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LAICYZACJA CZECH – ANALIZA PRZESTRZENNA

Republika Czeska jest znana jako jedno z najbardziej ateistycznych państw świata. To odejście od religii przypisywane jest najczęściej czterdziestoletniej indoktrynacji ideologii komunistycznej, która w tym kraju była wyjątkowo wrogo nastawiona do wszystkich kościołów. To jednak zbyt uproszczenie. Obojętny stosunek Czechów do religii wynika z ich historycznych doświadczeń i ma o wiele dłuższą tradycję niż historia komunizmu.

Obecnie większość społeczeństwa czeskiego deklaruje się jako bezwyznaniowa: według ostatniego spisu ludności z roku 2001 było to 60% z ogółu ludności. Ta liczba jest jednak tylko średnią, a poszczególne regiony znacznie się pod tym względem różnią.

Niniejszy przyczynek przedstawia przestrzenną analizę zjawiska deklarowanego ateizmu w Republice Czeskiej. Okazuje się, że są pewne prawidłowości geograficzne w rozmieszczeniu tego zjawiska. Ateizm jest najbardziej rozpowszechniony w północnozachodnich Czechach i maleje w kierunku wschodnim i południowym. Większy jest także w miastach aniżeli na wsi, przy czym także tutaj widać tę samą zależność: w miastach Czech zachodnich i północnych występuje częściej, aniżeli w miastach Moraw i czeskiego Śląska na wschodzie i południu kraju. Opracowanie stara się wyjaśnić to zjawisko.

LAICISATION PROCESS IN CZECHIA: SPATIAL ANALYSIS

1. Basic terms

Laicisation is process more or less visible in many countries all over the world and connected usually with modernisation process (Havlíček, 2003). It is a term for reduction the role of religion in daily life. This reduction is going step by step and we can describe several levels of it. Three groups of laicized people are labelled in this contribution: passive religious people, non-religious people and atheists.

1. Passive religiosity means formally remaining in the church, but reducing or even stopping religious practise.

2. Non-religiosity means finish of membership in church community confirmed by any formal act: public withdrawal, avoiding of baptising in case of children or declaring non-religiosity during census. Non-religiosity means lack of any connection to religious communities but not hostile attitude to the church.

3. Atheism in this contribution means not only lack of connections to religion life but aversion or even hostility to any religion activities and to the church as institution.

All three groups are common in Czechia today. But it is not only consequence of communism.

2. Specific Czech attitude to religion

Churches and all religious activities were due to ideological reasons oppressed in Soviet Union and its satellites. But this common anti-religious policy under pressure of Kremlin Moscow was not identical in different countries at East and Central Europe. Some communist rulers went further than Stalin: Albanian communist party abolished all churches and claimed Albania to be the first truly atheist country in the world in 1967 (Vykoukal, Litéra, Tejchman, 2000). On the other hand there was Poland where church had a relatively strong position during the whole communist period. Its adherents were even among members of ruling Polish United Party of Workers.

Czechoslovakia was between these extremes. There was here no complete abolishing of churches like in Albania but the anti-religious policy were more intense than in most other countries of the Soviet sphere. Character of Czechoslovak communist policy against religions was not at the centre between of semi-liberal attitude in Poland and brutal attitude practised in Albania, but it was closer to the last one. It was possible

because relationship of Czech society to church was not very positive and so the anti-religious policy can be implemented easier than in other communist countries.

Church in the Czech lands has not become a part of the national life, like in other countries e.g. already mentioned Poland. It is a consequence of Czech history. Czechs accepted Christianity very soon during the mission of Constantine and Method in 9th century. They brought Christianity of the eastern rite to Great Moravia. However, it then spread in a form of western rite due to the influence of Bavaria. The most important part of the Czech religious history is the Religious Hussite Wars in 15th century. They significantly influenced the position of church in Czech lands and caused major disputes in those days religious community. There were two clearly distinguished groups. One, that tried to preserve the Catholic Church as it was, and other that tried reform it. Those reformers were supporters of Jan Hus, very popular Czech catholic priest who tried to reform this church. Hus was in 1415 caused to death by pope and he was burned in Constance as heretic. The Religious Hussite Wars marked the origin of European Reformation. Hussites were defeated but their ideas to reform the Catholic Church were preserved among the Czechs. Consequently, nearly all Bohemia, and vast majority of Moravia and Silesia turned to Protestant Churches till the beginning of 17th century. But the rulers of Czech Kingdom were Austrian Habsburgs from 1526. They were strong catholic family, and it was a serious source of tension between king and Czech society than national differences. Thirty years war started 1618 by uprising of Czech Protestants against a catholic king. This war was basically European Catholic-Protestant

conflict. The Czech Protestants were defeated and area of Czech Kingdom was consequently and brutal re-catholicised. The Czechs were forced to convert to Catholicism or to leave the country. Defeated Czechs had to subordinate to Habsburgs but many of them perceived catholic religion as religion of oppressors from this time. It is the main reason of weak position of Catholic Church among the Czechs.

Austrian emperor Joseph IInd permitted Protestant Churches again at 1781. But the Czechs never fully returned to Protestantism again. Last Austrian census 1910 reports 96% of Bohemian and Moravian inhabitants being catholic. This census also reports that at that time in fact all Czech population was religious because those remained 4% of non-catholic were protestants, orthodox or Jews. Religiosity was usual social characteristics of everybody. Official number nondenominational people was 0,2 % in Bohemia and 0,1 % in Moravia and Silesia (*Statistický lexikon obcí Republiky československé*, 1935).

The situation changed after World War Ist, when Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy splitted into new states. Czechoslovakia was created by the unification of historical Czech Kingdom (Bohemia, Moravia and most of the territory of former Austrian Silesia) with Upper Hungary renamed to Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.

Freshly gained independence motivated many Czechs to separate from Habsburg monarchy also in terms of religion. Vienna was traditionally catholic and religious and so there was very popular among Czech intellectuals to demonstrate their independence on church organizations. This was a reason why some Czechs converted to non-

catholic churches. In the 1920s there was a new national church created and called Czechoslovak Hussite Church. It included ex-Catholics who wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to the new Czechoslovak Republic. This church had followers only among the Czechs and only in Czech part of Czechoslovakia. It was not present in Slovakia nor in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia and it included no members of numerous Czechoslovakian minorities: Germans, Hungarians, Jews and Poles.

3. Laicisation process in Czechia before communism

Opposition to Catholicism shifted in many cases to opposition to religion. Process of laicisation – that means leaving of life in the church – has started. Life outside the church started to be considered as modern for growing part of Czechs. Those were mostly intellectuals and left-wing people who refused to take part in divine services or even baptise their kids. It was not just passive religiosity which happens in most developed societies where many citizens (though formally baptised) do not take part in religious life regularly. In inter-war Czechoslovakia appeared however more and more radical cutting of roots with religious community described above as non-religiosity and atheism.

Laicisation in Czechoslovakia continued during whole inter-war period. Number of declared non-religious people was increased to 2,9 % in Moravia and Silesia and even to 10,2 % in Bohemia as census at 1930 reported (*Statistický lexikon obcí Republiky československé*, 1935). It is significant, that Czechoslovakian laicisation was practically reduced to Czech territory. Population at Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia saved their religiosity almost

generally. There appeared the features of combating anti-church atheism.

Declared nondenominational people appeared this time in the Czech statistics mainly in central Bohemia at the north-westward of Prague, in western Bohemia at Plzeň and its vicinity, in northern Bohemia at Ústí nad Labem and in several smaller areas in the north-eastern Bohemia. Significant group was reported in capital Prague, but in comparison to total of the most populated Czech city it was relatively not so much. Generally can be say, that non-religiosity occurred more often in big cities. In the country it occurred more only north-westward from Prague in district of Rakovník and Kladno. They were both localised close to the big industrial area in Bohemia in Kladno. Moravia and Silesia had only sporadic cases of declared non-religiosity during inter-war period.

4. Laicisation process in Czechia under communism

After the World War IInd the map of Czech population changed dramatically. Not as a result of war losses, those were moderate in comparison to other countries, but as a result of removal Germans after the war. Czechoslovakia lost during the war only 0,3 million inhabitants (most of them were Jews). During removal of German minority to Germany (1945-1947) Czechoslovakia lost however more than 3 million people. In consequence of this removal many border districts remained almost population less. Their re-settling was the biggest migration process in modern Czech history. When first after-war census passed in 1950 in Czechoslovakia, this re-settlement was not yet completed.

The new communist government started a strong anti-religion policy – in the terms of this paper it can be labelled as atheist policy. The communists let in this census held 1950 question of religiosity, but they never publish the answers. We have only fragments of the results. The total number of non-religious people increased slightly in 1950 among Czech people but the relative share increased more significantly because of removal German minority, which was in average more religious than the Czechs.

Unfortunately all consequent censuses during communist period did not include question of religiosity. Considering religiosity as private thing of everybody and pushing it from public life was for communist regime advantageous. We have only estimations of practising believers which attended – in spite of danger – divine services. Their number was about 3-5 % of total population. So the communist propaganda could present Czechoslovakia as almost atheistic country where only the last remain of believers live. The most of Czechs were really too afraid to go to church during communist period. Only some of them went to church sporadically and not in their own towns where they could be known. The others took part in the illegal church in Czechia. But they were exceptions. Most of Czechs easy put up with life without a church.

5. Laicisation process in Czechia in post-communist period

After fall of communism in 1989 the laicisation process in Czechia stopped and turned off. In new post-communist era some Czechs returned to churches. But not all of them and even not a majority of them have done it. Next census that included question of religion was done in 1991. Detailed analysis was published by Daněk –

Štěpánek (1992) and Srb (1997). 4,5 million out of 10,3 million citizens of the Czech Republic saw themselves as religious – most of them were representatives of passive religiosity. 4,1 million claimed to be non-religious and part of no church. Remained 1,7 million of Czech inhabitants did not answer this question at all. The fact that 16 % people did not answer shows the relationship of Czechs towards religion. Some experts thought that those who did not answer were religious people who were still afraid to admit it. Not everyone agreed with such explanation and the next census in 2001 showed that they were right. It was the other way around. The ones who ignored the religious question during the census were mostly non-religious people. Immediately after the fall of communist it seemed to be more appropriate to be part of some church. So many people declared themselves as adherents some churches without even a hint of religious practise. Many others considered this question as disturbed and they decided did not show their ignorance of religion matters. However, census ten years later confirmed this hypothesis.

New opinions emerged saying that Czech society is becoming more secular due to wrong procedures of Czech Churches after fall of communism. They would not been able to attract the lost sheep and in opposite they would repel a big part of believers. Explanation of growing number of non-religious people are however different. A sudden increase in number of non-religious people between 1991 an 2001 is not caused by decrease in religiosity as such. The new non-religious people were in fact those, who did not declare themselves in 1991 and partly also those, who declared

themselves as believers for conjuncturalist reasons.

Though it was voluntary to state religion in last census at 2001, number of those who decided not to do so decreased from 1,7 million to 0,9 million (roughly 54 %). It is evidence that most of them declared themselves as non-religious. Results of census 2001 therefore seem to indicate real situation in comparison of census 1991 that indicated only wish.

The spatial distribution of non-religious people in the Czech Republic is not homogenous. A factor that caused increasing number of non-religious people compared to the period before World War IInd was obviously the removal of Germans. Most Czech Germans were religious – either catholic or protestant. The new settlers – predominantly Czechs and Slovaks – did not restore religion life in their new home at the same level as was typically for expelled Germans. They were also whipped out their own tradition, they were from different places and very often they were under communist influence. Because the main area of Czech atheism before war in central Bohemia existed close to the main part of Sudetenland in the north-western Bohemia the consequence of it is the large area of high level of non-religiosity in the Czech Republic. There were only about 20 % inhabitants religious. The highest percentage of non-religious people in Czechia is in industrially and socially damaged northern Bohemia, in the districts of Most (79,9 %), Děčín (78,9 %), Chomutov (77,9 %) and Teplice (77,9 %). The second regional peak of non-religiosity is in former Kladno Coal Basin north-westward from Prague at district of Kladno (77,7 %) – Náboženské vyznání obyvatelstva (2003). See the map.

On the other hand, the highest percentage of religious people is especially

in east and south of the country in Moravia. In Bohemia it is also the south where the religious prevail. The lowest number of non-religious people was reported at districts of Uherské Hradiště (27,6 %), Žďár nad Sázavou (32,0 %), Hodonín (33,8 %), Vsetín (35,9 %), Zlín (39,5 %), Blansko (39,3 %) and Třebíč (40,3 %). There is also a difference between cities and countryside. People in the cities and towns are traditionally less religious than population of the countryside. But even this case is visible growing number of non-denominational people from south-east to north-west direction. Similar towns by population have more declared non-denominational people if they are situated at northern Bohemia than at southern Moravia. It is connected with migration activity. It is lower in the south-east part of the country than in the north-west part.

Age is another factor that needs to be considered. Younger Czechs are less religious than the elders. It is nothing special among European nations, but among the Czechs this phenomenon is only more intensive. There is also a link between non-religiosity and education, though it is not very strong. More educated Czechs tend to be less religious than those with lower education. However, the difference is not significant. Religiosity of Czech national minorities is not very much different from the majority, but minorities are similar to the own nations. It is symptomatic for example, that the Poles declare smallest number of non-religious people and the smallest number of those, who ignored this question during last census.

6. Conclusions

Results of the last census match with social research that was done in the Czech Republic in 1999 (Spousta, 1999). This research confirms a significant decrease in religiosity but only a slight decrease in a frequency in which people attend churches. This frequency is very low anyway. In 1999 only 7,0 % Czechs attended divine service weekly, 4,7 % monthly, 22,7 % at least once in a year, 8,2 % less often and 57,6 % never did so. It means that real religious practising is less frequent in reality than similar declaration of membership in any church: 32 % of Czechs are believers, but only 11,7 % attend divine service at least monthly. It is despite of disappearing strong atheist propaganda of former communist regime. Propagation of atheism is considered as not political correct now. Therefore hard atheistic ideas are not visibly expressed in recent time by Czech media as well as public opinion. Hard atheism has been replaced by more moderate non-religious concept. Non-religiosity concept is now widely dispersing and it pushes so the hard atheism as the renewed religiosity. What is the reason of it? The main reason is that anti-religious and atheist communist ideology has not been significantly

replaced by restored religion life. It is an ideology of modernity connected with ideology of consumption which gains far more adherents in the time after communism. Modernity and consumption are not anti-religious in fact but they do not care about religion at all. Such ideology is not able to restore devastated religiosity in Czechia.

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