth ministry have been determined by the mentioned two movements.¹⁷

¹⁵ “On the basis of archival documentation, we can state that the StB (the secret police) kept an eye on Father Šimáček intensively and knew about his activities. This is indicated by the fact that in 1990, some agents who introduced themselves as the staff of the Office of Rights and Democracy [*Úřad práv a demokracie*] in Ústí nad Labem came to remove a bugging device, carefully placed under the plastering in the room where the youth convened. At that point, it was also confirmed that the telephone in the parish office had also been bugged for years.” — J. BALÍK: *Diecézní centra...*, p. 150.

¹⁶ “Legally, ‘Nazaret’ has been incorporated into the Archdiocesan Centre for the Youth, which gained autonomous legal subjectivity on the basis of Cardinal Vlk’s decision, dated on 1 January 1999. Its mission covers provision of the operation, the activities and authenticity in the Archdiocesan Centre for the Life of the Youth ‘Nazaret.’” — J. BALÍK: *Diecézní centra...*, p. 165.

¹⁷ “On the one hand, the individual movements contribute to the awakening of the religious vitality, on the other hand, they also put pressure on individuals and groups in

Under the auspices of the Charismatic Renewal, for instance, weekly retreats for the youth are organised known as “Jump”.¹⁸ The “entercamps” inspired by them focus especially on spiritual direction of young people: for every 10 participants there are 2 leaders and a priest. Emphasis is put on the sacrament of reconciliation, Bible work and on adopting personal prayer, which the young people are supposed to practice also after the retreat is over. The diocesan centres for the youth organise sojourns for young people related to the celebration of Easter and the end of the year, with lenten and advent spiritual retreats or focused on training youth animators. The last nationwide meeting of youth animators took place in Třešť in 2014. Moravian dioceses organise deanery gatherings of the youth; in the whole of the Czech Republic there are diocesan youth gatherings, as well as the National Youth Gathering (*Celostátní setkání mládeže*), organised approximately every 5 years, the last of which took place in Žďár nad Sázavou in 2012. Vocation ministry is realised via gatherings organised by seminarians in Prague (known as *Tammím*) and in Olomouc (known as *Vir*). The seminarians also organise advent and Lenten retreats for young men between 15 and 30 years of age focused on life in the seminary and discerning their vocation to the priesthood.

Musical forms of young Christians

A specific problem field within the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic represent the various musical forms of young Christians. Already in the times of the totalitarian Communist regime, there appeared various collections of rhythmical worship songs, distributed in semi-legal ways. In response to the need to unify the readings of the song and select the best of them, the Salesians after 1989 initiated the publication of a uni-

order to achieve a community of ‘better quality’. However, this quality is viewed differently by the representatives of various movements and spiritualities, for example, for the members of the Focolare, a functional community is a one, in which no sharp differences in views are to be found and in which the members can openly communicate their spiritual experience; for the charismatics, a good community is a group, in which the members pray together spontaneously and are open to special charismata; the Salesians want the majority of the members of their youth groups to participate more and more in the activities organised for other young people and for children as they grow older.” — M. KAPLÁNEK: *Pastorace mládeže. Studijní text pro pracovníky s mládeží*. Praha 1999, p. 93.

¹⁸ The civil society organisation JUMP has been registered by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic under the case number VS/1-1/55 898/04-R.

fied collection of youth songs. Their publishing house Portál thus published the first songbook called *Hosana*, which did not obtain an explicit ecclesial approval under the regulation of the Canon Law, but a blessing of the Bishop of Brno.¹⁹ The existence of the songbook was welcomed also by Petr Eben, a composer of worldwide renown: “Certainly, only a minor part of the youth is interested in Classical music, most of them are captivated by rock and the various forms of pop a folk music. Given this fact, it only follows that in the field of religious music, there must also exist this duality of the two forms [...] However, we must admit that in the realm of light music, especially with songs, we often encounter amateurish attitude to setting texts to music and sometimes even banality and bad taste. It is, therefore, praiseworthy that from the 1200 songs gathered only about 400 were published, i.e. it represents a certain selective process.”²⁰ In the following years, two other volumes of the songbook *Hosana* were published (2004 and 2006).

The musical accompaniment during the holy mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of his visit to the Czech Republic in 2009 in Stará Boleslav,²¹ caused a sense of unease, or downright resentment, so the Youth Department of the Czech Bishops’ Conference was delegated to focus on this problem field with a group of specialists — musicians, linguists and liturgists. The outcome of this discussion was a Regulation of the Czech Bishops’ Conference about the use of liturgical music in worship, especially in relation to the youth.²² The document has a legal character of an instruction within the framework of the valid Canon Law.²³ However, it also presents a practical tool for putting together the musical part of the worship with the participation of the youth, because it also contains illustrative tables and lists of songs suitable for use at particular occasions.

¹⁹ “With all these songs we may chant glory to God, so that — in reverse — the glory may take hold of the singers and the listeners. However, the greatest glory reaching God should be every one of us, our life and the whole of our existences. For that to happen, I cordially bless all of you, Vojtěch Cikrle, the bishop of Brno.” — *Hosana. Zpěvník křesťanských písní*. Praha 1993, no pagination.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ The documents from this visit have been published in *Papež Benedikt XVI. v České republice*. Kostelní Vydří 2009.

²² Issued for internal use by the Czech Bishops’ Conference in Prague, 2015.

²³ CIC 1983, Canon 34.

Pastoral care of youth within the specific spiritualities

Ministry focused on university students in the Czech Republic is carried out especially by the personal prelature *Opus Dei*.²⁴ In Prague, it runs the University centre “Na Baště,” whose plan is to provide motivating intellectual and moral environment for students to whom it offers help in personal, professional, spiritual and cultural education. It aims at creating suitable environment for individual and group study activities, such as lectures and discussion clubs.

Motu proprio Summorum Pontificum of Pope Benedict XVI from 2007 which simplifies the procedure of worshipping in accordance with the *Missal* of Pope John XXIII and other liturgical books from the time prior to the Vatican II reform caused interest of many Catholic Christians, among whom there is an above-average percentage of young people. The actual *motu proprio* in Czech language was published by the Czech Bishops' Conference in its *Acta*.²⁵ The proof for the increased interest of young people for *Tridentine* liturgy is buttressed by the fact that a group of these young people took part on the World Youth Day in Kraków (25—31 July 2016) led by Bishop Athanasius Schneider.²⁶ Within the full communion of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic, no special structure have yet been founded, directed by two communities of apostolic life focused on fostering the extraordinary form of the liturgy, namely the Fraternity of St Peter (FSSP) and the Institute of Christ the King. Only the diocese of Ostrava-Opava authorised a particular priest to foster the traditional Roman rite. Some priests celebrate the traditional liturgy in their parishes within the conditions granted by the mentioned *motu proprio*. The adherents of this rite, however, take great care to make sure the faithful understand the rites, therefore, they make use of the Latin-Czech translation of the *Roman Missal* for the laity, whose latest issue has been updated with some new developments.²⁷

²⁴ “If you look into the Index of the registered legal persons [*Rejstřík evidovaných právnických osob*], we find out, that the Prelature of the Holy Cross and *Opus Dei* is dated on 23 November 1994 [...] The evidence of the prelature *Opus Dei* into the Index of legal persons in accordance with the law No. 308/1991 Coll. was carried out on the basis of the proposal made by the Archbishopric of Prague.” — J. KŘÍŽ, A. RTOBÓ: “Právní postavení osobní prelatury *Opus Dei* v České republice.” *Revue církevního práva* 51, 2012/1, p. 31.

²⁵ *Acta České biskupské konference* 3/2008, pp. 50—54.

²⁶ A work of this auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese Maria Sanctissima in Astana (Kazachstan) has recently been published in Czech, cf. A. SCHNEIDER: *Corpus Christi. Svaté Přijímání a obnova církve*. Ústí nad Orlicí 2015.

²⁷ Translated and annotated by M. SCHALLER: *Římský Misál*. Praha 1952. The new

The priests from the Fraternity of St Pius X (FSSPX) also operate in the Czech Republic.²⁸

It is a pity that an equivalent structure to the diocesan centres of the youth have not been founded yet by the Apostolic Exarchate of the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia can continue with their earlier tradition of youth get-togethers,²⁹ which was restored in 1994 by the re-foundation of the Fraternity of the Orthodox Youth in the Czech Republic, whose seat can be found in Františkovy Lázně.³⁰

Conclusion

Although the statistics and opinion polls keep reminding us of the fact that the Czech Republic belongs among the countries with the lowest degree of organised religiosity, it needs to be said that youth ministry in the Catholic Church shows — despite some problems — signs of vitality. An important value in this context seem to be variety, respect for the breadth of different spiritual paths used for attracting various groups of Catholic youth. Both the civil and the Canon Law have been an effective assistance for organising youth ministry and youth apostolate in the years following the fall of Communism in the Czech Republic.

edition is a reprint of the original and “from page 259 an appendix is added containing the changes made to the Roman Missal from 1962 onwards, some mass proprias of regional significance and the most common blessings conferred before, within or after the Holy Mass”, publ. by Nakladatelství Sypták, Brno 2015.

²⁸ Within the organisation of the Priestly Fraternity of St Pius X, the Czech lands belong to the “Austrian” district, therefore, all apostolate carried out on Czech territory in the name of FSSPX is subject exclusively to the superior of this district with the authority of a local ordinary. The superior of the district is subordinate directly to the superior general of FSSPX. The FSSPX bishops are only auxiliary bishops and have thus no jurisdiction on the basis of their ordination.

²⁹ This issue has been covered by P. MAREK in: *Pravoslavní v Československu v letech 1918—1942*. Brno 2004.

³⁰ The statutes of this subject, organised in the legal form of civil society organisation, were adopted on 11 June 1994.

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Pastoral Care of Youth in the Czech Republic — Legal Aspects

Summary

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia belonged among the most repressive in the former Soviet sphere. It made efforts of ideological indoctrination of youth and used various means in order to isolate young people from the religious life. Solely after the changes in 1989 it is possible to organize structures of many-sided care of youth within the Churches. In the framework of the Catholic Church there belongs a great deal of merits to the Salesian Congregation which operated with youth in the secret structures already in the times of totalitarianism when the male Church orders were abolished. The Czech Bishop Conference established its Section for Youth, also the Church movements as Focolare or Charismatic Renewal take part on the care of young Christians. The care of youth exploits the possibilities offered by the canon law. A special attention is turned to the problem of quality of the Church music for youth. Also the Catholic Traditionalists, Greek Catholics, Orthodox Church and the other Christian Churches employ the religious freedom and establish various organizations for young believers according to the civil law and their inner church prescriptions.

STANISLAV PŘIBYL

Le soin pastoral des jeunes gens en République tchèque – aspects juridiques

Resume

Le régime communiste en Tchécoslovaquie appartenait aux régimes les plus oppressifs de l'ancien bloc soviétique. Il tentait d'endoctriner idéologiquement les jeunes gens et employait différents moyens pour isoler les jeunes de la vie religieuse. C'est seulement après les changements de 1989 que l'on pouvait organiser dans les églises un soin complexe aux jeunes gens. Dans le cadre de l'Église catholique, de grands mérites dans ce domaine appartiennent à l'ordre salésien qui formait des structures secrètes concernant le travail avec les jeunes déjà à l'époque du régime totalitaire, où les ordres masculins étaient abolis. En ce qui concerne le soin pastoral porté aux jeunes gens, ce sont aussi des mouvements religieux, tels que *focolari* et le renouveau charismatique catholique, qui y prennent part. La prêtrise des jeunes gens exploite les possibilités que donne le droit canonique. Un accent particulier est mis sur le problème de qualité de la musique religieuse pour les jeunes. Ce sont aussi bien les traditionalistes catholiques, les gréco-catholiques, les orthodoxes et d'autres confessions chrétiennes qui profitent de la liberté religieuse et fondent différentes organisations pour les jeunes croyants conformément aux préceptes du droit civil et leurs réglementations religieuses intérieures.

Mots clés: Églises, jeunes gens, soin pastoral, mouvements religieux, droit canonique, musique religieuse

STANISLAV PŘIBYL

L'assistenza pastorale dei giovani nella Repubblica Ceca — aspetti giuridici

Sommario

Il regime comunista in Cecoslovacchia rientrava tra quelli più oppressivi dell'ex-blocco sovietico. Tentava di indottrinare ideologicamente i giovani ed usava diversi metodi per isolare i giovani dalla vita religiosa. Soltanto dopo i cambiamenti nel 1989 si poté organizzare nelle chiese un'assistenza multiforme dei giovani. Nell'ambito della Chiesa cattolica in tal campo ha grandi meriti la congregazione dei salesiani che creò strutture clandestine per il lavoro con i giovani già ai tempi del regime totalitario, quando gli ordini maschili erano soppressi. La Conferenza Episcopale Ceca ha costituito la Sezione per i Giovani, all'assistenza pastorale dei giovani prendono parte anche i movimenti ecclesiastici come i *focolari* o il Rinnovamento Cattolico Carismatico. La pastorale dei giovani sfrutta le possibilità offerte dal diritto canonico. Si pone un accento particolare sul problema della qualità della musica ecclesiastica per i giovani. Anche i cattolici tradizionalisti, i greco-cattolici, gli ortodossi e le altre confessioni cristiane fruiscono della libertà religiosa e fondano diverse organizzazioni per i giovani credenti attenendosi alle norme del diritto civile e ai loro regolamenti interni ecclesiastici.

Parole chiave: Chiese, giovani, assistenza pastorale, movimenti religiosi, diritto canonico, musica ecclesiastica