

MAPPING THE STATUS OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AFTER 1948 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SELECTED LOCAL PERIODICALS

JANA LUKÁČOVÁ

Department of Historical Sciences, Greek Catholic Theological Faculty
University of Presov
Ulica biskupa Gojdiča 2, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia
E-mail address: jana.lukacova.1@unipo.sk
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2931-8437>

PETER ŠTURÁK

Department of Historical Sciences, Greek Catholic Theological Faculty
University of Presov
Ulica biskupa Gojdiča 2, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia
E-mail address: peter.sturak@unipo.sk
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4606-5208>

VIKTOR KICHERA

Department of Modern Ukrainian History and foreign countries
Faculty of History and International Relations
Uzhhorod National University
Narodna Square, 3, 88000, Ukraine, Transcarpathian region, Uzhhorod
E-mail address: viktor.kichera@uzhnu.edu.ua
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4333-2377>

ABSTRACT

Aim. The article discusses the status of the Greek Catholic Church from 1948 to 1950. It also presents how this period was presented through media. Since it is possible to investigate this aspect within the framework of a comparison of several media channels, we have decided to introduce the comparison through the perspective of the daily-newspaper *Rudé právo*.

Methods. The findings of our research study are based on the data collected from archival and documentary sources, as well as professional studies and monographs related to the above-mentioned topic.

Results. Based on our research topic, we can understand how the attitude towards the Greek Catholic Church changed after the events of February 1948 and



what impact the change of regime had on its functioning. Regarding media, we can observe how the pressure on the Greek Catholic Church changed in relation to the regime change and individual historical events, and how the media expressed its opinion on the Church.

Conclusion. Media is not only a source of information for people, but it also creates public opinion, and therefore, it was extremely important to control this state apparatus in the past. We must understand that availability of information in the 1950s and today is significantly different. Catholic periodicals were almost non-existent and thus, people often received misleading or false information. Through our research, which is presented in the tabular presentation of data, we can discover the increasing pressure against the Church, and the response of the public to the Church.

Keywords: Greek Catholic Church, history, Czechoslovakia, daily-newspaper

INTRODUCTION

Media has always played an important role in shaping public opinion of society. Even today in our modern society, modern technologies affect the individuality of a person (Garcia Martin et al., 2020). Every person possesses the frontiers of knowledge based on the perception of the received messages (Binetti et al., 2021). During the studied period, society, and its mechanisms in Czechoslovakia, unfortunately, could not function on democratic foundations that would have supported the flourishing of citizens' identity (Zalec & Pavlikova, 2019).

Freedom and free will as a concept that we imagine today is something different from the category of freedom and free will in the past (Garcia Martin et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this lack of freedom was also reflected in the possibility to publish in periodicals in Czechoslovakia in the years 1948 – 1950, and in the following period. Members of society in Czechoslovakia were fed with “relevant opinion-forming” information through the media. The idea of Communism was to introduce a “just” society, which was supposed to be already created here on earth (Lukáčová et al., 2022).

THE YEAR 1948 – THE ELECTIONS OF FEBRUARY AND THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE STATUS OF THE CHURCH IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

February 1948 and the subsequent victory of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia outlined the direction of the relationship with the Church. We should not forget that after the elections, the primary concern of the new government cabinet was not aimed at the fight against the Church since it was an integral part and a pillar of the formation of people living in Czechoslovakia. Following the model of other countries where this regime was already present, the aim of the Communist Party was to control all the apparatuses of society, including the Church itself, which was expected to become an obedient instrument of power. The pressure on

the Church increased, and Marxist-Leninist atheism developed as the basic philosophical principle. The struggle with religion was considered part of the class struggle (Čitbaj, 2013). Moreover, the fight against the Church with the support of the law became the most effective tool. In 1948, several laws affecting Church life were adopted.

Gustáv Husák in his speech on December 9 also reacted to the perception of the Greek Catholic Church. During the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, he stressed the necessity of monitoring within the Greek Catholic Church and the importance of particular attention which should be paid to this Church (Slovak National Archives in Bratislava, 1948). Successive monitoring of places of Catholic formation started to take place. The main reason for this control was the fact that further clergy training programmes were held in these “centres” (Lukáčová & Šturák, 2020).

Under the monitoring of individual studies published in the newspaper *Rudé právo*, it is evident that the Church was under moderate pressure due to media channels at that time (in comparison to the following period), and it did not present or deepen the issue relating to the status of the Church in Czechoslovakia.

Table 1

Rudé právo, year 1948

Article headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>Freedom of the regime is one of the fundamental principles of our regime</i>	1	March	1
<i>New holidays adjustment</i>	20	March	1
<i>The government approved the law on a unified state school</i>	26	March	1
<i>The priest's word to the faithful II.</i>	19	May	2
<i>Faithful Catholics are positive about the constructive efforts of the National front</i>	19	May	2
<i>The word of the priest to the faithful Catholics and socialism</i>	26	May	2
<i>Th.Dr. and PhDr. František Kovář bishop-patriarch of the Czechoslovak Church for a unified list of candidates</i>	22	May	1

Source. Own elaboration.

THE YEAR 1949 AND THE CHANGE IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE STATUS OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In 1949, the perception of the status related to the Church in Czechoslovakia began to change. Considering the subject matter of this study, we have decided to focus mainly on the area reflected in media and church life. A

year earlier, all Catholic publishing houses had been nationalised, and the publication of the individual magazines had been also restricted due to the alleged lack of paper. On the other hand, the lack of paper had not affected other periodicals (except for the church ones) to such an extent. On January 1, 1949, the guidelines based on the higher quality of the press for the Greek Catholic Church entered into force. A monthly journal for Slovak Greek Catholics titled *Cyril and Methodius* was published. The biweekly magazine *Blahovistnik* was published without the Annex titled *Zorja*. All circulars were issued exclusively by the Saint Adalbert Association, and the publishing activity was guided by a specialised press committee of eight members. Six members were appointed by the administration of the Saint Adalbert Association (*Spolok svätého Vojtecha*) and two other members were members of various state apparatuses. In addition, this council was responsible to the press committee of the ÚAV SNF.

Freedom of the religious press was restricted. The Ordinariate in Rožňava also reacted to the control of the number of periodicals being published or even ceased. It recommended not printing circulars in individual Ordinariates but reproducing them by machine. Nevertheless, Róbert Pobožný, the capitular vicar of Rožňava at that time, advised that it would be useful to compile a list of published periodicals, although the Directive on saving paper was still valid (Archive of the Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Prešov, 1949a).

The politics of the following period also showed the direction of the status of the Catholic Church, which tried to reverse this trend using several measures. On January 19, 1949, the bishops' council delivered a ten-point memorandum to Klement Gottwald, the President of the Republic. Regarding the topic of the study, we have decided to select points 1 and 4, which refer to the issue of the church press:

1. ...to refrain from the constant attacks in the press, radio, and public speeches against the Church and its representatives, not to discredit publicly the Christian understanding of life as a contradiction to science and progress, and to be given the right of self-defence against such attacks publicly in the press, on the radio, and in public speeches in the spirit of the principles of democracy.
4. ...we request a fair resolution of the issue concerning the religious press according to the proposal of the Commissioner of the Bishop's Council for Catholic Religious Press and Book Publishing. We request that the official interventions against some Catholic publishing houses be withdrawn, and that one or two Catholic publishing houses be allowed in each diocese. (Bulínová et al., 1994, p. 44).

The position towards the Catholic Church, and especially towards the Greek Catholic Church, escalated at the beginning of 1949. This can be seen in the speech of Minister Alexej Čepička who in February said the following:

This is a novelty for us that the Greek Catholic Church would become part of the Catholic Church. If so, there would be serious consequences. Until now, we have separated it from you because the things that are happening in the Greek Catholic Church are serious. This Church is completely open and obviously in the service of the enemy; it is even impossible to find a priest who would not be involved in it and thus would not actively cooperate with Bandera's people (Vaško, 2007, p. 7).

Nariadenie vlády o referátoch krajských národných výborov pre školstvo, osvetu a telesnú výchovu (č. 14/1949). [Government Regulation on Regional and National Commissions Reports on Education, Promotion and Physical Education (no. 14/1949).] (Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republiky, 1949b) referred to the establishment of the *Commission for Education, Promotion and Physical Education*, and as part of every regional and national committee, it was supposed to help to monitor individual church institutions in Czechoslovakia (*Acta Curiae Episcopalis Nitriensis*, 1949).

Based on the provisions of the Central Action Committee in Bratislava and the Regional National Committee in Prešov, cultural and educational activities of all religious associations were prohibited. The reason for introducing such a provision was that religion and religious activities belong to the Church and based on the religion, any reactionary, hostile, and uncontrollable activities that are directed against the people's democratic establishment in the name of propaganda and culture cannot be allowed (Archive of the Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Prešov, 1949b).

On April 25, 1949, a new path began to be forged in the politics aimed at the presidency of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Consensus with individual Churches was no longer to be achieved through an agreement with bishops but through a struggle directed against them. The starting point for this process was the so-called *Karlovy Vary program*. A clearly defined objective of this programme was to break up the relationship between bishops and the Holy See, between bishops and priests, and, finally, between priests and the faithful. Furthermore, it was also aimed at providing support for the creation of a new national Church separated from Rome and the development of a plan for its liquidation, as well as preparation for the liquidation of religious orders and benefits for priests who were willing to cooperate (Hlinka, 1989).

The following months led to the gradual liquidation of the Church's property, the prohibition of Church collections, the abolition of the remaining Church associations, and the prohibition against all gatherings of believers that were limited only to church premises, and, in addition, the abolition of religious orders that had a relatively large influence on individual territories.

The practical implementation of the plan was entrusted to the so-called "Church Six". Its members often changed, but at the time, Alexej Čepička was the chairman and Vladimír Clementis, Zdeněk Fierlinger, Václav Kopecký, Viliam Široký and Jiří Hendrych were its members (Mandzák, 2010).

According to the Decree of the Information Directorate on April 27, 1949, press distribution had to be authorised in advance (Coranič, 2014). In addition, the subscription of the Vatican publications *Osservatore Romano* and *Acta Apostolicae Sedes* was officially prohibited.

Pavol Peter Gojdič OSBM, Bishop of Prešov, opposed several restrictions and measures aimed at the Catholic Church. The office of the president responded to one of his complaints in July 1949. Among other things, it was stated that the people's administration authorities did not hinder religious freedom with their measures, as the measures served to protect the people's democratic order (Archive of the Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Prešov, 1949c).

The successive steps of the government persecuted Christians on the territory of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak bishops decided to react to the situation as well, and so on June 15, 1949, they issued a pastoral letter *Hlas československých biskupů a ordinářů věřícím v hodině velké zkoušky* [The Voice of the Czechoslovak Bishops and Ordinaries to the Faithful in the Hour of Great Testing] as well as a circular for priests. In the circular, they condemned Catholic Action as a divisive movement, and any participation or cooperation with it should be punished. The inspirers and conveners were to be excommunicated, i.e. expelled from the Church. Bishops perceived this action as a fight against the unity of the Church and the Church order. Moreover, bishops mentioned in their letter deprivation of rights as well as all problems the Church had to face. In this letter, however, we can also find that bishops wanted to be involved in the resolution of conflicts between the Church and the state. At the same time, they proclaimed that human rights included freedom of private religious belief and free practice of religious acts, as well as actions to exercise these rights without fear of personal freedom, civil equality, and threats to existential rights (Pastiersky list, 1949).

In addition to the above-mentioned facts, the National Assembly approved the so-called ecclesiastical laws on October 17, 1949. It was *Zb. zákonov o zriadení Štátneho úradu pre cirkevné veci (č.217/1949)*. [Coll. according to which the State Office for Church Affairs was established (no. 217/1949).] (Národné zhromaždenie Československej republiky, 1949a) on the basis of which the State Office for Church Affairs (Alexej Čepička was nominated as the chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs, and the Slovak government entrusted Gustáv Husák, the chairman of the board of trustees, with the leadership of the Slovak Office for Church Affairs. Both persons performed their duties from November 1, 1949. Alexej Čepička remained in the position of chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs until April 25, 1950, and his deputies were František Hub, Jaroslav Plíhal, and Jaroslav Havelka) was established. Likewise, the adoption of *Zb. zákonov o hospodárskom zabezpečení cirkví a náboženských inštitúcií štátom (č. 218/1949)*. [Coll. on the Economic Security of Churches and Religious Societies by the State (no. 218/1949).] (Národné zhromaždenie

Československej republiky, 1950) and *Zb. Vládne nariadenie o hospodárskom zabezpečení rímskokatolíckej cirkvi štátom* (č. 219/1949). [Coll. on the Economic Security of the Roman Catholic Church by the State (no. 219/1949).] (Národné zhromaždenie Československej republiky, 1949b).

On the occasion of the National Assembly, Alexej Čepička gave an interesting speech: The state should provide economic support for all Churches so that they can devote themselves to religious and moral activities. It relieves them of material concerns. (...) Nothing changes in the free life of the Church. They will continue to decide freely about their activities. (...) Of course, it would not be possible to allow some positions in the Church to be misused for anti-state subversive activities. (...) Otherwise, the religious activity of the Church will continue to enjoy unlimited freedom (Vaško, 2004, p.166-167).

Based on the government's decision on November 4, 1949, *Vládne nariadenie o pôsobnosti a organizácii Štátneho úradu pre cirkevné veci* (č. 228/1949). [Government Regulation on The Scope and Organization of the State Office and Ecclesiastical Affairs (no. 228/1949).] (Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republiky, 1949a) entered into force. It supervised ecclesiastical and religious affairs, which had previously been carried out by other authorities. Particularly important are points *g* and *h*, which clearly define its competences:

- g) expert assessment of church and religious press and publications;
- h) publication of the official gazette for clergy, publication of information reports and publications (Nariadenie vlády Slovenskej republiky, 1949a).

In practice, active clergy required obtaining permission for any activities while this occupation was subject to a precise place and time. In this way, persons who did not have this permission acted against the state- The decisions of this secretariat also included the approval of the clerical position and relocation. The clergy also had to accept the censorship of announcements or pastoral letters (n.d., 1989).

At the end of 1949, the government demonstrated its attitude towards the Catholic Church, which through its actions and demands hindered the development of the "new" socialist society. The media activity against the Greek Catholic Church continued and therefore Bishop Pavol Peter Gojdič decided to issue a letter, in which he informed about his intentions to help his neighbours in Christian love but without harming the state or the nation (Archive of the Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Prešov, 1949d).

One of the plans aimed at preventing communication between the Catholic Church in Slovakia and the Holy See was the gradual liquidation of monasteries. This plan is reflected in the gradual decrease in the number of schools for the education of religious brethren and in the several raids carried out by State Security in monasteries. Gradually, the monasteries became the target of various persecutions because of their importance within the Catholic Church. Also, through the invitation organised by the

Superintendency of Education, Sciences and Arts in the summer of 1949, it wanted to clearly show the direction in which the activities of the religious orders were heading. It found the reason when and how to start action that took place in Čihošť. A miracle that happened on the third Sunday of Advent, December 11, 1949 (*Vatikánský „zázrak“ v Čihošti*, 1950). The event resulted in the arrest of the local priest, Josef Toufar. According to state officials, this was a clear strategy of the Vatican aimed at persuading and winning the people. Through this event, the public was shown the “inhuman face of the Church” that needed to be destroyed by this decisive action (Kalous, 2001). However, Josef Toufar was not the only priest accused of this miracle. There were the Premonstratensian priests such as Vít Bohumil Tajovský, Augustín Antonín Machalka and Stanislav Barták. Their testimonies were manipulated and labelled as anti-state activity.

It was therefore “exceptional and special” material. Thus began the action, whose first step was the trial of the abbots Tajovský and Machalka; these trials were supposed to lead to a clear discrediting of the religious orders. For the trial in March 1950, a sample of ten religious brethren identified as “reactionary” clerics was selected. These included the Augustín Antonín Machalka, Vít Bohumil Tajovský, Stanislav Ludolf Barták, František Šilhan, Adolf Kajpr, František Mikulášek, Ján Ivan Mastiliak, Ján Blesík, Josef Silvester Braitó and Josef Jan Urban (Mandzák, 2009). These events were intended to support the claim that monasteries as well as members of the religious orders were inconvenient for the communist regime.

Even during the described period of 1949, the “media” development of the status of the Church in Czechoslovakia was reflected in the newspaper *Rudé právo*. It can be traced how the state’s position towards the Church changed and what steps were gradually taken by this media channel to denigrate it.

Table 2

Rudé právo, year 1949

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>Christian priests for peace Magazine of the Catholic priesthood</i>	15	May	1
<i>Meeting of the Catholic priests and believers from all dioceses in the republic. Declaration of the Catholic Action Committee to all Catholics and the public</i>	18	May	1
<i>Telegram of the nationwide Catholic event of the President of the Republic, Kl. Gottwald. Catholic priests pledge allegiance to the people’s democratic state</i>	11	June	1, 2
<i>Thousands of believers call for an agreement with the state President of the Republic and Prime Minister of the Catholic Action Committee</i>	12	June	1
	12	June	2
	14	June	1

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>Lots of priests and believers to join the declaration of the Catholic Action Committee</i>	14	June	2
<i>Believers and priests for an accelerated agreement between the church and the state</i>	15	June	1, 2
<i>A powerful response to the declaration of the Catholic Action among believers and priests</i>	16	June	1, 2
<i>The priests from the Jesenice district condemn the oppression of the church authorities</i>	17	June	1
<i>Priests and believers ask for further negotiation between the state and the church</i>	17	June	2
<i>Already 1,500 priests and hundreds of thousands of believers expressed their approval of Catholic Action</i>	18	June	1
<i>Other manifestations of the will of clergy and believers after the agreement between the church and the state</i>	18	June	1
<i>The Catholic people stand behind the Republic</i>	19	June	1
<i>Catholic Action Committees established in the countries</i>	19	June	1
<i>Thousands of signatures to the Catholic Action declaration</i>	19	June	2
<i>Patriotic priests sign the decision</i>	21	June	1
<i>Believers condemned the attempt to misuse the services</i>	21	June	1
<i>The faithful call for the renewal of negotiations between the state and the church</i>	21	June	1
<i>An important declaration of the government of the Republic. The government will not allow churches to be misused for reactionary political expressions</i>	22	June	1
<i>Czech Catholics will continue on their way to a better life</i>	22	June	2
<i>Believers for the resolution of the relationship between the state and the church</i>	22	June	3
<i>Declaration of the Presidency of Catholic Action to the public</i>	23	June	1
<i>Additional priests and believers stand behind Catholic Action</i>	23	June	3
<i>Catholic Action - a mass movement of believers</i>	25	June	5
<i>Secretary General of the Central Committee of the National Front dr. A. Čepička: By solving church questions, we will contribute to peaceful development</i>	26	June	1
<i>The politics of the Catholic hierarchy do not correspond to the true mission of the Church. World press about the Vatican's adventurous policy in Czechoslovakia</i>	26	June	2
<i>Already 1,700 members of the clergy have signed the call of Catholic Action</i>	26	June	7
<i>Establishment of other regional committees of Catholic Action</i>	26	June	3
<i>Another thousands of believers ask for an agreement between the church and the state</i>	30	June	1

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>District committees of Catholic Action established in Slovakia</i>	1	July	1
<i>We will never allow the Church to be misused for anti-state activities</i>	2	July	1
<i>Answers to questions about the relationship between the church and the state</i>	2	July	2
<i>The mission of Catholic Action expresses the deepest feelings of the faithful</i>	3	July	7
<i>The Czechoslovak people manifested their loyalty to the People's Democratic Republic</i>	7	July	1, 2
<i>People, state and bishops</i>	10	July	1
<i>Allies of Archbishop Beran in Slovakia</i>	13	July	2
<i>Statement of the Czechoslovak People's Party on Catholic Action</i>	14	July	1
<i>An important meeting of the Presidium of the Central Action Committee of the National Front. The National Front presents a draft law on state reimbursement for the personal and material needs of churches</i>	16	July	1
<i>Exposing the subversive role of the Vatican and the church hierarchy</i>	16	July	5
<i>A hateful act by the Vatican</i>	19	July	2
<i>The General Secretary of the SOF criticizes the Pope's discriminatory decree</i>	19	July	2
<i>Church hierarchy during the occupation and today</i>	20	July	1
<i>The Vatican group revealed itself</i>	22	July	2
<i>Catholic Action Committees established in all regions and districts</i>	23	July	1
<i>Catholics and non-Catholics</i>	23	July	2
<i>The Vatican and the Fascists</i>	27	July	2
<i>Declaration of the Polish Government on the Vatican resolution on excommunication</i>	28	July	2
<i>The Vatican also persecutes the children of communists</i>	29	July	2
<i>District committees of Catholic Action established in all districts of the Republic</i>	29	July	3
<i>Catholic believers do not agree with the excommunication of their priest</i>	3	August	3
<i>Catholic priest about the threats of the Vatican</i>	4	August	3
<i>The Vatican's golden ties to Wall Street</i>	6	August	2
<i>The alliance of the Vatican with the imperialists</i>	10	August	2
<i>Meeting of the presidency of the Central Committee of Catholic Action</i>	14	August	1
<i>Why the Pope didn't excommunicate Hitler</i>	14	August	2
<i>Answers to questions about the relationship of the state to religion and churches</i>	16	August	2

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>The Vatican - a staunch enemy of the Czechoslovak people</i>	19	August	2
<i>Czechoslovak Churches to the President of the Republic</i>	20	August	1
<i>Vigilance against the enemies of the nation</i>	2	September	2
<i>The Vatican - a financial power</i>	2	September	2
<i>Episcopal consistories nourish the hopes of expelled Germans</i>	7	September	3
<i>Catholic bishops on the side of the enemies of the people and the state</i>	9	September	3
<i>Individuals from the ranks of the higher Catholic clergy seek to subvert the Republic</i>	16	September	1
<i>Priests' consent to the draft ecclesiastical law</i>	18	September	7
<i>A Vatican agent was sentenced to 10 years in prison for high treason</i>	20	September	5
<i>A Catholic clergyman on the draft law on state reimbursement of church needs</i>	23	September	3
<i>The relationship hierarchy between the church and the state</i>	29	September	2
<i>Clergy welcome the bill on the economic security of churches</i>	6	October	1
<i>Testimony about the religious freedom in Czechoslovakia</i>	6	October	2
<i>New laws provide the churches with the prerequisites for full development</i>	7	October	3
<i>The Act on the Economic Security of churches in the Parliament</i>	7	October	3
<i>The House Committees unanimously adopted the outlines of both ecclesiastical laws</i>	11	October	1
<i>Orthodox clergy warmly welcome ecclesiastical laws</i>	11	October	1
<i>The Catholic Action Conference welcomes new ecclesiastical laws</i>	11	October	3
<i>Additional priests agree with the new ecclesiastical law</i>	13	October	1
<i>Ecclesiastical laws as a key focus of the Czechoslovak clergy</i>	14	October	1
<i>About the role of the Vatican in World War II</i>	14	October	3
<i>Statutory regulation of the relationship between the church and the state</i>	15	October	1
<i>Parliament unanimously approved the ecclesiastical laws</i>	15	October	1
<i>Delegation of clergy to the President of the National Assembly</i>	15	October	1
<i>Letter from the Bishop of the Czechoslovak Church to the Prime Minister</i>	15	October	1
<i>Parliament unanimously approved ecclesiastical laws</i>	15	October	4
<i>Expressions of agreement with new ecclesiastical laws</i>	16	October	1
<i>New issue of the Bulletin of the Catholic Clergy</i>	27	October	5
<i>Clergy thank for new ecclesiastical laws</i>	4	November	3

Source. Own elaboration.

THE YEAR 1950 – THE PERIOD OF COMPLETION OF THE PHASES AIMED AT THE ANTI-CHURCH STRUGGLE

In the first half of 1950, the pressure on the Catholic Church, and mainly on the Greek Catholic Church, did not subside. On the contrary, it reached its peak. Two events played an important role during that period. These were the so-called Small and Great Church Sobors (councils). The Small Sobor took place on April 24 in Ružbachy; this meeting did not bear the desired outcomes. On the contrary, anxiety increased after the "Small" Sobor. After the Action "K", the news about the possible arrest of priests after the arrest of religious brethren started to spread relatively quickly among the people. Therefore, believers decided to guard individual parish buildings (Šturák, 2016). As a result, the plan to convert the Greek Catholic clergy to the Orthodox faith could not be implemented easily. Based on this fact, the upcoming congress of the so-called return committees changed into a "Great Sobor".

A week before the Prešov Sobor, a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia took place in Bratislava. The outcome of the meeting was advancing the conversion to the Orthodox Church in eastern Slovakia. According to Ladislav Holdoš, the situation in eastern Slovakia was as follows: in the Prešov region, there were around 164,000 Greek Catholics; the number of Greek Catholics was lower in the Košice region, about 64,000 believers. However, in his speech, he stated that the situation of the religious conversion was unfavourable because only 15 – 20% of the population had supported it in the Košice region. According to him, the support was greater in the Prešov region, with about 40 percent of the transfer believers (Slovak National Archives in Bratislava, 1950).

On April 28, 1950, the "Great Sobor" was held in the city of Prešov – in the building of the Black Eagle. It was a broader component of the action, whose aim was to definitively liquidate the Greek Catholic Church (Coranič, 2021).

The result of the Sobor was the publication of the *Manifesto of the Greek Catholic Clergy and Believers* (n.d., 1950) adopted at the Sobor in Prešov on April 28, 1950. The 16-page document stated the termination of the agreement between the Union and the Vatican and the return to the Orthodox Church.

The situation in society did not end with Action "P". Greek Catholics were monitored, and individual priests were seen as a possible danger that could subvert society.

The media once again became an important and effective tool in the fight against the Church. The newspaper *Rudé právo* was one of them. In 1950, it published several articles, whose aim was to denigrate the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia.

Table 3*Rudé právo, year 1950*

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>The highest representatives of the Orthodox Church arrived in Czechoslovakia</i>	1	February	1
<i>Arrival of the highest representatives of the Orthodox Church in Prague</i>	2	February	1
<i>High Church hierarchy against the Republic and against the interests of believers</i>	18	February	5
<i>Senior clerics took a pledge of allegiance to the Republic</i>	18	February	5
<i>The Vatican "miracle" in Čihošť</i>	9	March	3
<i>The policy of the Vatican - a manifestation of the will of the American imperialists</i>	28	March	2
<i>The policy of the Vatican - a manifestation of the will of the American imperialists (the final part)</i>	29	March	2
<i>High church dignitaries at the head of a group of traitors and spies</i>	1	April	3
<i>New evidence of the subversive plans of the Vatican against our Republic</i>	2	April	4
<i>Monasteries and religious orders - centres of anti-state activities</i>	2	April	5
<i>The Vatican sought to transform monasteries into centres of conspiracies against the Republic</i>	4	April	4
<i>Agents of the Vatican convicted of the most serious crimes against the Republic and its people</i>	5	April	4
<i>A just punishment for espionage and high treason</i>	6	April	1
<i>The verdict of the State Court on a group of treacherous rank-and-file priests</i>	6	April	1
<i>Favourable reactions to the punishment of the Vatican agents</i>	7	April	1
<i>The indignation of the workers over the activities of the treacherous priests</i>	12	April	3
<i>About the activities of the Vatican agents</i>	13	April	5
<i>Church Hierarchy and the Journal of the Catholic Clergy</i>	15	April	5
<i>The subversive activity of the priests in the service of the imperialists</i>	16	April	7
<i>About the return of Catholic orders to their religious mission</i>	19	April	1
<i>Also in Slovakia, orders will return to their religious mission</i>	23	April	7
<i>Enemies of our people</i>	2	June	1
<i>Patriotic priests on the side of our people</i>	2	June	5
<i>Catholics stand firmly on the side of peace</i>	11	June	7
<i>The conference of the Catholic priests in Velehrad was concluded</i>	7	July	3

Article Headline	No.	Month of issue	Page number
<i>The monasteries will serve the workers</i>	12	July	1
<i>The Vatican by deeds</i>	12	September	5
<i>Patriotic Catholic clergy go with people in the fight for peace</i>	10	November	5
<i>Peace Conference of the Catholic priests in Prague</i>	25	November	5
<i>Agents of the Vatican in the service of warmongers</i>	1	December	5
<i>Before the judgment of a group of treacherous helpers of Vatican</i>	2	December	3, 4
<i>The just verdict of the State Court in Prague against a treacherous group of the Vatican agents</i>	3	December	1, 7
<i>Slovak clergy unanimously support the resolution of the Warsaw Congress</i>	5	December	3
<i>The Vatican and the Remilitarization of West Germany</i>	28	December	3

Source. Own elaboration

CONCLUSION

Kierkegaard in his work on ethics and individuality, describes a mechanism that is needed in society to control our moral value system (Garcia Martin et al., 2021). In 2022, a study dealing with the feeling of happiness and the quality of life was published (Murgaš et al., 2022). When researching the introduced period of a given study, there are different opinions on this period, which are presented by individual people and their attitude from their point of view. The quality of the offered way of life was guaranteed by the communist dictates, which also had an impact on the formation of ethics and individuality. In that period, the state tried to keep the individual apparatuses of society under control. Of course, religion and the church were also included in the group of subordinate apparatuses.

Religion has always represented a complex institution that has had a direct impact on building a person's identity (Máhrík et al., 2020). In the researched years, it is possible to trace how the state took over the monopoly of education, which had and still has an impact on the construction of the authenticity of the personality (Kondrla et al., 2022), but of course on control and manipulation through the media as well. Media manipulation chooses methods and ways that make the manipulated people think that the decision is their own. With this type of manipulation, people are deceptively misled and often presented with the truth, but in reality, it is a lie (Tkáčová et al., 2023). In the past as well as today, media has a great influence on people, their way of thinking, the creation of a value scale, the acceptance of a certain worldview, the acceptance of people, but also the influence on different sectors of society (Budayová et al., 2022).

In the 1950s, media channels were mainly represented by magazine/newspaper publishing and radio broadcasting. However, the objectivity of

these media channels decreased after the events of February 1948. We can trace the impact of the media and the gradual increase in tendency leading towards denigrating the perception of the Church in Czechoslovakia between 1948 and 1950. We have decided to choose this period to show how the pressure against the Church was constantly increasing. This study focuses on the comparison of the media channel represented by the newspaper *Rudé právo*, which was published as a daily newspaper in the period under review.

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