CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS IN SOCIALIST SLOVAKIA 1969-1989

PRIVATIZING AND DEPRIVATIZING RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

Between 1969 and 1989, the Slovak socialist state claimed that its aim was to achieve a secular society, in which religion (perceived by Marxist theory as "backward") would be substituted by "reasonable and scientifically proven knowledge." However, looking at the experiences of Slovak Christian believers, I argue that what the socialist state *de facto* did was not secularization in terms of getting rid of religion, but rather making religion private. Thinking around the lines of the term *privatization* of religion from the secularization theory and José Casanova´s term *deprivatization* of religion I analyze the experiences and practices of believers in socialist Slovakia. I claim that privatization of religion was not a goal of the ideologists, but it was the response of believers to the actions and attitudes of the agents of secularization. Moreover, the pressure to privatize religion also had other effects, because it triggered the mobilization of believers and *deprivatization* of religion.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Often when I told someone that I am researching on the topic of religion under communism, people responded that it is a common knowledge about communist regimes that the communists aimed to eradicate religion by persecuting churches and Christians in socialist countries. Examples of priests and believers in forced labor camps, banned religious orders, and significantly restricted church activity in the public sphere convincingly support this claim. On the other hand, churches existed and religious celebrations also took place in socialist states. So a large and complicated question keeps occupying the scholars' minds – what can we say about religion in communist regimes in the Eastern Block? What does religion under communism tell about religion in modern world?

First of all, the pure term "religion" complicates the whole issue. What is it? Although many have tried to define religion by pointing to some typical features, the current scholarship dismissed the idea of religion as "an existing thing" possible to be defined through some essential categories.[1] Rather, the scholars suggest treating religion as a result of human activity, to see behind religion the people who "do things" and so constantly preserve, create, define, or negotiate what we call religion. So the new scholarship calls to turn the attention to people who express faith, make and sustain religious institutions, perform religious rituals, associate around religious labels, write and speak within religious discourses.[2] Through these lenses we can further ask about religion under state socialism. Who were the believers and how did they live religion in their lives? How were they seen and treated by the authorities? Believing that Christianity was persecuted in the countries ruled by the communist administration, we should

[1] Jonathan Z. Smith according to. Brian Porter-Szűcs, Christianity, Christians, and the Story of Modernity. In *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*. Brian Porter-Szűcs and Bruce R. Berglund, eds. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010), 10.
[2] Robert Ford Campany, "On the Very Idea of Religions," *History of Religions 42,* (2003): 319. According to Porter-Szűcs and Berglund, *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*.

ask what persecution was and whom the state persecuted. On the other hand, how did religion and churches survived the pressure?

Drawing on research of the state and church relationship, which has been a common subject of academic interest in the studies of communist policies, in this thesis I will take a step towards society. What I propose here is an inquiry into the life of Christian believers during the 1970s and 1980s in socialist Slovakia. I analyze the interplay between the state and the people living in it, based on an archival research combined with biographical interviews and testimonies of people who lived in the period.

I argue that the state through the ideologists and documents issued by the Communist Party claimed to aim to achieve secular society. However, it was not directly the Party and the ideologists who played the most important role in secularization. There were other agents who were directly working with "those kept in the religious chimeras." Therefore, what they pursued was to keep religion within some limits. These limits I describe in Chapter 2, through the "Slovak socialist model of acceptable religion." The model did not correspond to the legislation issued by the government. It was the combination of legislation and the applied policies and practices of the state against churches and believers which reveals the characteristics of religion and religious behavior, which the state accepted. The main line of the model shows that religion was accepted, or less persecuted when it was private. Through accepting the model and *privatizing* religion, believers could live an ordinary daily life in the normalization regime without facing oppression on every step.

After drawing general lines about religion in the socialist society, I zoom to school as a particular example in Chapter 3. In the secularization endeavor schools became the most important platforms for teaching atheism and scientific worldview, but at the same time, schools were also involved in the teaching of classes of religion instruction. I show how the classes of religious instruction were also an instrument of secularization, but they at the same

time served as a platform for mobilization of believers. All this in the particular historical situation of the post Vatican II council period and the Human Rights movement allowed the *deprivatization* of religion, going public of religion in socialist Slovakia. There were the *secret church* structures in Slovakia which brought religion to public. However I will demonstrate, similar processes of *deprivatizing* religion can be seen on a small scale in the settings of secular schools.

With my thesis I join the academic focus of studying religion under state socialism. Moreover, through the selection of theoretical approaches, I situate my research into the socio-historical studies of secularization, and the relationship between secularization, secularism, and religion. The terms which frame my thesis are taken from the general secularization theory, as discussed and challenged by José Casanova, a sociologist of religion. Nevertheless, the particular historical setting determines a deeper definition or re-definition of these concepts. I discuss the use of concepts, theories, as well as sources and methodology in Chapter 1.

I see the contribution of my work in three points. Firstly, speaking about religion under a communist rule, I keep the research distanced from the persecution vs. resistance narratives which prevail in these research area. I concentrate on people who were not imprisoned, or violently persecuted, but on those who lived their everyday life in the socialist contexts, but dealing with the question of religion. Secondly, as my contribution I see the change of the optics through which we research on religion in communist countries. Moving from church and state relationship to relationship of state and individual believers opens a different picture of experiencing, living, and negotiating religion. Finally, I propose my thesis as a contribution to the broad interdisciplinary discussion about religion in modern world.

Chapter 1 - Setting the frames

The inquiry of this thesis is how Christian believers lived in the "normalization" period. More specifically, I will discuss the confrontation of the daily religious practice of believers with the regulations imposed on religion by the state. I argue that how believers handled their religious practice in relation to the state was highly variable. The Czechoslovak socialist state between 1969 and 1989 claimed that its aim was to achieve a secular society, in which religion (perceived by Marxist theory as "backward") would be substituted by "reasonable and scientifically proven knowledge." However, I argue, that what the socialist state de facto did with religion was not the secularization in terms of getting rid of religion, but rather making religion private.

In this chapter I will discuss the framework that has shaped my thesis. First, I explain the historical situation of Slovakia and of religion in Slovakia in the selected time period, then I connect the general sociological theory of secularization to the socialist context. Finally, I present my approach, sources and methodology and restate my thesis statement.

1.1 Normalization in Slovakia

Considering the time frame, I focus on the 1970s and 1980s which form a separate period in the history of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Here, I will briefly present the overview of the socio-political development prior to and during the selected time period.

The Communist Party came into power in February 1948 and in the following five years took steps to transform society according to the Soviet, totalitarian, model of socialism.[3] Striving for total control the newly ruling communist regime, the regime took steps to subjugate

[3] Jan Pešek, "The establishment of totalitarianism in Slovakia after the February coup of 1948 and the culmination of persecution 1948-1953." In. Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin. D. Brown, *Slovakia in History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 285-298.

all spheres of life in the country. Gradually, the Communist Party monopolized political power, took control of the land and agriculture through collectivization, prohibited private ownership and entrepreneurship, and tried to also dominate the spiritual sphere of citizens in Czechoslovakia. Harsh persecution waves towards opponents of the regime, among them also churches and believers, accompanied the establishing of the total power, and continued, (although in a lesser degree) until the end of 1950s.

The period of de-Stalinization and recognition of Stalinist crimes triggered the first democratization movements between 1962 and 1968.[4] However, the regime began to liberalize after January 1968, after the personal changes at the key state posts. This whole democratization process came into history under the name *Prague Spring.* The new political leadership, led by Alexander Dubček as the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, strived to reform the regime and achieve the so called *socialism with a human face*. Similarly as the Hungarian attempt of 1956 or Polish attempt of Solidarity in 1981, the Czechoslovak *Prague Spring* was an endeavor of the new generation of political garniture to rectify the mistakes from the past and reduce the level of authoritativeness of the Party governance over the society.

The new political representatives started to sketch significant changes in the country – such as the federal arrangement of the country, economic reform, and challenged the leading position of the communist party. However, for the life of the society, other, smaller reforms were of great significance. The activity of non-communist parties rose, many associations as well as newspapers and magazines previously banned resumed their activity, censorship

[4] This shift of the politics between 1962 – 1968 is in historiography refered to as *predjarie*, "Pre-Spring." For more information: Miroslav Londák, Stanislav Sikora, and Elena Londáková, *Predjarie. Politický, ekonomický a kultúrny vývoj na Slovensku v rokoch 1960 – 1967*. [Pre-Spring. Political, economic and cultural development in Slovakia in years 1960 / 1967.](Bratislava: Veda, 2002).
Stanislav Sikora, "Slovakia and the attempt to reform socialism in Czechoslovakia 1963 – 1969." In. *Slovakia in History*. Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin. D. Brown, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 299-314.

became more lenient, and in April 1968 even cancelled, public critique was allowed, some who were unjustly sentenced were rehabilitated. This period also brought release to the relationship between the state and churches, since the state partially lowered the level of surveillance.[5]

The breaking point and the end of the democratization process came in August 1968 in form of the intervention of troops from Warsaw Pact countries which marked the new period. Military occupation was followed by a series of political meetings of the Czechoslovak representatives with representatives from the Soviet Union, during which a new political program was approved. A program that aimed to re-establish the "true socialism" as was supposed to exist prior to the democratization attempts. The period after 1969 is in the historical writings as well as in common language termed as *normalization.* It refers to the contemporary expression, the request of the Soviet Communist leaders to bring the political situation in Slovakia to *normal*, e.i. to nullify the results of political liberalization and democratization process, and re-establish the control of society.[6] In this narrower sense, *normalization* lasted only till December 1970, when the document *Lessons from the crisis development in the party and society after the thirteenth congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia* was issued. However, in the common as well as academic historical usage the term *normalization* is applied to the whole 1970s and 1980s. To differentiate between the two meanings of the term, I use *normalization* in italics when referring to the process of consolidation (undergoing the reforms directing to the *normal* situation) and in normal formatting when referring to the whole period.

In the process of *normalization* the new political elite aimed to clean the political sphere of the *contra-revolutionary elements.* Therefore, first of all, new people were installed on the

[5] For more information, consult: Anotnín Benčík et al., *Osem mesiacov Pražskej jari, 21. August 1968.* [Eight months of the Prague spring, August 21, 1968], (Bratislava : Osveta, 1990).
Antonín Benčík, *The Prague spring 1968. A National Security Archive documents reader*. (New York, New York Press 1994).
Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds., *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010).
[6] Jan Pešek and Michal Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie. Cirkvi na Slovensku 1969-1989.* [In the grip of normalization. Churches in Slovakia 1969-1989.] (Bratislava: Veda, 2004), 7.

highest state positions, subsequently the members of the communist party, people in significant state and academic positions were screened to eliminate the risk of upheaval. Also, employees underwent interrogations and according to their stance towards the *fraternal help*[7] were situated in the workplace.

After 1971, severe persecution of disagreeing individuals were no longer common, but rather hardly graspable, though partly legitimate ways of coercing people to collaboration and loyalty proofs dominated everyday life dynamics. Loyalty became the most important mechanism of social praxis that characterized the relationships in normalization times[8] and it can serve as an effective tool to understand the dynamics of behavior in the period of normalization. Loyalty, as theorized by Czech historians of normalization, is a social relationship between two or more people, or between a person and an institution, or ideology, which contains an element of confidence, a postulate of some reliability and predictability, knowing what one is loyal to. However, loyalty is never exclusive, and one person can exhibit several loyalties, also mutually incompatible. Due to the multiple loyalties to which people (willingly or unwillingly) committed, the period was a test of one's character. People very often balanced on the verge between their own personal conviction and what was expected from them by society, their vicinage.[9]

What is also important for my analysis, is the perception of the period and the situation after 1968. The texts by dissidents and intellectuals described the post-Prague Spring period in the terms of an order imposed on the society in which the society needs to live. While the period of 1968 was in the Czechoslovak intellectual circles understood as a step forward, - a step

[7] A term used in the official propaganda for the military action, refering to the Brezhnev doctrine of mutual help between the socialist countries in case of a problem.

[8] Jakub Jareš, Matěj Spurný and Kateřina Volná. *Náměstí Krasnoarmejců 2. Učitelé a studenti na Filozofické fakultě UK v období normalizace.* (The Red Army Soldiers' square 2. Teachers and students at the Philosophical faculty of Charles University in the period of normalization.) (Praha: Filozofická fakulta UK, Togga, 2012), 17-24.

[9] Jareš, Spurný, and Volná. *Náměstí Krasnoarmejců 2.,*

towards democracy and better life in socialism - the military intervention and the following political events baffled the hopes, and brought a new order, which contradicted the achievements of the Prague Spring, and therefore caused disappointment and resentment.[10] Although this was definitely a perception of intellectuals, other groups of the society, such as teachers, reflected the disappointment in their testimonies.

The choice of the time period also determines the use of other terms. I operate with the term socialism, socialist Slovakia, rather than communist. In the Marxist thought communism was seen as the highest stage of historical development, to which the way leads through the stage of socialism. While the Party presented, making use of propaganda, the initial phase as the building of communism, after 1968, as Lipták claims, communism was no longer considered, written, or spoken of. The documents issued by the Party rather spoke of "building a socialist society," a "developed socialist society," or "real socialism." Communism became a utopia.[11]

Finally, I want to explain my choice of Slovakia a case study. Although situating my work into the political development of Czechoslovakia, as the geographical focus I have chosen only Slovakia. The most important rationale is the different situation in the field of religiosity in Slovakia and in Bohemia and Moravia. As the statistical indicators demonstrate, Slovakia was more religious at the beginning of the communist period, throughout, and after the fall of communist regime. The numbers from the census in 1950 claim that in the Slovak part it was only 0.51% out of 3.3 million inhabitants who declared no church affiliation.[12] A study by the

[10] Milan Šimečka. *Obnovení pořádku.* [The restoration of order.] (Brno: Atlantis, 1990, originally published in *samizdat* in 1977). (available also in English. *The Restoration of Order.* Translated by A. G. Brain, (London: Veso Edition, 1984).
HU OSA 300 30 300-30-15, box 15. Vladimír Jukl, *Augustové udalosti z pohľadu katolíckeho laika.* [The August events from the viewpoint of a catholic laic.], July 10, 1988.
[11] Ľubomír Lipták, "Slovakia in the 20th century." in *A Concise History of Slovakia.* Elena Mannová, ed. (Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV, 2010), 291.
[12] Appendix I.
Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie,* 204.

Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences from 1988 on the basis of internal statistics of church baptisms, weddings, and funerals classified the religiosity of districts in Czechoslovakia. While the Czech Lands were stated as predominantly nonreligious, the majority of Slovak districts were described as strongly religious.[13]

1.2 Secularism and Churches

Religion in socialist Slovakia was a topic which received a lot of attention from the state institutions. Adhering to Marxism-Leninism, the Communist Party wanted to achieve a completely secular society, depending fully on human activity. Therefore the state imposed policies on religion which were supposed to accelerate secularization. Though policies of countries with communist governments were similar, they still bore specific features for each country and each context. Taking inspiration from Sonja Luehrmann's book *Secularism Soviet Style*, where she discusses and theorizes the specific *project of secularization* of Soviet society

[13] The results of this study were republished by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in 1988. HU OSA 300-30-7, box 520. Peter Martin, "Church State Relations," RFE/RL, 27 December 1988, 19–24.
The study recognized five types of religiosity.

	Baptisms	Church weddings	Church funerals	
"significantly below average"	13,8 %	3,6 %	32 %	No Slovak region
"Under average"	38,2 %	17,4 %	58,7 %	one Slovak region - Rožňava
"Above-average"	57,7 %	35,3 %	77,8 %	Regions of Bratislava, Komárno, Levice, Banská Bystrica, Liptovský Mikuláš, Lučenec, Martin, Prievidza, Rimavská Sobota, Košice.
"Significantly above-average"	71,7 %	58 %	89,1 %	Dunajská Streda, Galanta, Nitra, Nové Zámky, Sereď, Topoľčany, Trenčín, Považská Bystrica, Vrútky, Zvolen, Žiar nad Hronom, Poprad, Prešov, Trebišov
"Maximally above-average"	86,2 %	84,3 %	91,7 %	Trnava, Čadca, Dolný Kubín, Žilina, Bardejov, Humenné, Košice-vidiek, Michalovce, Spišská Nová Ves, Stará Ľubovňa, Svidník, Vranov nad Topľou

through the mandatory and state imposed atheistic education, I position my work as the analysis of the Slovak normalization project of secularism, as the way to achieve secular socialist society.

Before diving into the Slovak experience, the question how a general sociological model of secularization works in the case of the socialist state needs to be clarified. José Casanova, a sociologist of religion, shows that the theories of secularization, which are in western scholarship present since Enlightenment as the belief that as societies progress, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance,[14] stand on three "separate moments"[15], three premises. First of all, secularization presupposes the differentiation of spheres in the state and diminishing the authority of church in state's affairs. Secondly, secularization theories work with the assumption that modernization of society automatically lead to decline of religion, until its complete disappearance. Thirdly, Casanova argues, in the process of disappearance, religion is believed to privatize. The privatization in the understanding of secularization theories is the result of religious rationalization, individuation, and alternative interpretations of life which cause that religion becomes a subjective matter.[16] Secondly, due to the differentiation of society, the institutional religion is believed to depoliticize and lose its position in the society, therefore religion becomes private in terms of not institutionalized.[17] Casanova challenged the latter two theses, in his book *Public Religion in the Modern World*,[18] demonstrated that religions in the 1980s were neither disappearing, nor seemed to completely leave the public sphere.

[14] Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. "The Secularization Debate," in *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide.* Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-32.
[15] Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 20.
[16] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World,* 220.
[17] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World,* 35.
[18] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World.*

The three theses about secularization, or the relationship of secularization and religion can serve as a guideline when looking at the communist practices towards religion. I will show how the secularization efforts in the Slovak society played along these lines. Already since Karl Marx the belief in teleological disappearance of religion was present in communist thinking. Although defining religion as a theoretical category is a subject of ongoing discussions,[19] Marxist thought understood religion as faith in God or spiritual beings.[20] Marx with his ideas about religion and faith followed Feuerbacher's and Hegel's philosophy, which saw God as a projection of human and human needs. He labeled religion as the 'opium of the people', as an 'illusory consolation for the oppressed,' and he asserted that religion was a tool which the ruling class used for millennia to give the working classes a false hope of future well-being. Marx believed that after overcoming the economic causes of poverty, religion would become useless, and, would naturally fade from society.[21]

Lenin who drew on Marxist theory, saw religious faith as a spiritual oppression inhibiting human development, and he argued that communism is incompatible with religious faith. He claimed that there was no space for religion in the Party, nor in the rule of the state. Although "everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases", for every socialist, as Lenin put it, it was a rule to be an atheist. The prevailing socialist understanding

[19] Among the most significant debates: Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. tr. by Karen E. Fields. (New York: The Free Press, 1995, originally published 1912).
Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Clifford Geertz, (New York: Basic Books, 2002, originally published 1966), 61-82.
Talal Asad. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category." In *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Talal Asad, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 27-54.
[20] Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 7.
[21] William Raeper and Linda Smith. *Myslenie západnej civilizácie.* [Thinking of the western civilisation.] (Bratislava: Návrat domov. 1998), 126 – 129.
Alister E. McGrath, *Blackwellova encyklopedie moderního křesťanského myšlení.* [The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought.] (Praha: Návrat domů, 2001), 215.

of atheism, called also scientific atheism,[22] claimed that since through scientific research no God was discovered, any existence of a deity ruling over humans was negated. Just the opposite, it confirmed the status of man as an autonomous, independent being.[23] Therefore the socialist states, states which follow the Marxist-Leninist teachings, were supposed to work to achieve an atheist society and explicitly through propaganda and means of persuasion fight all religious elements present in the society.[24]

Based on Marx's and Lenin's thoughts, which were then further developed by other theorists and ideologists, communist governments did not only wait for the gradual disappearance of religion but also initiated the emergence of active forms of fight against religion. Concept of secularism as a body of political doctrines and moral sensibilities which claims the necessity to detach religion from modern public life[25] became important part of the communist policies. As Luehrmann claims, religion was for the participants and strategists of secularist endeavor a "powerful adversary" rather than just the "remnant of the disappearing past."[26]

The best way to approach the secularist practices is through policies towards churches, as the institutions significant in the transmission of religion. The history of how the Communist Party in socialist Czechoslovakia developed and formulated their policies and official stances towards churches has already been a subject of various historical studies which inform my

[22] The adjective scientific as opposing the *bourgeois* atheism. Unlike the bourgeois, the scientific ateism „did not take hostile stance against believers and did not insult their sentiments." Jiří Loukotka, *Socialismus, náboženství, morálka.* [Socialism, religion, morale.] (Praha: Horizont, 1985), 9.
[23] Loukotka, *Socialismus, náboženství, morálka*, 7 – 12.
[24] Vladimir Ilitch Lenin, Socialism and Religion, originally published in *Novaya Zhizn*, No. 28, December 3, 1905, available online at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm, last accessed May 6, 2015.
[25] Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, 3.
Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1.
[26] Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, 1-4.

work.[27] The most important classics describing the situation in the sphere of church and state relationships are Karel Kaplan[28] in the Czech lands and Jan Pešek and Michal Barnovský[29] in Slovakia. They offer a deep analysis of archival material documenting the state's policy towards churches in terms of legal and institutional frameworks and persecution, as well as sketching the responses of churches as institutions to the state's undertaking. Being the first who extensively researched this topic, their books became the most important reference points for further studies of religion under communism in Czechoslovakia. They systematized the periodization of the state-church development, provided tables with statistical information, and influenced the language and vocabulary used to describe happenings and changes, which I use in my thesis. Here I present an overview of the main intentions of the state policies, showing what characteristics of the church were eliminated and how. In order to be able to sketch a picture of the situation in the 1970s and 1980s, first I put forward a chronological overview of the policies since 1948.

Unlike the Soviet government, the Czechoslovak Communist Party did not separate church from the state. On the contrary, from the very first months after gaining power, the regime connected church with state more closely, with the aim to subjugate and take control of

[27] Ján Pešek and Michal Barnovský, *Pod Kuratelou moci: Cirkvi na Slovensku v rokoch 1953 – 1970.* [Under the power's custody. Churches in Slovakia in years 1953 - 1970] (Bratislava: Veda, 1999).
Pešek and Barnovský. *V zovretí normalizácie.*
Martina Fiamová – Pavol Jakubčin, *Prenasledovanie cirkví v komunistických štátoch strednej a východnej Európy.* [The persecution of churches in communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.] (Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2010), 596-615.
Máté Gárdonyi, "Prežitie – spolupráca – odboj." [Survival – collaboration – resistance] in *Felekezetek, egyházpolitika, identitás Magyarországon és Szlovákiában 1945 után. = Konfesie, cirkevná politika, identita na Slovensku a v Maďarsku po roku 1945.* [Confessions, church politics, identity in Slovakia and Hungary after 1945.] Budapest : Kossuth Kiadó (2008), 157-164.
Róbert Letz, "Az állami egyházpolitika Szlovákiában 1948-1989 között. = Cirkevná politika štátu na Slovensku v rokoch 1948-1989." [Church politics of state in Slovakia in 1948/1989] In. *Felekezetek, egyházpolitika, identitás Magyarországon és Szlovákiában 1945 után. = Konfesie, cirkevná politika, identita na Slovensku a v Maďarsku po roku 1945,* Budapest : Kossuth Kiadó, 2008, 113-147.
[28] Karel Kaplan, *Stát a církev v Československu v letech 1948 – 1953.* [State and church in Czechoslovakia in years 1948 – 1953.] Brno: Doplněk (1993).
[29] Ján Pešek and Michal Barnovský, *Pod Kuratelou moci: Cirkvi na Slovensku v rokoch 1953 – 1970.* [Under the power's custody. Churches in Slovakia in years 1953 - 1970] (Bratislava: Veda, 1999).
Pešek and Barnovský. *V zovretí normalizácie.*

church activity and religious life. First of all, the state administration subordinated churches through the legislation. Church Laws 217/1949 and 218/1949 accepted on August 22, 1949 and valid till the revolution in 1989, destroyed the autonomy of churches in Czechoslovak society.[30] By the Law 217/1949 a State Office for Church Affairs was created with the official task to supervise whether the "church and religious life in Czechoslovakia was in line with the Constitution."[31] However, the historians of church and state relations agree that the real competence of this central office was to control churches in all aspects of their religious activities.[32] According to the second law, Law 218/1949, all legal ecclesiastical institutions became economically dependent on the state,[33] and also in their legal status they became subordinated. Although stating that religion was an opiate of humanity which needed to fade, the state pledged to provide a salary to priests and to a limited number of employees approved by the Office. However, to be paid by the state as a priest one was obliged to acquire *state approval* and pledge loyalty to the socialist state. Therefore, the legally serving clergy was caught in between two authorities – the state and the church hierarchy. If the rules were breached by the priest, he ran a risk of losing state approval, which was followed by the prohibition of one's legal religious service.[34]

Although the state and church remained connected, the state pushed churches from their spheres of influence. Among the most significant was the liquidation of religious orders in 1950 by which the Roman Catholic Church lost its supportive structures and the presence in the world of everyday life. Moreover, the Greek Catholic Church was outlawed[35], and all the

[30] Kaplan, *Stát a církev v Československu,* 111-113.
[31] "Law 217/1949, by which the State Office for Church Affairs is created" accessed June 6, 2015, http://www.upn.gov.sk/data/pdf/217-49.pdf
"Law 218/1949 about the economic provision of churches and religious organizations by the state." Accessed June, 6, 2015, http://spcp.prf.cuni.cz/lex/218-49a.htm
[32] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci,* 13-24.
[33] Since the separation of church from state did not happen till today (2015), this second law is still valid, however, with the exception that the state no longer issues a state approval and has no word in the selection of priests.
[34] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci,* 19.
[35] Liquidation of Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia came in the first wave of strict anti-church policy, in which the subordination of churches was done through church laws. In April 1950 on the special meeting of sobor,

parishes were forcefully transformed into Orthodox. Church schools were nationalized, church press banned, all associations working around churches cancelled. Permitted were only religious activities approved by the state and these were even restricted within the church areal. The teaching of religious education in schools was allowed, however, limited and strictly controlled. Church marriage was no longer accepted as valid, it could serve only as an additional voluntary addition to the civil marriage rite. Moreover, the state influenced church attendance by organizing mandatory brigades for youth for Sundays or Christian holidays.[36] When applying these policies, those believers, former monks and nuns, and priests who rejected to obey the rules or organized resistance movements were persecuted, imprisoned, or sentenced in show trials. Although accused of espionage or treason, the real reason for the persecution was their religious activity.[37]

As Casanova claims, religious organizations compete for people's commitments with each other but also with the secular organizations.[38] Pushing out religion from the sight of

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the Užhorod Union, by which the Greek Catholic Church as church of eastern rite accepted the authority of Vatican, was proclaimed as invalid. The contract with Vatican was cancelled, structural organization of the church was dismissed, and the theological seminary closed. The priests who wanted to continue in clerical service could have done it within Orthodox Church, a church that did not have a strong tradition in Slovakia. Those who tried to legally and openly continue the activity of GCC were persecuted, interned. The only possible survival was in illegality.

For more information:

Michal Barnovský, "Grécko katolícka cirkev na Slovensku po druhej svetovej vojne." [Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia after World War II.] In. *Felekezetek, egyházpolitika, identitás Magyarországon és Szlovákiában 1945 után. = Konfesie, cirkevná politika, identita na Slovensku a v Maďarsku po roku 1945* [Confessions, Church politics, Identity in Slovakia and Hungary after 1945]. Budapest : Kossuth Kiadó, 2008: 277-288.

Stanislav Konečný. "Slovakia." in *Churches In-Between. Greek Catholic CHurches in Postsocialist Europe,* edited by Stéphanie Mahieu and Vlad Naumescu. (Berlin: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2008), 111-124.

[36] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci*, 19.

Vladimir Gsovski, *Church and State Behind the Iron Curtain.* (New York: Praeger, 1955).

[37] For more information about the liquidation of religious orders:

Pavol Jakubčin ed. *Likvidácia reholí a ich život v ilegalite v rokoch 1950-1989.* [Liquidation of religious orders and their life in illegality in years 1950-1989.] (Bratislava: Ústav Pamäti národa, 2010).

Milan Dubovský. *Akcia kláštory.* [Action: monasteries.] (Martin: Matica slovenská, 1998).

Milan Dubovský. *Akcia reholníčky.* [Action: nuns.]. (Martin: Matica slovenská, 2001)

on religious persecution:

Róbert Letz et.al., *Zločiny komunizmu na Slovensku.1948:1989.* [The crimes of communism in Slovakia. 1948:1989] 2 volumes. (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2011, 2013).

Martina Fiamová – Pavol Jakubčin, *Prenasledovanie cirkví v komunistických štátoch strednej a východnej Európy.* [The persecution of churches in communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.] (Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2010), 596-615.

[38] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World.* 20-25.

people, taking properties of religion into the hands of the state, and so decreasing the possibility to observe religion affects those who consider themselves religious, and they are more likely to abandon religion. Although church activity was in Slovakia limited, it was not outlawed. Still many forms were allowed – such as religious services (which was in all socialist countries except Albania), but also pilgrimages, classes of religious instruction in schools. All these created space and opportunities to continue with religious life, however within a much more restricted space.

Starting from the end of 1952 a new period in the relationship between church and state began, in which the state changed the main line of secularizing endeavor. By using widespread propaganda of atheism the state started to focus on the *ideological fight for believers*[39]. In Summer 1954 the leaders of the Party proclaimed religious confession a private affair that would be no longer recorded in censuses.[40] However, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, religious confession never became a completely private affair, since the state, in all its structures cared about who is a believer, and persecuted religious activity.

Although religion and churches were systematically pushed out of the public sphere, churches continued to play the crucial role in the rites of passage. Baptisms, weddings, but mainly funerals in Slovakia were in the hands of churches.[41] In order to eliminate the position of churches, the state developed in the 1950s a set of rituals which were supposed to functionally replace the church ones. In charge of them were the *Zbory občianskych záležitostí,* the Brigades for civic affairs, bodies of the local government, which carried out ceremonies such as *Welcome to life* for the newborn, civil marriages, or civil funerals.[42] As the figures from

[39] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci*, 29-33.
[40] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci*, 24-25.
Although the question of religious afinity was asked during regular inspections, interviews.
[41] See Appendix II.
[42] SNA MK SSR OPVC, box 103, "Podiel kultúrno-osvetovej práce na ateistickej výchove občanov v Trenčianskom okrese za IV. štvrťrok 1973." [The role of cultural-edyfying work on the atheist education of citizens in Trenčín district in the first quarter of 1973.]

the normalization period prove, Slovak citizens continued adhering to religious rituals, mainly in case of funerals.

Political liberalization in 1960s Czechoslovakia loosened up the relationship between state and church. The extenuated censorship allowed a more open discussion about persecutions in the 1950s. President Zápotocký through an amnesty in January of 1960 set free around 5600 political prisoners,[43] among them many priests, church activists, or former monks and nuns who in religious circles witnessed their experience.[44] That led some church activists to bring the issues about reconsideration of the policies towards religion to discussion, however, the situation was still too precarious for a deep public discussion about religion and its position in the state. Nevertheless, the events of 1968 allowed the monastic orders to come out of illegality and they regained state recognition. Similarly, the Greek Catholic Church was again permitted although without dealing with all the conflict situations (about believers, properties) which emerged. During the short period of liberalization the silenced churches reappeared in the public discussion, for a short time could speak up and express their objections to the regime openly, and thus regain authority and inner strength.[45]

The evaluation of the democratization process in 1969 issued a document *Lesson from the crisis development,* which besides other problems, recognized that churches and church activities "got out of control" and were given too many concessions. The document re-stated the Marxist-Leninist ideology and its application by all means of mass activity as one of the

[43] Jaroslav Rokoský. "Amnestie 1960." [Amnesty 1960.] *Paměť a dejiny* 01, (2011): 36.
[44] František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť. Z osudov katolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku v rokoch 1943-89.* [You will not be able to rupture them. Fate of the Catholic Church in Slovakia in years 1943-89.], (Bratislava: Archa, 1991).
[45] Pešek and Barnovský. *Pod Kuratelou moci*, 115-145.

five "permanent and unchangeable values" of the country,[46] rejection of which was seen as an anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary act.[47]

In December 1971 a document *The Conception of the long-term practices in the sphere of church politics and worldview education in Slovakia* was issued, which shaped the behavior of the state towards churches and religion. As the name itself suggests, the document dealt with the situation in two directions. The second field of interest of the state, the atheist education, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In the relationship between church and state, the state needed churches and the representatives of religious life to be loyal to the regime, and their activities not conflicting with *the development of socialist society*. In its secularist endeavor the state wanted to have church which is passive, which only carried out their rituals.[48] Attempts at activity reaching beyond were perceived by the state with resentment, and very often ended with the withdrawal of one's state approval or relocation of active priests. Along similar lines, the state also tried to push all religious activity and happenings back into churches, so that they are not public. Moreover, the Office for Church affairs called for moderation in church celebrations, such as confirmations or consecrations of new priests.[49]

Looking at the 40 year long period of communist rule in Slovakia, I will now give some concluding thoughts on how the Communist Party envisaged the role of the church in the state. In general, the applied policies did not directly pursue a complete dismemberment of churches. Rather, the Party took steps which, in their view would cause the decrease in the church's attractiveness and significance, which was supposed to cause the dying out of religion. Therefore, as Jindřich Kabát summarizes it, the state through its policies wanted to achieve

[46] Other were the leading role of the working class and its avant-garde the Communist Party in society; The socialist state as the instrument of the domination of proletariat; Communal ownership of the means of production and planned direction of the national economy; the principles of proletarian internationalism and their consistent application in foreign policy, especially in relation to the Soviet Union. According to: Lipták, Slovakia in the 20th century, 291

[47] Lipták, "Slovakia in the 20th century," 291.

[48] Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, 60.

[49] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 67, "Plány cirkevných akcií na rok 1988." [Plans of church events in 1988.]

churches that would be transparent for control, obedient and quiet in terms of responding to state's policies and to the atheist propaganda, loyal to the state, passive in terms of other than approved ritual activity and especially in its mission, and not modernizing.[50]

The attention towards the *project of secularism* reveals the state's policies which gradually deprived churches of some of their functions and pushed religion and churches out of the public life. However, since religion was not outlawed, religious life in Slovakia continued. The secularist policies and interventions against religion as such, or church and believers only created a framework of what demonstrations of religion were persecuted, but left others which were more or less tolerated. Therefore I introduce a *model of accepted religion*, as a helping tool to understand how the socialist model defined what religion meant in socialism and how this definition shaped the maneuvering space for the believers. The model is historically specific for the given time period. Although I call it a model, it was not a model *per se* which would be constructed and presented by the state authorities. Rather it was a shared knowledge based on experiences which people understood and appropriated from the state's policies against churches, believers, and practiced religion. Using a discourse analysis I synthetize the model of religion accepted in the socialist society, as it stands out from the documents and the personalized accounts. This model, discussed in depth in Chapter 2, does not assume the absolute right, applicable to any case study. However, it points to the central argument and show, that religion was accepted when it was kept private, whereas this category of private varied according to the circumstances.

1.3 Deprivatization of Religion - The *Secret Church*

Adhering to José Casanova's argument further, I will now briefly present his concept of *deprivatization* of religion and illustrate it on the case study of Slovak unofficial Catholic

[50] Jindřich Kabát. *Psychologie komunismu.*[Psychology of communism.] (Praha: Práh, 2011), 241-260.

structures through which religion went public in socialist Slovakia. Casanova observes *deprivatization* of religion as religion entering the public sphere to 1) protect human rights and to demand the existence of civil society against an authoritarian rule, 2) contest the absolute autonomy and legitimacy of the secular sphere, and 3) to protect the traditional "life-world" from the intervention of the state to the private spheres of an individual.[51] In such understanding, as I will demonstrate, Slovak *secret church* serves as a very apt example of *deprivatization* of religion.

In Slovak historiography the research on the topic of religion and churches during the communist regime has two main directions, both working within the totalitarian paradigm. The first main corpus of research analysis concentrates on the topic of persecution, bringing the stories and histories of victims - people or groups, such as priests, former monks and nuns, active individuals, directly persecuted by the regime, imprisoned, or sentenced. To this stream belong books, mainly bringing reconstructions of events, uncovering archival material, and recognizing the injustices done by the regime.[52] Within the persecution vs. resistance narrative, life stories of individuals who by their deeds somehow stood against the state power are being researched and documented in projects such as *Project Oral History – Witnesses of the Oppression Period* initiated by the Slovak National Memory institute[53] or activities of the Confederation of the Political Prisoners.[54]

The second stream of literature about religion in the socialist state deals with the active resistance against the socialist regime. The main body of resistance is connected to the so-

[51] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World.* 57-58.
[52] Róbert Letz et.al., *Zločiny komunizmu na Slovensku.1948:1989.* [The crimes of communism in Slovakia. 1948:1989] 2 volumes. (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2011, 2013).
Martina Fiamová – Pavol Jakubčin, *Prenasledovanie cirkví v komunistických štátoch strednej a východnej Európy.* [The persecution of churches in communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.] (Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2010), 596-615.
[53] Project Oral History – Witnesses of the Oppression Period, accessed June 4, 2015, http://www.upn.gov.sk/en/project-oral-history-witnesses-of-the-oppression-period/
[54] Konfederácia politických väzňov Slovenska [The Confederation of political prisoners of Slovakia], accessed June 4, 2015, http://www.kpvs.sk/casopis.asp

called *hidden* or *secret*[55] Catholic Church which emerged as a response to the collaboration and suppression of official church hierarchy. The most important descriptive book is František Mikloško's *You will not be able to rupture them*[56] in which he as a former activist brings by now the most precise insight into the existence, main characters, and events. Ján Šimulčík, also a former catholic activist, described in several short books the most important protest actions connected to the activities of the *secret church*.[57] David Doellinger in his title *Turning Prayers into Protests*[58] brings a deep analysis of the functioning and role of the *secret church* in late socialist society. By comparing a Lutheran congregation in Leipzig and the Slovak *secret church*, he builds a narrative of how the church structures, which were originally aiming for spiritual development of individuals, transformed in the course of time into oppositional bodies.

The roots of the *secret church* reach to the pre-communist period, but developed after 1948 as a reaction to the state's attempts to suppress and control church activity, and persecute active believers. All titles about the *secret church* and its related activities claim that the original aim of these structures was definitely not political. Small groups of catholic believers established regular meetings in order to keep the Christian belief and tradition alive. However,

[55] The term *hidden church* was predominantly used by the activists in the 1970s before the rise of the activity of this platform. Later in 1980s the term *secret church* prevailed, and that became the most common reference term, which I will use in my text. Other synonyms for the *secret church* are *underground* church or *parallel* church. The official state documents of the *Štátna bezpečnosť,* the secret police, and Office for Church Affairs used the term *illegal church structures* when describing the activities of the *secret church*.

[56] František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť.*

[57] Ján Šimulčík, *Svetlo z podzemia.* [The light from the underground.] (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 1997).

Ján Šimulčík, *Katolícka cirkev a nežná revolúcia 1989.* [Catholic Church and Gentle Revolution 1989.] (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 1999).

Ján Šimulčík, *Čas svitania. Sviečková manifestácia - 25. marec 1988,* [The time of dawn. Candle manifestation / March 25, 1988.] (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 1998, 2003 (2. edition)).

Ján Šimulčík, *Zápas o nádej. Z kroniky tajných kňazov 1969 – 1989.* [The fight for hope. From the chronicle of secret priests 1969-1989.] (Prešov, Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2000).

[58] David Doellinger. *Turning Prayers into Protests. Religious Based Activism and its Challenge to State Power in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany*. (Budapest: CEU, 2013).

the state saw these structures in political terms. Not only that they met and activated people, the structures also did illegal activity of secret education and consecration of priests.

The combination of circumstances at the end of the 1960s mobilized the *secret* structures so that they gradually developed into a mass movement. First factor influencing the grow of these structures was the Second Vatican Council.[59] Besides changes in liturgy and inner organization of church hierarchy, the council recognized the role of laics in the church life, and encouraged the so called Lay Apostolate, the activity of lay believers to lead pastoral work among believers. The second factor was the amnesty in 1960 which released some people sentenced for religious reasons from prisons, and so served as an further impetus for the *secret church* activity. From Christian activists and people persecuted for religious reasons in the 1950s emerged a movement *Dielo koncilovej obnovy*, the Work of Council Renewal, which wanted to implement the results of the Vatican Council into the church life in Slovakia. In the liberalization atmosphere of the mid 1960s the Work of Council Renewal encouraged priests to give space and opportunity for laics to be actively involved in the life of the church. When after 1968 the state again toughened the policy against churches, activists started building structures of small groups as platforms for education and personal formation for young Catholics. Based on personal contacts, these groups helped to establish contacts between Catholics in the country.

Thirdly, the *deprivatisation* of religion in Slovakia through the *secret church* is connected to the international development in the sphere of human rights talks. The human rights movement of post-Helsinki period brought a new language which these religious groups appropriated, and used it as a means to challenge the state. In the 1980s the activities of these structures reached out the private meetings. As David Doellinger argues in his book, through

[59] Second Vatican Council met in 1962-1965, in order to discuss and define the role of Church in the world of 20th century.

actions such as pilgrimages or petitions, Christians experienced the collective feeling of how many people adhere to the same faith and who also did not agree with the state's policies towards religion, as a result their confidence as a group rose. Pilgrimages became the most important platforms for demonstrating the mass character of Christianity in Slovakia after 1985. The 1985 pilgrimage in Velehrad[60] at the occasion of 1100th anniversary of the death of St. Metod, attended, according to various sources, about 500,000 pilgrims.[61] When a clerk from the Office for Church Affairs started his speech about religious freedom, the mass of believers started shouting their demands, their vision of religious freedom. They demanded priests and bishops for vacant places and keeping of human rights in treatment of Christians. Since then the numbers of pilgrims were high in all pilgrimages around the country.[62]

From 1985 the state saw the *secret church* as an oppositional center. It were not only pilgrimages where the believers mobilized, they also started interfering into political questions, such as in 1986 formulated their opinion on abortion politics,[63] or expressing support to political prisoners. Nevertheless, despite the growing power of believers and religion, the anti-religious campaign of the regime continued until the fall of the communist regime, although without an effective strategy. One of the last antireligious deeds was a violent intervention of the police on March 25, 1988 at the so-called Candle Manifestation, a peaceful public gathering where by lighting candles and praying, the participants symbolically supported a demand for freedom and civil rights. Although being officially announced, police units were ordered to violently disperse the crowd by using tear gas and water cannons.[64]

[60] A pilgrimage site in South Moravia in Czech Republic.
[61] Ján Čarnogurský. "Tajná cirkev a púte na Slovensku." [The secret church and pilgrimages in Slovakia.] (originally published in *The Salisbury Review*, London, 1989), in *Videné od Dunaja.* [Seen from the Danube.], Ján Čarnogurský, (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997), 78-86.
[62] Čarnogurský, "Tajná cirkev a púte na Slovensku."
[63] Abortion politics debate took place in 1986 around the new law.
[64] For more information about the manifestation: Ján Šimulčík, *Čas svitania*.
Ján Chryzostom Korec. Bratislavský veľký piatok. [Bratislava's Good Friday.] (Trnava: Lúč, 2008).

Although *secret church* is a very interesting phenomenon which affected the perception of religion in socialist and post-Socialist Slovakia, a question remains, how representative this movement was. I challenge Doelinger's and Mikloško's argument who create the image that the *secret church* was the prevailing stream in the Catholic circles. My reading of archives, and meetings with believers, does not prove that. The *secret church* traces are prevailing, but only in the archival material, since the it was the movement causing problems, and also the movement which was directly connected to western media, whose archives for example Doelinger uses. The number of people included in the *secret church* is a subject of discussions. Since the main activity, the small group meetings were secret, it is not possible to give an exact number of participants. However, the leaders of the movement estimate a five digit number of regularly meeting people,[65] which is still a very vague number. The pilgrimages, where people from the *secret church* groups met with other believers, show about 30,000 to 100,000 attendants on the main pilgrimage sites in Slovakia in the late 1980s.[66]

1.4 Believers and Their Practices

Both the persecution narrative of Christians as victims of communist policies and the resistance narrative about the *secret church* are important research interests; however, it is questionable how representative these examples are. In other words, religion in socialist Slovakia cannot be reduced to these two extremes. This is where the current also the international research aims. The edited volume *Christianity and Modernity* edited by Bruce R. Berglund and Brian Porter-Szűcs[67] is an example of such approach. This volume presents a collection of essays which challenge the commonly accepted narratives about the persecuted church and Christians, and go beyond the clichées and stereotypes, revealing levels of

[65] Šimulčík, *Katolícka cirkev a nežná revolúcia 1989,* 8-10.
[66] Ján Čarnogurský. "Tajná cirkev a púte na Slovensku." [The secret church and pilgrimages in Slovakia.] (originally published in *The Salisbury Review*, London, 1989), in *Videné od Dunaja.* [Seen from the Danube.],
[67] Porter-Szűcs and Berglund, *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*.

complexity that are often ignored. They bring examples which often contradict or challenge the accepted narratives. Here I want to position my research, in which I look at religion in the socialist state through believers and their experience. In my research I attempt to go beyond the narratives of persecution by those being imprisoned or tortured by the state, and concentrate on people who did not encounter a direct contact with the secret police or high-ranking state authorities, but who lived their life within the socialist structure and experienced the effects of the regime in their homes, working places, and families.

For my purposes, when approaching believers I am working mainly with religiosity in the traditional sense, connected to religious institutions and practice. This primarily means that I look at the church attendance and activity within the church, and also other connected practices which reflect belief or at least religious tradition such as baptism, church wedding, attendance in religious instruction, reflection of religion in the material sphere – wearing crucifixes, or similar.

I claim that Christians in general did not create a homogenous group in socialist society. Neither did members of the same church, congregation or parish act uniformly. In their everyday life each person considered their individual and unique life situation, relations and connections to other people, and their specific position in social space. However some collective and shared patterns of behavior can be traced not only among people of the same community but also in the country as a whole, since they were maneuvering within the common frameworks of religion in the socialist state, the *model of accepted religion.* Nevertheless, with the scope of my research I do not make absolute claims, rather I bring case studies as examples and suggestion for further comparative research.

When researching on the lives of Christian believers, I was looking at the interplay between the believers and the state's secularizing policies in normalization Slovakia. Besides the state's activity and secularizational effort, such inquiry allowed me to see also the believers

as active in their interplay with the state. When approaching the activity of believers, their responses to the state's policies, I was inspired by the considerations of Michel de Certeau about the *practice of everyday life.*[68] De Certeau influenced by the linguistic turn in social sciences and by works of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Marcel Détienne turns his attention to people as the *users* or *consumers* of culture. He focuses on the *ways of operation*, the *ways of doing things* claiming that it is the system of operational combination, the process of making, which composes a culture.

The point of departure for de Certeau's analysis comes from colonial studies, and works within a situation of an imposed culture. When an elite imposes an order on the population, constructing the frameworks for operation, it counts with subordination of the people. Therefore people cannot work within their own system, but need to find their way of existence in the existing order. In such system of power relations, there is a battle or a game between the weak and the strong, the dominating elite and dominated *other*.[69]

Referring to practices, de Certeau introduces two main concepts – *tactic* and *strategy*. Whereas *strategy* refers to a calculation of power relationship, which is possible only when the "subject of will and power can be isolated."[70] In other words, *strategy* is a model working with the positions and relations defined, and without having to take into consideration the actual circumstances.[71] *Tactic*, on the other hand, is a "calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' localization, nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality."[72] It must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.

[68] Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Translated by Steven Rendall, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988, originally published 1984).
[69] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 34.
[70] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 35.
[71] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, XIX.
[72] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, XIX.

Similar considerations about the practices in an imposed order were made in the German school of *Alltagsgeschichte* which deals with the everyday life history in GDR. Whereas de Certeau is strong in showing the distinction between *tactics* and *strategies* in everyday practice generally, the German school concentrates on the particular mechanisms of power systems in the German socialist society. The German school of social history builds on the conception of the omnipresent state power in the *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* (totally controlled society), [73] however reflecting the real effects and influences of the power on the society.

In these considerations Alf Lüdtke brings a different terminology to name the tactics of people. Analyzing the behavior of the majority of citizens in the *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* he recognized the silent putting up with authority and "obedience which expressly preserves the horror of the threat of death or injury characterizing every form of domination."[74] To analyze how the dominated subject interplays within the frameworks of imposed structure, Lüdtke brings two concepts - the notions of *Aneignung* – the appropriation, or acceptance of the imposed order as one type of tactics. Secondly, he talks about *Eigensinn,* the re-appropriation and re-construction of constellations, structures, and institutions considered as social fields of power while adhering to one's agenda, turning the order to one's own advantage. I will be using the term *Eigensinn,* as is used in the Alltagsgeschichte school, might be described as putting up with political power to the degree that one must, while pursuing one's own ends to the degree that one can.[75] It is therefore a concept that signifies a "neither-nor" stance, it stands somewhere in the middle of conformity and resistance, bearing

[73] Jürgen Kocka. Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft. In Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (eds.). *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*. (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 1994), 547-554.
[74] Alf Lüdtke 1991, according to John R. Eidson, "Compulsion, Compliance, or *Eigensinn?* Examining Theories of Power in an East German Field Site." *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers,* Working Paper No. 61 (2003): 3.
[75] Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur*. *Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*. (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 1999), 23-26.

characteristics of both. Also, *Eigensinn* does not refer to only one type of tactics, but includes the whole spectrum of responses dependent on the concrete circumstances of an individual, who is intertwined in a network of commitments and loyalties.

Finally, an important issue of the 'state' as an agent needs to be covered. Accepting the German term of *durchherrschte Gesellshaft*, I cannot go with the consideration that socialist society was a product of the party solely. The hierarchized mechanisms of the Communist Party, its departments in many institutions and workplaces, specialized committees, all together created the state and its policies, however, did not always have to be accordance. In other words, the 'state' is a concept and a representation of power, which is manifested through multiple agents and practices, not always convergent. Moreover, as for example also Havel put it,[76] the state was built and strengthened by all individuals who took part in the system, in the required rituals and loyalty claims. Therefore a reference to state or regime does not mean the first secretary or president, but included many more agents. However, in the public discourse created by the press or in memories of people state is not very much differentiated, therefore I cannot omit using the word state in the text completely. However, when I know a more specific actor, I make the distinction. Breaking apart "the state" into its agents can shed some light on the reality. For example teachers, discussed in the third chapter, were agents of the state, but through their actions transmitted a different message then the ideological committees issued.

1.5 Sources and Methodology

In the thesis I combine two main types of primary sources – archival sources and personal materials. Working with two different types of material allows me to analyze the

[76] Václav Havel, "The power of the powerless" in *The Power of the Powerless: citizens against the state in Central-eastern Europe*, edited by John Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 23-96.

positions and tactics of religious people within the socialist state through two different sets of optics. Archival material provides me with contemporary views, opinions, and claims; through oral history I am able to encounter reflections nowadays, influenced by the time distance in terms of memory issues and re-narrations, as well as by the regime change and public condemnation of the communist regime, which followed the 1989 revolution.

Regarding the archival material, I base my analysis on a vast number of documents. The reason for this is that the traces of religious life in its most common practice were not systematically monitored, therefore are dispersed in various collections and locations. I started my research in the Slovak National Archive in the folders of the Office for Church Affairs, a part of the Ministry of Culture. Besides organizational issues on the level of state and church hierarchy relations, which constituted the majority of the material, I found there also reports from the local units of the Office, regularly reporting on the overall situation in the administrative districts. These were then processed to higher regional units and described the situation on that level, up to the state level. Through descriptions of encountered problems and deviations, I was able to draw the basic lines of what in the eyes of the Office was seen as acceptable and what not.

The Office of Church Affairs also collected materials measuring indicators of religiosity. Charts with numbers of baptisms, church weddings, and church funerals are stored there together with detailed accounts on the numbers of children attending religious instruction. A question can arise, to what extent one can believe these numbers, and generally, to what extent can we believe the socialist archives reporting on religion. Sonja Luehrmann in her forthcoming book *Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge.*[77] *r*eferring to the Soviet example points to the fact that the creation of documents about religion

[77] Sonja Luehrmann, *Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge.* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press, manuscript).

and religious life was in the hands of organizations which were supposed to control it and possibly eradicate. Therefore she acknowledges that the material might be bringing forward desired information and silencing problems. However, in case of the Office for Church Affairs I have decided to take the numbers for granted and not suppose them to be faked or adjusted. Although, as the table attached to this thesis shows, the numbers were decreasing all the time, but the reports which accompanied these statistical data very often provided also information which did not prove the desired development. Being internal documents for the Office, and stating the problems, showing number of communist party members having their children baptized, or pointing to the different numbers of children registered for the religious instruction and (much bigger) number of children at the First Communion, I regard the materials as credible.

A different type of material, which helped me to draw further the lines of accepted and unaccepted religion, is available in the Archive of the Institute of National Memory which administrates the files of *Štátna bezpečnosť (ŠtB),* the State Security, the secret police. The secret police investigations were directed in several fields and the so called 2nd Department of the ŠtB Administration focused on the "fight against the internal enemy." This included also church and church-connected issues. Regular annual, bi-annual, quarterly, monthly, and two-week reports informed about all deviances and unacceptable happenings which were subject to further scrutiny.

Looking for believers in the archive, I encountered files with letters of complaints. In these catholic parents to the Office for Religious Affairs, or directly to president Gustáv Husák complaining about the situation around the religious instruction in schools, or the overall situation of Catholics in the country. Through these letters I could see the dynamics of negotiation of mutual positions, as well as get hints about some strategies and behavior of believers. These letters and reports accompanying them served as the basis for my analysis

presented in the third chapter of this thesis, where I present the school as a battlefield at which a visible fight between religion and secular state endeavor took place.

Regarding state plans and strategies for atheisation and ideological influencing of the youth, the documents in the files of the Ministry of Education came useful. They revealed how the state fought against religion in the education process, although officially claiming absolute freedom, however, in internal directives requiring more intensive activity against religion. Since the ministry provided mainly directives and expected outcomes, practical advice how to discourage or persuade the children and their parents in the teaching process came in periodicals for teachers and schools, which I researched in the OSA Archives in Budapest, which holds the former archive of Radio Free Europe.

In the Czechoslovak Unit of the Radio Free Europe (RFE) archives available in the OSA I examined another collection of materials directly connected to the lives of Christians in socialist Slovakia, and mainly the Catholic samizdat journals issued in the 1970s and 1980s by the *secret church* activists. These magazines published declarations of how a proper Christian should behave in socialist society, encouraged people by describing the rights religious people had in society, and published examples of people persecuted by the regime de facto because of their religious conviction. Moreover, often letters to higher authorities, and appeals against judicial decisions were published, together with interviews with persecuted people.

The other corpus of material besides archival documents are personalized materials. While the archival sources revealed the deviations and problems, the life stories and oral histories gave me a better insight into what was normal in religion. In order to see and understand the situation of the majority, I use interviews with Catholics and Lutherans, since these were the two biggest and traditional churches. Geographically I focused on Western Slovakia, because the situation in the Eastern part of the country was different due to the prohibition of the Greek Catholic Church which was spread in that area. Similarly, southern

parts with a high percentage of Hungarians and their affiliation to Reformed Church dealt in the researched time period rather with the minority policies, which affected the everyday life of these people in the society.

Regarding the covered research, I work with a corpus of oral history interviews which I conducted during my previous studies in 2010 in a small pilgrimage town Topoľčianky in Western Slovakia, and also have a corpus of interviews with members of the Lutheran Church in Stará Turá, a small town in Western Slovakia, conducted exclusively for this thesis. Since due to a coincidence I got access also to edited oral history materials about life in socialism collected by other historians in the project *Unnoted heroes,*[78] I have read through the materials about believers and consider them in my analysis. Although the project has a very strong orientation on resistance, the collected materials does not always take this direction and rather describe the experiences of believers in the socialist state.

When collecting the interviews in the field researches, the main methodological tool was oral history, and semi-structured ethnographic interviews. Oral history is "a creative, interactive methodology that forces us to get to grips with many layers of meaning and interpretation contained within people's memories.[79]" An oral history interview therefore is an informant talking at a given moment to a given researcher about a certain topic, narrating stories, events, ideas, or experiences from their memory that they at the given moment recalls and selects from their memory. As the outcome of the interview the researcher gets "a view how the informant sees the world", a complex package of information addressing past issues

[78] Nenápadní hrdinovia v zápase s komunizmom. [Noteless heroes in the fight with communism.] accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.november89.eu/

[79] Lynn Abrams,"The Peculiarities of Oral History" in *Oral History Theory*, (Routledge, 2010), 18.

reflected from a contemporary point of view.[80] As many authors point out, oral history brings not only facts, but a broad range of descriptions, meanings, emotions, and evaluations.[81]

In my research I am taking oral history as a method of gathering material, creating sources and I see it as an opportunity to give a voice to people who are not usually included in the narratives about the socialist regime. I chose this method of data collection also because I believe that if it is possible to reach people whose lives were directly affected by a historical event or a historical period, it is inevitable to take their point of view into consideration.

Collecting the interviews almost 25 years after the fall of communism I am aware that what I encounter from the informants is neither a reconstruction of events that happened, nor a record of their thoughts, ideas and actual memories. What I will be able to see and study are contemporary reflections of past events in the form of memories that underwent a process of selection and which are shaped by the official narratives about the previous regime, as well as by the evaluation of the informants themselves or by the religious community.

Finally an important note about the process of memory building is necessary. Also as my oral history research revealed, that many people still have not come to terms with their own role in the normalization regime. Since the intellectual public discourse divides the society according to the communist/non-communist lines, heroised are those who can prove that did not conform to the regime. Therefore, especially in the urban areas, the narratives about normalization period flourish with stories about ploys, through which the people legitimize that they were those who did not conform, but with all their actions kept their ideological integrity and could show the courage. This needs to be held in mind when reading the retrospective narration of stories in the normalization regime. As Fedor Blaščák, a Slovak philosopher

[80] Ronald J. Grele, "Movement without an Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems of Oral History" in Perks, R. and Thomson, A. (eds). *The Oral History Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1998): 46-47.
[81] Abrams, "The Peculiarities of Oral History", 18-33.

focusing on the Normalization period and its legacies for post-socialism, points out,[82] these stories show how is the symbolic level of narration important for the shaping of memory and building one's own picture about themselves.

To complete the list of materials with which I worked, I need to mention dissident writings, which are somewhere on the division line between sources and secondary literature being the contemporary descriptions and analyses of the situation in the country in the studied period. Issued by intellectuals, often sociologists or philosophers, they bring a relevant insight into the functioning of the normalization regime, the involvement of people in strengthening it, and the role of the omnipresent communist ideology and ritual. Very accurate and well written, Havel's *The Power of the Powerless*[83], Šimečka's *The Restoration of Order*[84], documents issued by Charter 77, and others, they became inevitable reference point for the study of normalization. They helped me to grasp the language and complexity of the normalization period from a contemporary point of view.

1.6 Thesis Statement

The inquiry of this thesis is how Christian believers lived in the "normalization" period. More specifically, I will discuss the confrontation of the daily religious practice of believers with the regulations imposed on religion by the state. I argue that how believers handled their religious practice in relation to the state was variable. The Czechoslovak socialist state in the normalization period claimed that its aim was to achieve a secular society, in which religion (perceived by Marxist theory as "backward") would be substituted by "reasonable and scientifically proven knowledge." However, I argue, that what the normalization state de facto

[82] Fedor Blaščák, "Zabudnutá generácia." [The forgotten generation.], *TRANSIT 68/89*, (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009): str. 552-55. available online, accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.memorykontrol.org/fedor-blascak-zabudnuta-generacia

[83] Havel, *The Power of The Powerless.*

[84] Šimečka, *Obnovení pořádku.*

did with religion was not the secularization in terms of getting rid of religion, but rather making religion private.

Through its policies against churches and against believers, the communist regime pursued a model of secularization specific for the Slovak normalization society. The state through various actors kept religious practice within certain limits. These limits created a model of "acceptable religion," religion that the state tolerated. Such tolerated religion adhered to the principles of secularization – it was not supposed to mingle in politics and had to be kept private - private as in enclosed and non-collective. Religion also had to remain "passive." I will discuss the abovementioned concepts in Chapter Two.

The second part of my analysis shows how the structures of the state determined who was a believer. One was most likely labelled as believer due to observable religious practice. Since being recognized as a believer by the state could lead to further discrimination Party members, people on nomenclatura positions, and teachers, as groups which were subjects of closer scrutiny in their religious practice and ideological stances, developed their particular *Eigensinn* tactics, which ranged according to the particular circumstances from silence, through own arrangements of schedules and practices, but again mainly to hide religious practice.

The endeavor of the socialist government strived to enclose religion, however did not succeed completely. First of all, contrary to its official stance, the regime did not manage to treat religion as something completely private. Also the legal claims about religion in the constitution allowed public practicing of religion, which connected to the particular historical situation of the post Vatican II period and the Human Rights movement allowed *deprivatization* of religion in socialist Slovakia. It was not only the case of the *secret church* structures that brought religion to public. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, similar processes of religion becoming a public and collective affair can be seen on a small scale in the settings of secular schools.

Chapter 2 – Slovak Socialist Model of Acceptable Religion – "Rather keep it private"

Having the frames set, in this chapter I dive deeper into the question of how Czechoslovak socialist state understood and pursued religion. The normalization state regarded religion as standing on three main theses.[85] First of all, based on the teachings of Marx, the communist regime viewed religion as the remnant of backwardness[86] which needed to be overcome, with which the state wanted to help actively through secularism. Secondly, in the official legal documents, starting from the constitution, the socialist state claimed freedom of religious confession, allowed religious rituals, paid priests, and even organized religious instruction in schools. Thirdly, the state asserted that religious belief was a private matter of each and every individual.[87] These three theses created a framework in which the state interacted with religion. However, since "the state" was not a uniform actor, different agents of the state emphasized different postulates in different moments. The question of privacy of religion remained the most complicated and controversial. Although claimed as a private matter, the structures of state power kept caring about one's worldview. Religion was a subject of interest of the state and a label of believer was a public category which could have influenced one's life. In order to prevent the possible negative consequences of having the label believer, people developed tactics by which they made the supposedly "private" religion private in the meaning of concealed.

To set a common ground for further analysis, I first tell a story. A life story of one particular women on which I will demonstrate the complexity of the situation of Christian

[85] Pešek and Barnovský. *V zovretí normalizácie*, 59.
[86] Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." (Edited by Matthew Carmody, 2009, originally published 1844), available online, accessed June 6, 2015, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm
[87] Pešek and Barnovský. *V zovretí normalizácie*, 59.

believers in socialist Slovakia - how one was and was not a believer at the same time, what role did the state play in the identification and how an what options one had to respond to the imposed setting. Although it is a personal experience, the elements which it brings forward are definitely not specific and particular. In the following subchapters I will discuss the question of how state identified believers, how it treated them, and how believers, now those who would call themselves believers, responded to the treatment. In the conclusion of this chapter I highlight the "Slovak socialist model of acceptable religion" as it comes out of the materials. The model shows how was religion defined in socialism and how the definition shaped the maneuvering space for the believers.

2.1 The Story of Zuzana

Zuzana[88] was born in 1962. Her early childhood she spent in an orphanage, from where at the age of three her new mother adopted her. Sometime at the beginning of the 1970s, in the period when the state re-formulated the requisite of ideological formation of an individual, her mother was called to sign a proclamation that she will be bringing up her daughter in socialist spirit. "Later she told me, 'In my mind, I took from it what I considered good, and said out loud, that yes, I can do that.'" However, being a committed Christian, Zuzana's mother brought her up in Lutheran faith, led her to regular church attendance, to participation in activities provided by the church, such as Sunday schools, and enrolled her also to religious instruction classes which took place in the school. Moreover, she arranged that the godparents of Zuzana were a priest with his wife, with whom Zuzana developed very close relationship.

Since Zuzana's mother did not hide her religious affiliation, she was often reported to the factory management as attending church services. This caused that her promotion at the working place was stopped. "She even had a boss, … who directly told her, that 'I personally

[88] Unpublished interview: Zuzana (coded name). Interview by the author, Stará Turá, January 31, 2015.

will make sure that you will not get any salary bonus, nor special wage, nothing.'" So the two of them lived in very poor conditions, however, keeping the religious practices at a level, which her mother saw as proper.

When Zuzana was in her fifth grade, a direct appeal came from the local Office of Social Affairs and Family. The clerks from the office, under the menace of taking Zuzana from her mother and relocating her back to the orphanage, required an immediate stop of religious instruction attendance, church activities, and meetings with pastors. Both Zuzana and her mother felt that it was a serious threat which needed their response, a change of behavioral patterns. They immediately adjusted the religious practice which could be easily controlled – Zuzana stopped attending the local church and was unenrolled from the religious instruction, but with her mother they sought for new ways of living their lives as proper Christians.

> So I could not go to the Sunday school or to the church openly. So we went to Lubina (a village 5 km from her home town), or to Mičiná (a village 200 km from her home town, where she had some family connections), or somewhere I do not even know… Even there to Turčianske Bystré, where I had my godparents, the pastor's family, where they did not know me. I even had the confirmation there. Me alone. But if they saw me here, at Stará Turá, they would take me from my mother. Therefore I say, one really had to prevaricate, find their own way through.

They hid their religious practice in their hometown, from the sight of the local organs, but continued their practice. Moreover, not being allowed to attend religious classes, Zuzana's mother, and later Zuzana herself intensified the meetings with the pastor's family. Besides discussions about faith, they also educated her in topics which were not present in the school curriculum, as for example the role of churches in the rise of national awareness in 19th century. Zuzana claims that she might have received more religious education as other children of believers, despite the fact that she was checked on for even entering a church building.

When applying to high school, in the 9th grade, Zuzana's class teacher was supposed to write the letter of recommendation, where she was obliged to, besides other information,

mention the worldview and ideological conviction of her pupil. Although knowing that she was brought up in Christian faith, the teacher did not write down this information. From that moment, in her files she was no longer treated as a believer, due to which she got accepted to the vocational school as well as to the university.

2.2 Religion and Believers In the Eyes of the State

An insight into Zuzana's experience leads us to the first question of how the state dealt with religion, and how it identified believers. I claim that the state dealt with two aspects of religion – ideology and practice. However, it was the aspect of practice which became predominant when addressing religion and around which believers and state met and stipulated.

Religion, which in the Slovak context referred mainly to Christianity, was theorized by philosophers and ideologists in several regards.[89] In the first and most commonly used sense, Christianity was taken as the idealistic worldview, which in its central claims contradicted the historical materialism of Marxism-Leninism. The basic contradiction was in the incompatible ideas about the origins of the world and of life. Marxism-Leninism built on dialectical materialism, the philosophical teaching of the primacy of matter, denied the existence of any transcendent entities and confirmed the absolute autonomy of the human as a self-standing being. On the other side stood the Christian teaching of God, who is believed to be the creator of the world and life.

Secondly, the ideologists saw religion through its psychological function, as a part of "emotional life."[90] As Marx already put it, religion was the false hope in oppression, as an

[89] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. "Zásady vědeckoateistické výchovy na školách." [Principles of scientific-atheist education in schools.] *Učiteľské noviny.* May 11, 1972.
HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. Peter Prusák, "Nezanedbávajme svetonázorovú výchovu." [Do not neglect the worldview education.] *Pravda* September, 1, 1972.
[90] "Zásady vedecko-ateistickej výchovy na školách",
Jiří Loukotka, *Socialismus, náboženství, morálka.* [Socialism, religion, morale.] (Praha: Horizont, 1985), 11.

escape from reality[91] which people created when oppressed by the feudal lords. Thirdly, religion was presented as a class ideology affecting political opinions. Marxist ideology, by the constitution from 1960 set up as the state ideology. By this Marxism-Leninism was identified with the political party as well as with the state, and therefore, who did not agree with the ideology, might have been considered as being against the party and the state.[92] Not adhering to Marxism-Leninism, the non-communist political and economic subjects, but also churches, as the institutional embodiment of Christian ideology,[93] were seen as the main enemies of the state. In such understanding, religion always had political connotations.

Fourthly, religion was categorized as a moral system incompatible with the "communist morale." This point was for the ideologistsis the hardest to grasp, and it caused them problems when they tried to persuade the society that religion in its moral aspect is undesired or even dangerous. In society people understood Christianity as a worldview positively shaping moral values of individuals.[94] Until the very end of communist regime there were citizens, even communists, arguing that religion in moral terms was beneficial for socialist society. Also the moral norms of religion, based on Ten Commandments and biblical teachings, did to certain extent overlap with the communist morale, summarized in the *Moral Codex of Communist Builder* accepted on the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in 1961.[95] Although using very different language, the Christian morale agreed with the communist codex

[91] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. Eva Kavková, "Vědecky podloženou argumentací k ateismu" [By scientifically proven arguments to atheism.] *Učiteľské noviny*, October 12, 1972.
[92] Marián Gula. 2010. Kolaborácia cirkví s komunistickým režimom. Spolupráca ľudí z cirkví s ŠtB alebo niekoľko poznámok o informáciách, ktoré získavala ŠtB z prostredia cirkví. [Collaboration of churches with the communist regime. The cooperation of people from churches with the State Security or a few remarks about the information that the State Security collected from the church environments.] In. M. Fiamová – P. Jakubčin. *Prenasledovanie cirkví v komunistických štátoch strednej a východnej Európy.* [The persecution of churches in communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.] (Bratislava : Ústav pamäti národa, 2010), 596-615.
[93] Gula, "Kolaborácia cirkví s komunistickým režimom, 596-615.
SNA MK SR OPVC 89, *Naša cirkevná politika po 1968*. [Our church politics after 1968.] (1971)
[94] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266, "Svoboda je když…" [Freedom is when…] Tribuna (1976).
[95] Martin Hulič. Etika a morálka v kontexte marxizmu. [Ethics and morale in the context of Marxism.] (2013) http://www.kss.sk/temy/spolocnost/1046-etika-a-moralka-v-kontexte-marxizmu.html

in requiring honesty, veracity, moral immaculateness in life, mutual respect, or inexorability towards injustice. To claim the inadequacy of religious morale, the ideologists did not argue that Christian moral norms were inacceptable. Rather, they brought counterexamples which were supposed to demonstrate, that religious morale was insufficient in preventing evil in the world. Several times I encountered an example which presented wars, mainly religious wars as a demonstration that the moral influencing of religion was not successful.[96]

Finally, religion was regarded as a way of life, graspable through religious practice connected mainly to church attendance, *rites de passage*, activities connected to the liturgical calendar, and religious elements in material culture. Although in the ideological writings the problem of religious practice seems to be minor, in the actual interplay between the state and believers the question of practice was central. Since practice was supposed to reflect belief, it was mainly religious practice which the agents of the state checked, controlled, and possibly persecuted.

Christianity was seen as a hostile ideology, however, was legally allowed. Article 32 of the constitution asserted: "(1) Freedom of confession is guaranteed. Everyone can confess any religious belief, or be without any confession, and perform religious acts, unless it contradicts the legislation. (2) A religious faith or conviction cannot be a reason to deny fulfilling the citizen duty which is prescribed by the law."[97] Since in the Marxist vision, religion was supposed to die out as society reaches higher stage of historical development, the fact that it was allowed should not be conflicting. However, since religion was not fading out, and the development in the 1960s showed that religious activities were surviving, steps to actively fight against religion and towards secular society needed to be taken.

[96] HU OSA 300-30-9, box 104, T. Keviczká, "Je to najsúkromnejšia vec?" *Práca,* August 2, 1972..
[97] Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.upn.gov.sk/data/pdf/ustava100-60.pdf

According to the legislative, religious conviction of an individual was supposed to be a private matter, which would no longer be a question in census. However, that did not mean that the structures of the state no longer cared about religion and religious practice of the citizens. Just the opposite, the state used many agents and many ways to keep record of religion and religious sensibilities of the citizens. Moreover, the state mattered not only about the fact *that* there were believers generally, it was also important *who* the believers were. The experiences of Christians who were discriminated due to their religious affiliation prove, that the category of a believer, or in contemporary terminology a person "unsettled in the question of religious conviction," "ideologically inappropriate", "under the influence of religion" played a role in the political and public discourse and had the potential to influence the life of an individual. This de facto means that the state had at least some concepts or indicators through which recognized one as a believer. According to various examples from the examined material I argue that a person was considered a believer when a person either declared their affiliation to religion on the official level, and/or when this affiliation was proved by the authorities.

The need to know the religious affiliation was connected to the fact that the state was the main employer. In order to ensure the "best *cadres*" for important state job positions (and de facto also in order to issue the omnipresent scrutiny and declare its power over the people), the state kept records on skills, personal qualities, as well as the values of all employees in the country in the so called *cadre material*. This personal material was created at the moment an individual reached school age and served as a portfolio for various needs of socialist society, mapping besides the overall performance of the person also his environment, personal characteristics, worldview orientation, and health condition.[98] As Henryk Gericke, a German

[98] SNA MŠ SSR Sekretariát ministerstva školstva, box 21, Metodické pokyny o záverečnom komplexnom hodnotení žiakov ZŠ, gymnázií, stredných odborných škôl, učilíšť a o komplexnom hodnotení uchádzačov o štúdium na stredných alebo vysokých školách. [Methodical directives about the final complex evaluation of pupils of elementary schools, gymnasiums, vocational schools, apprentice schools and about a complex evaluation of applicants for high schools or college studies.] (1976).

underground musician ironically remarks, "The future started on the first day of school and consisted of an eternal present," [99] because anything that was noted down into one`s folders might influence the future in a predictable as well as unpredictable way.

Although religion was proclaimed a private matter, and was legally permitted, the question on religion as a worldview had its permanent place in regular questionnaires and mock talks with the authorities. During these occasions the authorities, employers, or other state agents directly asked about one's relation to religion. Sometimes the asked question aimed at faith and worldview orientation, as "How have you dealt with the religious question?" Sometimes the authorities asked rather about religious practice – whether one's children were baptized, whether one had marriage in a church, or whether they attend religious services. According to the interviews, it was the decision of a moment like this whether they got the label 'Christian' into their *cadre material* and bear the consequences of this declaration. Many people claim that they regardless their regular church attendance and proclaimed religious belief did not declare religious conviction, in order to prevent possible discrimination and harassment.

Zuzana's story demonstrates, that the label of believer in the *cadre material* did not always correspond to the emic identity of an individual. Videlicet, the *cadre material* was not an objective record of one's profile. Rather it was a result of interplay of the observable or declared facts about the subject's life, as recorded by an agent of the state. And the agent, in Zuzana's case her teacher, could shape her "official identity." So Zuzana lost her status of a believer. Other people brought their own examples of such deeds. A kindergarten teacher recollected how an inspector asked her whether she had her children baptized. She did not want to lie, so she honestly answered that yes, her children were baptized. However, the reply of the

[99] Henryk Gericke, "Too Much Future," in Michael Boehlke and Henryk Gericke, eds. *ostPUNK! – Too Much Future: Punk in der DDR* 1979-89 (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2005): 9.

inspector surprised her, since she said: "Ok. But do not tell anyone and I will not note it down to your folder."[100]

One's own declaration was only one way of checking one's religious affiliation; the more common way of identifying believers was according to their religious activity observed by the agents of the state. In the normalization period the state through local authorities, 'vigilant comrades,'[101] or by secret police agents kept track of who was present at the religious ceremonies. All my informants confirmed that such people did occasionally stand in front of a church and were noting down names of people who attended church, or numberplates of cars parked around the church. In some cases people recollect these agents taking photographs to be able to prove one's presence in the service.

Although the socialist state called for equality of all citizens, in the ideological question it had different expectations from different groups. The group which was most watched for their religious activity were communist party members and people in nomenclatura[102] positions. Supposed to be models for other inhabitants, the behavior and proclaimed ideological profiles of these people were supposed to be representative. In their case, the public discourse put it openly, "their religious belief was not a private matter".[103] Since in 1968 some party members openly declared their religious conviction, and resumed their religious activity, after 1971 the attention towards them in ideological questions intensified. Although no law regulated the ideological conviction of party members,[104] again, the public discourse created by the press,

[100] Unpublished interview: Vilma (coded name). Interview by the author, Stará Turá, January 31, 2015.
[101] "Bdelý/uvedomelý súdruh"
[102] In the Soviet bloc, the term "nomenclatura" referred to the elite class in the society, which controlled the key positions in the state administration, academia, or on positions which had to be approved by the communist party. Usually people working on nomenclatura positions were also communist party members.
[103] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266, "Svoboda je když…" [Freedom is when…] *Tribuna* (1976).
[104] Unlike the state regulation of party membership, the catholic church, represented by pope Pius XII, issued already in July 1949 a document about the incompatibility of the party membership and Christianity. Pius XII, Excomunication of communists. Decree of the Holy Office. (1949), accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.geocities.ws/caleb1x/documents/communism.html

promulgations of communist functionaries, and the applied practices revealed the expected norms.

> The other matter is the compatibility of religious conviction with membership in the Czechoslovak Communist Party, whose politics is based on the scientific worldview and on the revolutionary teachings of Marxism-Leninism. The communist party requires from its members to stand firmly on the principles of the scientific worldview, if they are to convince and educate other citizens. The party requires them to educate first of all their children and other family members in the spirit of scientific worldview and progressive thinking.[105]

The reports from schools and local offices monitored how many communists had their children enrolled for religious classes in schools, and presented it as unacceptable and as something to be eliminated.[106] Despite the intensive pressure on the party members to overcome the burden of religion,[107] the numbers of children of communist party members, representing about 3-5% of all registered children,[108] demonstrate that the state's endeavor did not achieve its goals completely.

Alike party members, teachers, as those supposed to lead the ideological (trans)formation were under a close spotlight. As in the case of party members, according to the official law there were no limitations on who could or could not become a teacher. On the practical level a teacher was supposed to represent the declared values of communism. Therefore the narrative present in newspapers, magazines, internal directives and overall public debate pursued the discourse

> The school cannot be neutral in respect to the world outlook, and he who has decided for the teacher's profession has voluntarily accepted the commitment to educate children and youth exclusively and consistently in the communist spirit and in accordance with scientific principles.[109]

[105] HU OSA 300-30-9, box 114, Odpověd čitatelce. [An answer to the reader.] *Tribuna*, Septemeber 24, 1975.
[106] SNA MK SR OPVC "Rozbor stavu prihlásených detí na vyučovanie náboženstva v základných deväťročných školách a skúsenosti z uplatňovania nových smerníc." [Analysis of the state of registered children for religious instruction in the elementary nine-year schools and the experience from aplication of the new directives.] 1970.
[107] OSA 300-30-7, box 266, "Svoboda je když…" [Freedom is when…] *Tribuna* (1976).
[108] See numbers of communists registering their children for religious instruction – Appendix III.
[109] HU OSA 300-30-7/266 Too many Slovak Children attending religious education, 1972.

This "voluntary acceptance" took the form of a signature on a "Teacher's proclamation," which every teacher had to sign in order to be allowed to teach. However, the proclamation obliged one to teach within the lines of Marx-Leninist worldview, recognized Christians were not excluded *de iure*, since this was not a legal prescription. Rather they would be under a tightened surveillance, intensified forced instruction in Marxism-Leninism, and under a vehement urge to change their worldview. *"We cannot accept pretense,"* claimed the Ministry of Education,

> However, we expect that all teachers will understand the political function of our school built on Marxist-Leninist principles … to fulfill their duties in the worldview realm. In the future we will not be interested in those who will not succeed, for whom it will conflict with their personal conviction.[110]

If teachers officially (and in minimizing their religious practice) did not reject the non-materialist worldview, they were disqualified *de facto*, since in the eyes of the regime they represented a subversive element, and were either forced to leave the teacher's post or, as I will show later, constantly discriminated.[111]

However, if one was not a communist party member, (or in higher position in office, which, however, went very often hand in hand with party membership), or teacher, or stated differently, when one was a regular worker or employee without ambitious career goals, church attendance was generally accepted. Nonetheless, especially when regular, religious practice could be reflected as a "black point" in one`s files. Similarly, the enrollment of one's child for religious instruction classes was considered a public declaration of belief, as making the religious conviction public, and that might have an influence on one's own life as well as the life of the child and broader family.

SNA MŠ SSR, Odbor základného školstva a výchovných zariadení, box 131, Further education of teachers.
[110] SNA MŠ SSR 1969-1975, box 131. Department for elementary education and educational units.
[111] SNA MŠ SSR 1969-1975, box 131. Department for elementary education and educational units.
HU OSA 300-30-7/266 Education/Problems with Churches 1972-78

Talking about believers in socialist Slovakia, a more nuanced description is necessary, since Christians in general did not create a homogenous group in socialist society. I managed to trace categories for distinguishing believers as proposed by an article in Pravda from 1973.[112] The article recognizes four categories of believers, and such categories also appear in other materials. First group were the *undecided*, people whose religious conviction was not firm but they have not yet abandoned it. Secondly, the *formal believers,* as those "for whom the form is more important than the essence of religion," were displayed as likely to accept the scientific atheist worldview in the "course of time." Both these two, the *undecided* and *formal* presented the tolerated, the "more acceptable" categories of believers. The sociological surveys about religion asked how one would describe their religious conviction. Among the possible answers were also options as *ambivalent* or "going to church but not necessarily believe in God." As the results of sociological reports often comment, the growing percentage of *ambivalent, undecided, formal* believers was a good sign of progressive development.

Nevertheless, a problematic category in the eyes of the state were *religious fanatics*, or in other documents referred to as *bigot believers.* They were described as people who disturbed the fulfillment of the atheisational efforts by keeping their religious practices and showing strong commitments to churches. What was seen even more dangerous was any activity reaching beyond passive church attendance - active engagement in some special ministry, social service, organizing prayer meetings, Bible study groups, or illegal distribution of religious literature. Such activity served not only as a proof of one's serious religious conviction but was in the eyes of the state authorities seen as dangerous, due to the political connotations of religion. Therefore an active engagement could be (and in many cases was) a reason for further limitations, interventions, or even legal persecution. These *activists*, a

[112] HU OSA 300-30-6, box 115, "Pôsobiť na každého" [To Influence everyone.] *Pravda,* June 23, 1973.

category attracting the attention of secret police and state administration, were recognized already in the 1950s, and the state started controlling them again after 1968.[113] In the 1980s the number of references about *activists* significantly grew. Especially after 1985 because, as I demonstrated on the case of the *secret church* activities, the activist circles systematically connected religious topics with politics by organizing petition actions against the church policies. Since the state power tried to keep any voice of religion detached from politics, the activists intervened into the space, where the state did not want to see them.

A specific attention was directed towards the religious conviction of youth. The young generation, as the "future of the nation," was the main target of the secularizational endeavor of the state. Regarding the youth of 1980s, that youth which was educated in the intensified atheization endeavor, the state had problems accepting them as religious. As if different categories of religiosity played role when dealing with the youth.

> A lot of young people, which definitely cannot be labeled as believers neither in the traditional, nor in the actual meaning, because they do not satisfy the basic characteristics about behavior and goals of people devoted to belief,…, can form a broad platform for activating religiosity.[114]

Further on the document denies the possibility of honest interest and faith of the youth, but claims that the increase of youth presence on pilgrimages *"is only a way how this age group demonstrates its protest or disagreement with some maladies of socialist society*."[115]

By now we have seen that the state recognized a believer mainly through a self declaration of the person or through the religious practice. The state has different expectations on the ideological profile of party members, teachers, people on higher positions, and on youth.

[113] SNA MK SR, box 98, "Rozbor počtu žiakov prihlásených na VN v školskom roku 1970/71." [Analysis of the number of registered for RI in school year 1970/71.]
[114] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 98, "Klerikalizmus a mládež" [Clericalism and youth.] (not dated document, presumably around 1980).
[115] Ibidem.

Finally, a question arises whether believers can be treated as a specific category in socialist society. I claim that at the beginning of the normalization period believers did not form a separate collective category in the eyes of the state. Within the aim to overcome religion, religious affiliation was not underlined, rather believers were addressed within the category of citizens. Similarly, in the emic perception of believers, they did not think of themselves in a collective category. Although people from small religious communities emphasize a collective aspect. In my interviews, the Catholics and Lutherans very often referred to their own case, and described religious practice without referring to the collectivity of a church congregation.

The endeavor to keep religion individual is visible also in the methods used in the secularizational practices. The methodicians, creating and disseminating the methods of teaching atheism to teachers and employers, call for an individual work with believers.[116] Individual work in the context of power pressure allowed first of all an effective persuasion, often through threatening or harassment. Moreover, collective treatment of believers could possibly empower believers, what was definitely not desired. Furthermore, as restrictions of collective activities throughout the whole period of communist rule prove – forbidden church associations, persecution of any attempts to build meeting groups for any age, or work with a congregation as a group – the state aimed to prevent religion from being collective, but to be just, as proclaimed, private, but not only in terms of domestic, but also in terms of individual affairs. In the 1980s when believers start to form collective category, as we saw in the case of pilgrimages, the state addressed them collectively, but trying to make them an inherent (and so not specifically visible) part of the socialist society.[117]

[116] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 521, "Pôsobiť na každého" [To Influence everyone] *Pravda*, June 23, 1973.
[117] What was seen as problematic, and what triggered persecution were moments when some rules defined through the religious conviction conflicted with the citizen's duties. Jehova's Witnesses, as first of all as illegal religious organization, who moreover, refused compulsory military practice, were the target of state policies during the whole period of normalization. For more information on Jehova's Witnesses see e.g. HU OSA 300-30-9, box 114.

> The differences in worldview sphere should not be a reason for breaking the unity of our working class. Just the contrary, believers and fairly working citizens, as well as the adherents of various worldviews are from the viewpoint of citizens obliged to create a moral and political unity of our common homeland, live by each other, work together, and build our socialist society.[118]

The inquiry into the question who was a believer in the eyes of the state showed four important points about religion in socialist setting. Firstly, although proclaimed a private matter, the state kept asking and checking religious affiliations of its citizens. Secondly, emic religious identity did not necessarily have to correspond to the label of believer as seen by the state, due to people hiding their religious conviction or religious practice, or also due to creative interventions of the agents of the state. Thirdly, citizens were not equal regarding their worldview orientation. The more visible one was in the structures of the state, the more ideologically appropriate one had to be and the more attention he got from the state. Finally, the state treated believers individually, not collectively, and moreover, tried to prevent religious collectivity.

2.3 The Risk of Being a Recognized Believer

Knowing how was a believer identified, in this chapter I demonstrate why being a believer was an undesired label. As almost all personalized materials of active believers claim, being recognized as a believer meant in socialist society certain stigmatization, in level according to the social and intellectual strata to which the person belonged. While workers recollect mainly humiliating situations accompanying any meetings with their superiors, people more visible in the structures recall more types of stigmatization or discrimination. Believers from among the working intelligentsia and from intellectual circles claimed that they were treated as "secondary citizens," or "citizens of lower value."

[118] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 98, "Zásady právnej úpravy otázok slobody náboženského vyznania a náboženských organizácií." [The principles of legal customizing of the issue of freedom of religious confession and religious organizations.] (not dated, supposedly around 1980)

Examples of the discrimination from my informants and from the sources are manifold but they all show that the social prestige of a person bearing the informal status of secondary citizen was lowered. Workers recall mainly forced meetings with their superiors or cadre worker,[119] where these would try to persuade them, or directly abuse their religious conviction. Or, as was the case of Zuzana's mother, religious conviction could be a reason for not getting special awards, premium wages, or other bonus. People with other professions mentioned mainly the limited possibilities of career building, suspended promotion at work, no possibility of salary raise, or banning travel outside the country.

Religious practice could be also a reason for losing one's job, however, not as a direct consequence, since firing someone just because they go to church was contestable as contradicting the constitution. Rather, what Šimečka coined with the term *civilized violence*, a series of abasing situations was created in order to drive the person out of the job, so that it is the person themselves who finally decided to leave.

Jana Mičiánová, an elementary school teacher from Nová Dubnica who in 1981 converted to Catholicism and started openly attending religious events and declaring her Christian affiliation, describes her experience with the civilized violence as a series of humiliating events. It all started with meetings with her headmaster, school inspector, and regional inspector, all of whom required her to immediately change the visible practices – to unenroll her children from religious instruction and to stop going to church. Since she did not obey their request, the school changed her workload and lowered her salary, and at the end of the year relocated her from a teacher's position to an after-school care in a special school for problematic children. However, the authorities courted possibilities to meet Jana either in school, or publically, mainly at her way back from the church. All the time they were jesting

[119] Cadre worker could be seen as an equivalent to today's Human Resource position, it was the person responsible for employing new people, as well as keeping the cadre files updated about the

at her conviction, forcing her to abandon it, or at least hide it. Her new boss recommended to her to ask for a job as a cleaning lady, or to voluntarily leave the job herself. Jana in her letter claims that the director threatened her, that "if I do not leave voluntarily, he will create in the school such circumstances, that I will be happy, to leave. I must admit, he kept his promise and created such circumstances."[120] Then supposed to prepare a presentation for the whole pedagogical collective on the topic *Practical implementation of the scientific worldview education and atheist education in the educational activity of after-school care*, Jana was humiliated in front of all her colleagues, and forced to sign a resignation and leave her job, until she finally decided to send her case as a letter of complaint to the president.

Besides the civilized violence issued against teachers, in the setting of education students were also the targets of the discrimination for religious reasons. The possibilities of education depended on personal cadre review of the student, as well as of the student's parents. Since the elementary schools were assigned according to residence, the moment of high school choice was an important point when the label religious could play a role. Many people through their disrupted biographies demonstrate how they were not accepted for gymnasiums,[121] vocational schools, or universities because of their or their parents' cadre profile spoiled by the phrase "religiously laden."

The choice of university, if at all possible, was for the "ideologically inappropriate" significantly reduced. Even in families with university tradition for generations, the coming generation was not always able to continue in the family profession.[122] As the interviewees

[120] HU OSA 300-30-15, box 15, Jana Mičiánová, "List prezidentovi." [A letter to the president.] *Informace o církvi* 2 (1984)

[121] Supposed to be elite high schools, educating in general knowledge, rather than particular technical skills, designed to be followed by university studies.

[122] See also Ľuba Herzánová, "Svet práce – svet každodenného života – svet rodiny. Medzigeneračné vzťahy v jednej bratislavskej rodine v 2. polovici 20. storočia." [The world of work – the world of everyday life – the world of family. Inter-generational relationships in one family from Bratislava in the second half of 20th century.] in *Neroľnícka rodina na Slovensku*. [Non-agrarian family in Slovakia.], Marta Botíková, Ľuba Herzánová, Miroslava Bobáková. (Bratislava : Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Komenského, 2007): 158-174.

would say "we simply knew", since it was a shared knowledge of the situation, that it was hard for a believer to be accepted to studies of the most prominent disciplines, legal studies and medicine, or to humanities, due to corruption and *appropriate cadres* preferences. In the perception and experience of people,

> That one was in advantage, who was a son or a child of a worker, or a miner, or a party member. Even if he was stupid, did not matter, he finished high school with Ds, but he got accepted to medicine. However, I and my children are a good example, that it was possible to study at the university. Although I knew, that my children would be never accepted to the philosophical faculty, or for medical studies, legal studies. That were warm places for children of party cadres…[123]

Humanities were also mainly for ideologically appropriate candidates, where believers were disfavored. Although pedagogical universities usually accepted a broader range of applicants, requiring the formal loyalty to the regime in the teacher's profession discouraged some believers already from applying. *"The options for believers… what was left were mainly the faculty of natural sciences, those programs where just few people applied. Or the Technical University."*[124] The reports about university education[125] show that the interest in technical studies was rather low, and the state tried to promote them and attract more students, therefore maybe the ideological background of an applicant was possible to overlook. For the generations of believers born in 50s, 60s, if given the chance to study at university, graduates of technical disciplines outnumber humanities.[126] I see it as a result of both the policies against inappropriate cadres, as well as a choice, at least in some cases, when the believers chose such disciplines in which the ideological questions did not stand in center of their studies and future career.

[123] Unpublished interview: Šimon (coded name). Interview by the author, Bratislava, March 12, 2013.
[124] Unpublished interview: Jakub (coded name). Interview by the author, Bratislava, February 22, 2015.
[125] HU OSA 300-30-9, boxes 103, 104, 105.
[126] Ľuba Herzánová, "Svet práce – svet každodenného života – svet rodiny.

In the psychological level being a secondary citizen could reach the state of social isolation, or psychical extortion and threatening, and oppressing one's dignity. Negative consequences were often drawn not only against the person themselves, but against their partners, families, parents, close relatives. Therefore in their everyday practices, and not only those connected to religion, had to take into consideration not only their personal situation, and calculations about their lives, but also think about possible negative consequences of their actions on a wider circle of people, and that was what people refer to as the hardest issue.

To be recognized by the state structures as a believer in socialist Slovakia was a risk. People in the country knew from their own experiences or experiences of others that bearing a label of believer could bring negative implications. Especially when one was or wanted to be on a different than worker position. Therefore, and that is the subject of the following part, many people developed tactics to prevent the negative consequences in their lives.

2.4 The *Normalized* Believers

The above described discriminative behavior of the state towards believers called for believers to become less visible and more inconspicuous in the socialist system. Since religion and religious practice was allowed, for the broadest category of citizens it was not necessary to formally act as an atheist. Rather not to create conflict situation with bringing religion to discussion, since that was a dangerous soil. As my interviewee recalls, her mother would often remind her: "Obey the teacher, accept what she says. But if she claims that God does not exist, either do not respond at all, or do not argue with her. … She might not think so, but she has to say that. But do not fight."[127]

[127] Unpublished interview: Marína (coded name). Interview by the author, Bratislava, December 27, 2014.

Not provoking with religion was the first tactics for the everyday behavior of believers. This rule, transmitted in the process of socialization, became a guide for survival to which people adjusted their practices, in the hope that that will prevent them from discrimination or any negative experiences of humiliation and mocking. At the same time, being invisible and inconspicuous became the norm, and not only in terms of religion but generally. As my informant, who claimed that he has never concealed his religious affiliation, stated,

> From my point of view, this was the norm: to twist in the life, to nod to the requirements of the regime, and if necessary to hide religion. But then they had children in schools, they had gardens, cottages, went on holidays, had a job. Socialism gave them advantages, and they truckled. Adjusted.[128]

Many of my informants admit that they made concessions, "concessions against what we could do in 1968, what we can do now. But then, that was the reality."[129]

In the time when the dissident and resistance movements called for honesty, *life in truth,*[130] and not acting against one's conscience, the accepted norm among the ordinary citizens called for preventing possible problems and survival without meeting with the potentially repressive state apparatus. My interviewees claimed that ideological or moral questioning of one's deeds was not common, since they wanted to prevent all possible problems. Some because of fear, some because of the future of their children, some because of good work position. In such view many things which were by the intellectual dissident circles, or by the Western watchers of the situation read as political statements or ideological claims merged to acts, [131] which people claim today they did them without further thinking.[132]

[128] Unpublished interview: Michal (coded name). Interview by the author, Stará Turá, February 1, 2015.
[129] Unpublished interview: Vilma (coded name). Interview by the author, Stará Turá, January 31, 2015.
[130] Havel, *The Power of The Powerless.*
[131] HU OSA 300-30-6, box 64. Jan Obrman, "Czechoslovakia" in *Children in Eastern Europe.* Radio Free Europe Research, October 26, 1987.
[132] However, I sense there a retrospective reevaluation, and a sort of inner feeling of inconsistency or conflict, since the following examples of "things done without further thinking" are topics that the people mentioned themselves.

As Havel's salesman automatically decorated the shop window for each festival, the interviewed believers signed that they will educate in the Marxist-Leninist worldview, agreed with the *brotherly help* of Warsaw pact armies, disagreed with *Charta 77*, held presentation about the maleficence of religion, had their children in Pioneers, celebrated the May Day, Great October Socialist Revolution, or Victorious February.[133] Why? "Because everyone did that", "because it was not a question," or "because I was afraid to do anything else." Not signing a teacher's proclamation would mean an end of the teacher's career and would bring insecurity into one's life and disagreement with the Soviet occupation was a reason for sending one to the lowest worker position. Charta was a rather unknown document among the non-intellectuals in Slovakia, and signing Anticharta was a condition to be allowed to enter work or school that day. Ceremonial parades were in small towns and villages seen as a good opportunity to meet friends, to have fun at the special venues and attractions created for this occasion. Even less questioned were the ideological organizations. A report from Radio Free Europe claims that the main motive for parents to let their children join Pioneer seems to be "their wish not to risk obstructing their children's careers and to prevent them from being isolated from their classmates."[134] Indeed, the membership worked in a child's favor when he applied to some of the more attractive high schools and particularly university. However, the parents today claim that they did not see the organizations as ideological instruments, but as free time activities for their children, which they and their children actually liked. Moreover, since the Pioneer organization copied the structure of school system, the Pioneer units corresponded to the classes in which the children spent the whole day anyhow.

This "doing because one has to" or not questioning one's motifs directs our attention to the performative character of people's actions in the official sphere. Although the propaganda

[133] February 25th, as the anniversary of communist takeover in Czechoslovakia.
[134] HU OSA 300-30-6, box 64. Jan Obrman, "Czechoslovakia" in *Children in Eastern Europe.* Radio Free Europe Research, October 26, 1987.

claimed the aim for a total transformation of thinking, as Šimečka put it, "The state does not require the entire person, just the part that projects above the surface of public life; and that if this part accepts the sole truth,[135] then the individual may do what he or she likes in the private sphere."[136] Alexei Yurchak in his work *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More*[137] introduced the concept of *performativity* as widely appropriated way of life in late socialism in Soviet Union. He claims that people in their actions emphasized the performative element, the function of an act rather than the content. So they developed a future-oriented way of acting in which their current acts were about to keep their way open for further acts in the future. Accepting the performativity mode was a way which allowed an individual to stay "in play".

Although the performative behavior, as doing something because one should, or because one does not want to face problems, can be traced in Slovak society, I challenge the presupposition with which Yurchak works. Yurchak claims that discourse and knowledge was not in minds of people divided into value categories of good and bad that were fixed and bounded, but he sees them as processes that were never completely known in advance but rather that one reacted unpredictably to a concrete situation. The situation in normalization Slovakia was, however, shaped by the events of 1968, which caused apathy and disinterest in the ideals of communism. People, and all four teachers from my interviewees emphasized that, were filled with disillusionment with the political change, which they perceived as a step back when compared to the Prague Spring period. Not believing in the proclaimed phrases but knowing

[135] I.e. that there is only one party, that everything belongs to the state, which is also the sole employer, etc.
[136] Šimečka, *Obnovení pořádku,* 163.
[137] Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation.* (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
Alexander, Yurchak. "Soviet Hegemony of Form. Everything was Forever, Until it was no More" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Jul. 2003)*: 480-510.

that it would ensure keeping the status quo of silence and outer peace, they acted as they knew the regime requires.

It would be too ambitious for us to think that the regime was blind to the pretense and performative behavior. It was not, because comments criticizing pretense appeared sporadically:

> At their workplace they [now talking about communists] fulfill all their tasks, but once coming home, they leave behind all the duties of a communist. They do not want to take a role in some collective organization, such as the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship, or other.[138]

However, bearing in mind that the state was not a centralized entity, but rather an omnipresent framework for everyday action, multiplied and reproduced by everyone working in the system, such pretense was in practice accepted.

Although I presupposed the conflicts of believers based on ideological levels, on the mutually incompatible ideologies of Marxism-Leninism and Christianity, the interviews and life stories of believers did not prove that. The stances of believers towards the state ideology did not come out often in the interviews. When I directly asked about their opinion towards the regime they did not perceive socialism as a problem. Rather, as one teacher declared, the "biggest problem of communists" were the restrictions on practicing religion which the state imposed on believers. The most often mentioned clashes of interests for believers were mainly in church attendance and in declaring Christian values publically. Besides that, in their everyday experience believers met atheism as the claim that to believe is backward and no God exists, a phrase which shaped the public discourse, influenced the allowed language, and limited some topics which could not be taken out publicly. Although atheism in its essence conflicted with the basic belief of Christianity, being present in the state for so many years,

[138] HU OSA 300-30-6, box 115, "Religiosity in Slovakia." *Tribuna,* April 11, 1973, 6.

believers already overlooked it, unless they got a direct question on their worldview. Such a point forced some to think about Christianity incompatible with atheism. Similarly, the informants claimed that they regarded Marxism-Leninism as a phrase, as a mandatory discourse, unless they were forced to actively contribute with a lecture or at schools when teachers pointed to the different interpretations of certain phenomena. The claimed non-appropriation and constant overlooking of the communist ideology allowed a combination of Communist party membership and active religious life in one family, without recalling an inner struggle over the ideology.

The majority of problems and conflicts which the believers recall now, or which are reflected in the archives were connected to the limits regarding the take part in religious rituals, church attendance, and religious upbringing. Since the teaching of the Catholic Church recognizes the obligation of every believer to attend mass on Sunday and on the prescript holidays, those teachers, party members, and people at the *nomenclatura* position who wanted to keep religion needed to develop some tactics to solve the problem in practice.

The used tactics were of different scales, including various numbers of actors. Some people claimed they attended church always with their grandparents or other older people (neighbors or family friends). Then, if confronted, they claimed to the authorities that they went because of the older person needed help. Other people, such as Zuzana and her mother, developed the tactic of going to other places for church services, or for baptisms and confirmations.

In other cases these people found understanding by the local priest. For example the priest in Topoľčianky, in a small pilgrimage town in Western Slovakia had a conciliatory approach towards the citizens and accepted the fact that some people could not openly attend religious services. Therefore he allowed private confession, baptism, or confirmation during

the night or on weekdays, or he administrated wedding ceremonies in secret with the couple and witnesses. In such a way people kept their religious practice, but in a changed form– private as enclosed, and individual as excluding the collective aspect of religion.

Coming back to Zuzana's example, Zuzana withdrew from religious practice which was observable to the local agents of the state who scrutinized her in her hometown. The agents in other localities did not know her and therefore she was not their target. The formal withdrawal from religious practice presented in Zuzana's case allowed her to keep her private sphere detached from the reach of the state. This shows the relational aspect of making religious practice private. Furthermore, conforming formally to the expectations of the local state agent Zuzana could continue with her religious activity outside church and school religious education, and therefore she claims she did no longer feel a psychological pressure of doing something what could cause her problems. However, the applied tactics of Eigen-sinn which people developed did not have to automatically mean peace and security for the people. As one teacher put it, even though she did adjust her practices to be less a visible Christian, it did not prevent her from the constant fear and psychological pressure.

> Do I always have to hide and feel guilty when creeping in dark to the corner of a church, always a different one? When I roll up the collar and wear dark glasses when going to the communion? And when I quickly run from the church, when I see there my students, or when I see the secret [policemen] standing at the entrance and writing down the car license plates or even take pictures of people leaving the church? Is it normal and worth a dignified life when I quickly hang down the crosses from the walls and anxiously hide in closets those few books published in this country in which they mention God when expecting my colleagues as guests? Or at any call from the headmaster I am on the verge of a heart attack asking: did they already discovered me? Did they receive an anonymous report on me?[139]

[139] HU OSA 300-30-15, box 16, Vyznanie učiteľky (The confession of a teacher), in *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 4, (1985).

This utterance shows that although hiding religion did not psychologically satisfy this woman, it was an effective strategy, which worked. In her case for 20 years.[140]

Since the socialist state stigmatized believers, people developed tactics how to prevent problems in their lives. Especially those, whom the state could blackmail due to their position in society. The main line of tactics of believers went along concealing religion and religious practice.

2.5 Slovak Socialist Model of Acceptable Religion

So what do all these examples about people practicing religion in socialist Slovakia reveal? A close reading of the documents forming the public discourse - laws, official governmental declarations, unofficial regulations and directives, newspaper articles – and the experiences of believers reveals a model of religion which was acceptable or at least endurable by the socialist state in post 1968 Czechoslovakia. Although not accepted in terms of doxology - philosophy and ideology, it was de facto religious practice which played the most important role in defining and treating religion by the socialist state.

And then, since practice was the determining factor, I argue religion was accepted when it was kept private. On the one hand, private in terms of not visible in the public sphere, whereas public included mainly politics and institutions of high political interest such as schools, television, radio, cinema, or even present in the public discourse formed by newspapers. On the other hand, private in terms of individual, therefore not collective. Moreover, since forms of religious practice were restricted, religion and believers were expected to be passive, and open to the atheisational campaign. And finally, since it was expected to die out as such,

[140] Ibidem.

religion and religious practice were generally more tolerated when connected to the old generations and not so much welcome when being spread among the youth.

Since in many cases the state persecuted religious practice, it prepared the ground for a complete surrender or religion and giving up all the visible demonstrations of religion. A complete surrender, which would be in the Ludkeian terms called *Aneignung,* total appropriation, could be a subject of a valuable study of power mechanisms, or value systems in normalization society. In my analysis, however, I focused on the appropriation of the described secular model of religion and the tactics that the believers developed within this framework by still keeping up the religious practice.

As I demonstrated, the main line of the tactics was to conceal religion – to refuse religious affiliation when asked about it, give away some demonstrations of religion, or find ways of hiding religious practice. Therefore I argue that privatizing religion in Slovak socialist context corresponds to the process of *making* religion private. Firstly, to make religion private was the aim of the state, proclaimed through persecution of "non-private" believers. Secondly making religion private was the response of believers who did not declare their religious conviction when encountering the state due to the possible consequences. Therefore it was predominantly the pressure which caused the privatization of religion. Only then could privatization of religion serve the state as a proof of secularization. However, such instrumental understanding of privatization does not correspond to the belief of secularization theory, which sees secularization as the reason for religion *becoming* the private matter of an individual.

Before proceeding to the following chapter, which zooms into schools as platforms of ideological fight, I need to emphasize that the majority of Slovak believers by conforming to the model of accepted religion did not perceive the normalization regime as conflicting with their worldview. If they felt a conflict, then they talked about the limitations in terms of

religious practice. In the next part I will show how the conflict over religious practice, in the form of classes of religious instruction, actually stood as a basis for activation of believers in normalization Slovakia.

Chapter 3 - School As a Battlefield

In this chapter I zoom into the setting of socialist schools, which were supposed to become the main platform for the secularizational endeavor in the normalization period. After the turmoil in 1968, the state declared its aim to actively work on the ideological profile of the citizens. The 14th Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1971[141] set out a goal to fight against religion as a hostile worldview.[142] This re-imposed atheisational aim came as an outcome of the evaluation of the period leading to the political liberalization. The new government recognized the insufficient ideological formation as one of the crucial factors leading to what was understood as the *crisis development*. Similarly, important was the acknowledgement that religious worldview was not dying out automatically, as was expected, therefore ideological influencing and education in the scientific world outlook was needed to be actively worked on.

Besides other institutions such as municipal organizations, various socialist unions (as for example the Slovak Women's Union[143]), or the Brigades for Civic Affairs, schools were supposed to become the most important spaces for reproduction of the state's ideology. Concurrently, in the proclaimed freedom of religion, schools were involved in the process of teaching religion. This combination led to schools becoming the arenas for secularizing and fighting against religion at the same time. The explored material shows how the main goal of the ideological influencing shifted when it moved from the official plans of the ideological committees to the real implementation by teachers, directors of schools, and employers. While

[141] Taking place on May 25 – 29, 1971 in Prague
[142] SNA MŠ SSR Kolégium č. 1-7, box 1. Martin Hargaš, "Správa o problémoch náboženskej výchovy na ZDŠ na Slovensku," [A report about the problems of RI on the elementary schools in Slovakia.] July 22, 1969.
[143] The Communist Party recognized women as the more religious, therefore in the Slovak Women Union was supposed to focus on women and guide them to overcome religion – SNA ÚV KSS Predsedníctvo, box 1466, Materials from the 17th meeting of the presidium of Central Committee of Communist Party, November 23, 1976.

ideological committees created programs striving for an ideologically homogeneous atheist society, through the real agents of proposed secularization the main aim shifted to a zeal for presenting a progress in secularization through indicators of secularization and a fight for a decrease in observable indicators of religion, mainly pupils attending religious instruction. I base my analysis on material from the collection of the Office for Church Affairs which contains reports about religious instruction and problems connected.

The traces of conflicts around the classes of RI prevail in the archival material as the most common point of clash between the believers and the state's policies. Also in the testimonies of people living in normalization the experiences from the registration for RI stand out as the most frequent topic when referring to discriminating behavior towards believers. What light does it shed on believers and the secularization and atheisational endeavor? First of all the clashes show that religious instruction remained until 1989 a dynamic battlefield between state's atheisational endeavor and the interests of active believers. But at the same time, this reveals that it was not the imposed education of Marxism-Leninism which provoked the believers to actions of active resistance, but the intervention of the state structures to the demonstrations of religious faith.

The changing political and social atmosphere in the country influenced by the legalist and human rights movements also supported the *deprivatization* of religion. The most visible example is the *secret church* which I described in Chapter 1.3. However, traces of mobilization and *deprivatizing*, as the process and steps leading to *deprivatization,* can be detected also in the dynamics around religious instruction classes. In this chapter I will show how the religious instruction classes in the setting of a socialist school mobilized people to act and *deprivatize* religion.

3.1 Actively Towards Atheist Society

This section presents the schools as the platforms for ideological education. As the name of the document re-regulating the religious issues in the state, *The Conception of the long-term practices in the sphere of church politics and worldview education in Slovakia*, suggests, in the 1970s, in time of active re-consolidation of the society, a lot of attention was devoted to the question of ideological education. For the purposes of the newly re-imposed atheist propaganda, new platforms were established to assist atheist education. A new Institute of Scientific Atheism was founded at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in January 1971, and the Institute of Marxist-Leninist philosophy at Pavel Jozef Šafárik University in Prešov, Eastern Slovakia a year later. Both were established with the task to "suppress the influence of religion in society," as well as to systematically deal with the ways of overcoming religion, mainly through implementing strategies of ideological education at schools and universities. A third institution was the Museum of the development of societal consciousness in Bratislava,[144] created with the aim to "popularize the materialistic worldview through opinion forming and propaganda." [145] Nevertheless, as historians claim, the existence of the museum depended on the mandatory visits organized by schools.[146] Similarly, the atheisational effort was supported by large amount of literature about ideological instruction and atheist formation. Between 1974 and 1977, more than 55 books were published, ranging from texts by Marx, Engels, and Lenin,

[144] Located in a former franciscan monastery
[145] Róbert Letz et al., *Zločiny komunizmu.*
Elena Machajdíková, "SNM - Múzeum vývoja spoločenského vedomia 1973 – 1990," [Museum of the development of societal consciousness.] accessed May 20, 2015
http://www.snm.sk/swift_data/source/archivsnm/archiv_pdf_nove/mvsv.pdf
[146] Róbert Letz et al., *Zločiny komunizmu*, 295.

to translated Soviet methodical material or Czechoslovak ideological production.[147] The production of handbooks for ideological and atheist education continued till 1989.[148]

The most important platform where the ideological indoctrination was supposed to take place was the sphere of education – schools, universities, and ideological organizations such as the Pioneers or Socialist Youth Union. To incorporate the ideological aims in all subjects and classes, a variety of methodological aids, guidebooks, and articles were published in the early 1970s in order to help teachers, the crucial agents of secularization, bring the scientific-atheist view into their classes. Since the teachers were now becoming the real agents, the extensions of the ideological institutes, they had to be first of all educated and methodologically prepared. The Institute of Scientific Atheism and the Institute of Marxist-Leninist philosophy prepared meetings, conferences, evening schools were mainly in the form of lectures educated the teachers so that they could really lead children to think in Marxist terms.[149]

Ideological education served as an umbrella term which included several main educational goals – education towards socialist patriotism, proletarian internationalism, education towards respect for work, and scientific formation with the emphasis on atheist education.[150] All were proclaimed to be equally important, however, in the early 1970s, the atheist and scientific-atheist emphasis significantly outbalanced the other goals in pedagogical manuals and magazines. On the other hand, in the 1980s a much smaller number of articles in newspapers dealt with religion, and rather talked about ideological education in terms of

[147] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 97 – "Prehľad vybraných významnejších publikácií zameraných na ateistickú a svetonázorovú výchovu, vydanú v rokoch 1974 and 1976, a plány na rok 1977." [Overview of selected more significant publications focusing on atheist and worldview education published between 1974 and 1976, and plans for 1977.]

[148] For example the archival box MK SR, OPVC, box 99 contains several publications in a folder "Materials for enhancing the atheist education."

[149] Regular annual conferences about atheist education for teachers took place in Bardejov. Short reports available in HU OSA 300-30-9, boxes 103, 104.

[150] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266 "Zamyšlení nad výukou náboženství" [A thought about the teaching of religion.] in *Tribuna* October 8, 1975.
SNA 1. Tajomník Lenárt – 47, i.j. 91-95, S 72 Oddelenie školstva a vedy ÚV KSS, Reports from 1972.

building of socialist morale, building a positive patriotic relation towards the homeland, forming the collectivity, and aesthetic thinking formation.[151] However, in the folders of the Office for Church Affairs, the reports claiming the need to overcome religion by atheist education are present until 1989.

The ideological institutions presented the atheist education as a fight against all levels of religion – ideological, emotional, moral, institutional and practical. The proclaimed aim was to change the mindset of young people so that for them religion would be "just a collection of legends, on which we [they] look as on the mythical deeds of Egyptian, Greek, or Roman deities."[152] Ideological influencing and atheist propaganda became a duty for members of the communist party as well as for others who were in positions of authority – bosses, top managers, and especially teachers.

The officially pursued method for ideological influencing called for "patient persuasion." Through the classes, teachers were supposed to positively motivate and influence children to adopt the "scientific worldview" and consequently to reject religion. This influencing should have taken place in all class subjects, but topics such as the emergence of the world, life, or the historical development of society were specially emphasized. In order to attract the attention of children, the ideologists recommended to direct the focus e.g. to cosmonautics and the newly developing field of space research, which was not only fascinating but also it was supposed to serve as proof that no heaven existed and thus neither God.[153] Or

[151] HU OSA 300-30-9, boxes 104, Soňa Benková, "Dôležitá je tvorivá práca učiteľa." [The creative work of a teacher is important.] *Učiteľské noviny.* November, 29, 1984.
[152] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. Eva Kavková, "Vědecky podloženou argumentací k ateismu" [By scientifically proven arguments to atheism.] *Učiteľské noviny*, October 12, 1972.
[153] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. Ivan Krenčey "Cesta tvorivých činov." [The path of creative deeds.]

they recommended to point to quotes from works of classical authors which included some anti-religious sensibilities to ridicule religion.[154]

In the fight against religion, religion did not remain a private affair of an individual or a family. The state, through its agents, entered to what was believed to be the private sphere, the family, trying to recruit the parents towards ideological formation. Ideologists and teachers constantly warned parents about the harmfulness of the "double-track" upbringing - religious at home and atheist in school.[155] The Czechoslovak Law on the Family[156] made it clear that "parents, the state, and social organizations, particularly Czechoslovak Youth Union and the Pioneer Organization, are inseparably united in caring for a child's upbringing." In practice, this meant, as Radio Free Europe summarized, that "parents are required to bring up their children according to a particular ideology, which is not necessarily their own. If they fail, the regime has the legal means to enforce "proper" education outside the family. The family remains very restricted in the type of upbringing it can offer its child."[157] However, as the religious instruction dynamics will show, these formal requirements did not meet with everyday reality, and religious upbringing was tolerated.

The ultimate goal of the ideological influencing did not always meet with the actual situation in schools. Always presented in terms of modernization, the "modern socialist citizen," a category that appears very often in the writings in the early 1970s, was supposed to appropriate the scientific worldview and atheism.[158] And the scientific worldview was regarded

[154] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266. Kornel Danáš "Problémové úlohy v procese vedecko-ateistickej výchovy." [Problem-oriented tasks in the scientific-atheist education] *Společenské vědy ve škole* 3 (November 1972).
[155] Several psychological studies appeared in the early 1970s claiming that a double track upbringing led to negative formation of child's personality – to hypocrisy, sham, mistrust to others, and other moral dilemmas – e.g. HU OSA 300-30-6, box 65, Karol Danáš, "Čo je dvojkoľajnosť vo výchove?" [What is the double-track in upbringing?] *Nedeľná Pravda,* May 16, 1975.
[156] The collected Laws, (Prague: Statisticke a evidencni Vydavatelstvi Tiskopisu, 1983), Law no. 66, 1983, according to: HU OSA 300-30-6, box 64. Jan Obrman, Children in Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia., Radio Free Europe Research, october 26, 1987.
[157] Ibidem.
[158] HU OSA 300-30-7,box 266. Ivan Krenčey "Cesta tvorivých činov." [The path of creative deeds.]

as the basis for thinking which was supposed to lead to a qualitatively different society that would "rely on and celebrate human action only."[159] Although the Communist Party most likely wanted to achieve a completely secular society, the real agents of the secularization, the schools and teachers, were those who actually shaped the directions in which the ideological indoctrination took. According to the teachers' personal conviction, combined with fear, or pressure from above they did or did not apply the ideological elements into teaching. Though, they, as all four interviewed teachers claimed, they always wrote the "right ideological formulations" into the official records.

Formally propagated as positive influencing towards scientific worldview, the active secularization in normalization Slovakia rather took the form of an active fight against practiced religion. One type of examples point to the clashing schedules of state and church. In order to achieve its aim to decrease the church attendance, the state kept scheduling activities to overlap with the "church times". Mandatory work brigades for students took place on weekends, with a strongly controlled attendance on Sunday mornings. TV program on Sunday mornings devoted special attention of the program makers to attract children, so that they desire to stay at home rather than go to church with parents. Christian holidays and times of special events of the church, as for example pilgrimages, were always a stage for a fight for people between church and state. To attract people, the municipalities very often organized occasional markets with scarce products or festivals at the time of a pilgrimage and close by the site.[160] Special attention was again issued towards young people and students who had some sort of mandatory program at the time of the pilgrimage – be it spartakiada rehearsals, preparation of

[159] Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, 6.
[160] This organization, however, worked more for the believers. Since it was quite easy to organize a bus trip to these festivals, my informants told me many stories of how they ordered a bus for such occasion but went to the pilgrimage.

some school performance, or other work for the "collective welfare."[161] The state used similar strategies until the last days. At the time of the Candle manifestation[162] several faculties organized mandatory meetings to prevent students to go to the public religious meeting.

In the setting of socialist schools atheisation took also the form of a game with numbers, since it was desired to show progress in modernization and civic-mindedness. We can ask how the state measure the effects of the ideological education. Due to the complicated nature of ideological awareness, vicarious signs served to measure the achievements of ideological influencing and hoped transformations. Positively perceived were growing numbers of newly established platforms, which at least by the names matched the desired development – such as clubs at schools - *clubs for small atheists, clubs for cosmonautics, astronomic clubs, scientific clubs,* and *association for Soviet friendship*.[163] A story of Vladimír Krčméry[164], he himself a catholic and a nephew of Silvester Krčméry, one of the most important catholic activists in Slovakia during the whole time of communism, illustrates how the name of a club was more important than the actual activity.

> Today it may seem strange, but at that time we got really engaged in the Socialist Youth Union at Metodka.[165] I personally was in charge of the so called High-school Scholarly Work.[166] In those grey, miserable 1970s I did, due to a lucky constellation of circumstances, enjoy a feeling of freedom. Between 1975 and 1978 we organized at least ten catholic trips and camps under the name of High-school Scholarly Work and the Tree of Life.[167]

[161] HU OSA 300-30-15, box 16 "Levoča 1986. Viera silnejšia ako činnosť mocenských opatrení." [Levoča 1986. Faith stronger than the activity of power interventions.] *Informace o Církvi* (Information about Church) 1986/4.
[162] More information in section 1.3
[163] A report from 19.6.1977 states that in the school year 1975/76 1,100 atheist clubs existed. 170 in the West Slovakia Region, 237 in Central Slovakia and 693 in East Slovakia, the area believed to be most religious.
SNA ÚV KSS Predsedníctvo, 1480, a report from 19.6.1977 – zasadnutie PUV, states that in the school year 1975/76 1,100 atheist clubs existed. 170 in the West Slovakia Region, 237 in Central Slovakia and 693 in East Slovakia, the area believed to be most religious.
[164] Vladimír Krčméry, Martin Hanus and Jozef Majchrák. *Vladimír Krčméry. Ženie ma zlé svedomie.* [Vladimír Krčméry. The bad conscience is my driving force.], (Bratislava: W Press, 2014), 19-20.
[165] A prominent gymnasium in Bratislava
[166] A student academic conference, where students present their projects as a scholarly work.
[167] A club for young biologists

Another way of examining the worldview was through questionnaires. To prove the correct development, the "increasing number of people appropriating the scientific worldview, the schools had to ask the pupils and employees on their ideological stances. Asked questions were supposed to reflect the level of belief – asking whether one believes in afterlife, mainly heaven and hell, in miracles, or that it was god who created the world and life,[168] but also practice – do you attend church, how often and when, with whom,[169] or by reflecting one's worldview. The journal Atheism proudly presented outcomes of quantitative researches in which only a small number of pupils declared religious conviction, but from three possible options chose either *ambivalent,* or *avowed atheist,* rather than *active believer.*[170] Finally, the measuring of the achievements of atheist education was through to the numbers of children registered for religious instruction. Though the enrollment for the religious instruction was a negative indicator – as not only ignoring the atheisational endeavor, but as bringing religion to the public discussion, so out of the accepted model.

The abundancy of documents in archives issued by the ideological institutes and disseminated through press and media confirms that the consolidating regime imputed an enormous importance to the ideological education. However, the disillusionment with the situation after 1968 caused that not all the agents of the state were convinced about the importance of the ideological influencing. Therefore *de facto* the ideological strive often got the form of demonstrating what was expected and what was believed to be the positive development, but it did not necessarily had to meet with the covered topics in classes or real focus of various clubs.

[168] HU OSA 300-30-7,box 266, Peter Prusák, "Religiozita a úlohy svetonázorovej výchovy na dedine." [Religiosity and tasks of the worldview education in a village.]
[169] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 509 "Dotazník" [A questionnaire.] 1980
[170] HU OSA 300-30-8, box 19. – contains several sociological surveys of students.

3.2 Religious Instruction As an Instrument of Secularization

Religious instruction,[171] as the possibility to hold lectures on Bible stories, catechism, and church history in school, was allowed during the whole period of communist regime in Slovakia. The legislative allowing and customizing the RI was the Directive of the Ministry of Education 1272/1970 issued on April 28, 1970, which followed the 218/1949 law.[172] In the proclaimed freedom of religion, any child attending second to seventh grade of an elementary school anywhere in the country could be by their parents enrolled for classes of religious instruction, which took place in the local school.[173]

Any church approved by the state was allowed to organize the RI classes. However, out of twelve churches, only the biggest ones, the Roman and Greek Catholic, Orthodox, and to a smaller extent also the Lutheran Church actually made use of this opportunity. As the reason for other churches giving up this opportunity I see the historically different organization of children`s education within the structure of the church. The Lutheran church and other protestant churches developed a system of regular Sunday schools and group meetings for different age groups already prior to the 1950s, so it was a regular activity, usually approved by the Office for Church Affairs.[174] Therefore Sunday schools was their main contact with the youth involving less state intervention which survived the harsh church policies of the 1950s. For the Catholic Church the education in school stayed as the most commonly used way of educating children until the early 1980s.

[171] Later abbreviated as RI
[172] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 96, Smernice a zásady upravujúce vyučovanie náboženstva. (Directives and rules shaping the policies around religious instruction.
[173] For numbers of children attending RI see Appendix III and IV.
[174] Sabrina Ramet. Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia. The Communist and Postcomminist Eras. (London: Duke University Press, 1992), 1-10.

Although administrated by the local school, the RI was not a subject in the school curriculum, nor reported on the final transcripts. It had the status of a voluntary, extra-curricular after-school activity. The frequency of classes depended on the number of registered pupils. Twice a week when the group was larger than 16 pupils, one class per week in case of fifteen to nine children, once in two weeks for five to eight children, and once per month in case of lower interest. For the successful registration the parent was supposed to hand in the signed enrollment form to the director (in case of registering the child for the first year of religious instruction) or to the class teacher (in case of re-registering for the next years) in a given period (June 15 – 30). This was the official rule, however, the archival material and memories of believers reveal how this rule was applied.

Besides the laws customizing the legal status of religious instruction also other directives existed. Already in the 1970s the dissidents in their writings about the functioning of the state reproached the simultaneous use of several informational streams to regulate policies. They claimed that besides the constitution, laws, and directives available for public (and for the West), other streams of information and directions flowed - those of internal regulations, directives, and hand-to-hand, or ear-to-ear transmitted instructions, black-mail lists, which were shared internally or secretly within an institution, or the particular political sphere. [175]

The possibility of religion instructions was granted throughout the whole communist rule, however the schools were given other instructions. The numbers of pupils registered for religious instruction noticed a significant rise during the Prague Spring period, from 39,78% registered in 1967/68 to 61,6% in 1968/69,[176] which was seen by the state as a threat. Therefore

[175] Šimečka, *Obnovení pořádku,* 75.
[176] SNA MŠ SSR Kolégium č. 1-7, box 1. Martin Hargaš, "Správa o problémoch náboženskej výchovy na ZDŠ na Slovensku," [A report about the problems of RI on the elementary schools in Slovakia.] July 22, 1969.

in the instructions for the elementary school agenda for school year 1969/70, (which were then repeated and emphasized every year), the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture called for *"an intensification of ideological-political education in schools, and strengthening the education in scientific worldview, also with the aim to reduce the number of pupils, who are exposed to idealistic ideology at the religious instruction."*[177] As a method, the Ministry recommended *individual work* with parents through the school structures, as well as persuasion through the local party structures and employers. The following quotation of instructions for the individual work with believers from 1982 issued by the Ministry of Education illustrates the recommended procedure.

> In order to ensure reducing the number of registrations for religious instruction and for improving the atheist propaganda (in schools) we recommend the following measures: An analysis of the local political situation, and establishment of political committees at all elementary schools. We suggest delegating the members of these committees to talk to parents about the maleficence of religious education in socialist society, focusing mainly on those parents who are less likely to register their children and therefore it would be possible to use them as a pattern to follow by others. We suggest urgently eliminating the bigot religious fanatics so that they do not disturb fulfilling these goals. The headmaster is supposed to make a list of parents who registered their children and submit it to the educational office in the respective region for further discussion. He is obliged to inform the regional party organs about the achieved results in the fight against religion.[178]

As can be seen from this illustration, registration for religious instruction, an action officially permitted, was from the directive of the Ministry (so not from the will of the directors, or the teachers) followed by additional measures against believers, by individual meetings striving to

[177] SNA MK OPVC box 96, Rozbor stavu prihlásených detí na VN v ZDŠ a skúsenosti z uplatňovania nových smerníc, [An analysis of the situation of registered children for RI at elementary schools and the experiences from application of the new directives.] 1970.
SNA MŠ SSR Kolégium č. 1-7, box 1, "Ideovo-pedagogické smernice pre prácu škol a výchovných zariadení I. a II. cyklu na školský rok 1971/2." [Ideological and pedagogical directives for the work of schools and educational institutions of level I and II for the school year 1971/72.]
[178] SNA MK OPVC, box 99. "Anton Hlinka o výuce náboženství." [Anton Hlinka about Religious Instruction.]. Transcript of a radio broadcast, June 22, 1986.

dissuade the parents from their decision. At the same time, it demonstrates that the main goal of atheist propaganda was the decrease in numbers.

The *individual work* is also the main motive in the narratives of witnesses about the process of registration. Anna was a postwoman, who due to having five children, and due to her active engagement in the local church got by the school recognized as a fanatic catholic. She recollects how the headmaster came to her after a parent meeting, when she wanted to register her first daughter for the first year of RI. Appealing to her that she as a recognizable person in the town serves as a bad model for other people, and even makes it hard for him to dissuade others. She opposed that she attended church regularly, sang on funerals and weddings, and even sang on the funeral of the headmaster's mother, so he must have seen her. From this confrontation she came out as a winner, however, in a couple days the postmaster, the head of the post office, tried to convince her not to enroll her daughter, since she would not be accepted to better high schools. She again refused to change her decision, therefore her first daughter attended the RI classes. Having five children, she had to go through a similar procedure with each and every child, however, she claimed that once the family was registered, the school tried, indeed, once again to convince her, but with much less pressure as before, since, as she states, "they already counted with us."[179]

Besides individual meetings schools took steps to dissuade parents under pressure when summoned to meet a school committee. Fedor Blaščák, a contemporary Slovak philosopher researching on the mechanisms of power during the normalization period, considers the humiliation in front of a committee as the typical mechanism of enforcing obedience in this

[179] Unpublished interview: Anna (coded name). Interview by the author, Trenčianska Teplá, April 6, 2015.

time period.[180] A quote from a catholic mother from Trenčín describes the practice, commonly encountered also by other parents, in detail.

> The class teacher visits the family, when he finds out the parents' opinion, using all possible arguments he tries to persuade them not to register their child for religious instruction. Allegedly the child then does not have any chance to continue in further education. If the parents still insist on the registration, one of them is invited for a talk to the school. There is the class teacher of the child and a class committee – three parents of other children in the class. All four of them strive to mock the catholic parent for having an old-fashioned worldview, and persuade him not to register the child. If this is not successful, another, much more difficult talk follows by submitting the form to the headmaster. There is sitting the school committee of at least ten teachers and the parent is alone. Another round of persuasion takes place.[181]

This letter written in 1986 shows that the persuasive practices of schools did not significantly change throughout the time. Together with the previous example of the postwoman, from early 1970s it demonstrates the practices of persuasion which did not follow the recommended pattern of positive influencing, but rather persuasion through mocking, threats, and alerts. However, these threats and alerts were not hidden, but openly stated. A report from an elementary school in Piešťany from 1976 includes a copy of a form, which parents were required to sign together with the RI registration.

> During the registration period, the class teacher warned the parents of the consequences, which follow from the double track upbringing in a socialist school. Nevertheless, the parent insists on the registration and will not object that this circumstance will be taken into consideration when recommending the child for an elite school.[182]

These warnings and threatening became a point of common criticism. The *secret church* structures, criticized this legally improper treatment and since they had a direct connection to the foreign broadcast, problems around RI classes were publicized in the West. As Anton

[180] Blaščák, "Zabudnnutá generácia."
[181] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 97, Anna Pružincová, "List prezidentovi Husákovi" [A letter to president Husák.] 1986.
Similar complaints during the whole period came with the same topics/problems.
[182] MŠ SSR Sekretariát Ministerstva školstva, 1976, box 21. Správa o prihlasovaní žiakov na vyučovanie náboženstva v školskom roku 1976/77. [Report about registering pupils for RI in school year 1976/77.]

Hlinka, a referent of the Voice of America about the religious issues in Czechoslovakia, said out loud in broadcasting in June 1986, and what many parents experienced also in the previous 16 years:

> Today we have arrived to such situation, when the regime no longer strives to keep the impression of legality, and it openly states: If you register your children for RI, you will bear the consequences yourselves. And the parents hesitate, whether they want to ruin the future of their children, limit their possibilities to study at better high schools and universities, make them the second rank citizens, citizens who can be anytime discriminated, sued, or imprisoned.[183]

Formally emphasizing the goal to achieve the secular atheist society, through the internal directives the ministry actually delegated responsibilities of anti-religious propaganda down the whole structure, to teachers and school directors, who were supposed to be the active agents in the fight against RI. In the hierarchized structure of control mechanisms the headmasters were by the local and regional inspectors held responsible for the happenings in the school, they then instructed teachers to perform the actions to lower the number of registered children.[184] From this I venture on to claim that the real interest of schools in late socialism in Slovakia was not the change of worldview orientation, but in the public representation of religion, the number of enrolled children. Because the numbers were the measurable units of success, that success which gave credit to the school in the all country measures of socialist schools. Director's decrees and requests are not archived, but examples of their activity remain in memories. As my interviewee, a former teacher, recollects, in early 1970s were two students registered for the RI, but since it compared to ten in the previous

[183] SNA MK OPVC, box 99. "Anton Hlinka o výuce náboženství." [Anton Hlinka about Religious Instruction.]. Transcript of a radio broadcast, June 22, 1986.

[184] As Jana Mičiánová stated: "*The lowering of numbers in RI belongs to the setted target of the school. Teachers are instructed exactly how many students they have to dissuade from attending the RI classes."*
HU OSA 300-30-15, box 16, "Nechajte maličkých prísť ku mne." [Let the little come to me.] in *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3, (1985).

school year, two were taken as a success. However, when three pupils later registered, she was publically pilloried in front of all teachers, as it was recognized as her insufficient activity.[185]

Finally, besides attempts to verbally dissuade the parents from their decision, the schools actively created additional bureaucratic complications, all in order to decrease the number of registered children. As the most common administrative obstacles from the whole period are shortened the registration periods, when the directors shortened the ten day period to two or three days, with only a few office hours when the parents can bring the registration form,[186] required signatures of both parents also in cases when the parents are divorced, or do not live together, and their personal presence when submitting the form, or they did not accept ones delivered by mail. In the most extreme cases, directors of schools refused the enrollment at all, claiming that they as a socialist school did not allow religious instruction at all.[187] However, the Office for Religious Affairs distanced itself from these additional measures, and from 1975 called for adhering to the existing directives without further obstacles. Seeing the overall picture from the country, the Office asserted that "*these practical measures, which do not stem from the directives, in their consequences rather activate parents and clergy for searching for new possibilities how to teach religion out of the school spaces."*[188]

Simultaneously with exerting pressure on parents, schools took steps to gain children's attention by creating more attractive programs in the Pioneer or afterschool activities simultaneously with steps to decrease the attractiveness of religious instruction. Since RI was formally not a school subject, it was not fitted in the daily schedule, but took place after all

[185] Unpublished interview: Katarína (coded name). Interview by the author, Stará Turá, February 1, 2015.
[186] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 96. Report from the Regional Office of Ministry of Education in the situation of religious instruction in schools in school year 1979/80.
[187] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266 Too many Slovak Children attending religious education, 1972.
HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266 "The religious instruction is not taught anymore, since no one registered." Ján Bánsky, "Dobrá práca ZDŠ v Tisovci." [Good work of the elementary school in Tisovec.] *Roľnícke noviny,* November 29, 1972.
SNA MK SR OPVC, box 96, Reports from 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985.
[188] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 96. Report from 1982.

other classes finished. For example in Dolný Kubín the RI classes were scheduled after 4.30 p.m.[189] which in the winter months meant that children were leaving school when it was already dark. The time itself was not attractive, especially when kids had to wait for several hours for the religious instruction, while other children could play.

The Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party itself paid attention to the situation in the ideological formation of children and called for more attention to the activities of the Pioneer organization, which "necessarily must be attractive."[190] So for example a February 1972 report from Trnava claims: *"The school management creates various interest-based activities, as was in winter the making of an ice-skating ring for the pupils."* Of course, it showed that pupils were more interested in winter games than the religious instruction.[191] Similarly, attractive programs such as visiting a cinema or a museum, or Pioneer meeting would very often overlap with these classes.[192]

"Patient influencing and persuading" of children in school both in the memories of my informants and as reflected in the archival material, followed also other than peaceful and tolerant ways. Complaints by parents demonstrate that occasionally children from Christian families would be pointed to as examples of "those who had not yet accepted the right world view" and humiliated in front of the class.[193] Or some teachers applied strategies of making the RI a disadvantage for the child – a mother remembered that the day after RI (which took place

[189] SNA MK SR OPVC 96, "Complaint" Sťažnosť, 2.11. 1983 Dolný Kubín
[190] SNA 1. Tajomník Lenárt, boxes 47, 58, i.j. 91-96, 145-150.
[191] SNA MK OPVC 98, "Mesačná situačná správa, Trnava, február 1972." [Monthly situational report, Trnava February 1972.]
[192] SNA MK OPVC 96, "Informácia a súčasnom stave a priebehu prihlasovania detí na vyučovanie náboženstva na ZDŠ v SSR." [Information about the current state and progress of registering children for RI in elementary schools in Slovak Socialist Republic.], 1982.
[193] HU OSA 300-30-15, box 16, "Nechajte maličkých prísť ku mne." [Let the little come to me.] in *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3, (1985).
Unpublished interview: Marína (coded name). Interview by the author, Bratislava, December 27, 2014.
Unpublished interview: Anna (coded name). Interview by the author, Trenčianska Teplá, April 6, 2015.

late in the afternoon), when children have less time to prepare for the other classes, the teachers would call them out to oral examination, and give them lower grades when not prepared.[194]

What can be summarized about RI as such is that rather than being an expression of religious freedom, as the propaganda claimed, RI served as an instrument of secularization. Secularization, which officially claimed religion as a private thing, but in practice strived to control it. Firstly, through the possibility to register a child for RI the state was able to collect data about the religiosity of the population. Secondly, by monitoring who are the parents enrolling their child, the state kept record on how many of the party members, teachers, or other functionaries still kept the religious worldview.[195] Thirdly, RI was also a way to reach active believers and potentially deter them. All these three aims were the reason why the state needed schools to administrate the RI, although it was not a subject in the school curriculum. Likewise, that's why the classes took place at the school ground and the state did not allow them to change the venue for parish houses or churches, as the churches demanded since 1975.

In this part I have demonstrated that although classes of RI were allowed, they were seen as the transgression of the *model of acceptable religion.* Since the enrollment of an offspring for RI was a public declaration of religion, it was a sign to recognize one as a believer, so it could have consequences. Therefore parents were to decide whether to harm the future of their children, make it difficult for them to study at prominent high schools or universities and thus to make them citizens of lower value who were likely to be discriminated in the society. RI rather remained an instrument of the state to monitor religion of the citizens. Moreover, although the ideological organs of the state claimed their goal to change the thinking of the

[194] HU OSA 300-30-15, box 16, "Nechajte maličkých prísť ku mne." [Let the little come to me.] in *Rodinné spoločenstvo* 3, (1985).
[195] For some years see Appendix I, in other years not all regions/districts reported the number of communists registering their children.

society, in the practice of RI, the main goal transformed to reducing the numbers of children attending these classes.

3.3 Religious Instruction As a Platform for Activation of Believers and Church

Believers did not form a specific group in the everyday life of society, they were part of the society as everyone else. However, there were cases when their belief came as a specificity, determining their actions. Such was the case of registration for religious instruction. Secularist endeavor, fighting against demonstration of religion in schools triggered responses from the parents and churches, who started developing their own tactics. Some abandoned public religion, some formally succumbed but in privacy continued in the practices. However, there remained a group of believers who, in their decision to keep religion as a value in their family, turned the (from the state's perspective) undesired religious instruction into a platform for challenging the state. Looking at believers through the lens of religious instruction dynamics reveals how they, alone or together with the local priest, or church community responded to the pressure on decreasing numbers in RI. I claim that the contradictory nature of the claims about religion in the socialist state, allowing public religious instruction, but trying to lower the numbers, in the particular historical situation of late socialism enabled the *deprivatization* of religion. In this section I am pointing to the actions of *deprivatizing* religion. However, I have to say that the *deprivatizing* of religion did not depend on *privatization* as the action of believers. It was not (or at least not predominantly) a reverse process. In other words, the people included in the RI negotiations did not necessarily have to first *privatize*, hide religion to *deprivatize* it later. Rather, *deprivatization* was another type of reaction to the state pushing religion to privacy. Therefore *privatization* and *deprivatization* as actions of believers coexisted in the society together.

Mobilization of believers through which *deprivatization* of religion took place, stood on four levels, which were present simultaneously and mutually intertwined, yet changing and developing in the course of time. First of all, the church as an institution and as a community of believers needs to be taken into consideration. The reason why the religious instruction was such a controversial issue for both the state and the believers was the role which the classes played in the organization of life in the Catholic Church. The RI was not only a declaration of one's religious conviction (because that would not suffice for many people to themselves be dragged down) but it was also a prerequisite which the church compulsorily demanded in order to allow a child for the first communion or the confirmation.[196] Since RI at schools was the only possibility, those who (whether due to their personal conviction, the pressure from family, or because of tradition) wanted their children to be confirmed, had to register them. The priests, or other active members of the church would in many cases remind the coming registration period and appeal on the parents to "fulfill their Christian duty." Moreover, after the first encountered problems with the administrative complications, some parishes assisted parents in successful registration. Some prepared a template to follow when filling the form, others gave the parents advice how to behave at the registration, such as not talking with the committee, or sending the form as a letter. Here we can see the changing pattern of the church-state relationship in late socialism. Church developed more contacts with believers, together with whom it in some cases formed nuclei of active religion.

However, the constant pressure on lowering the numbers of registrations, necessarily called for a response from the Catholic Church as the institution, which compared to all other churches only slowly developed an alternative to the RI in schools. Although, in the big cities private meetings of small groups with a priest or a member of the Lay Apostolate movement

[196] This explains why the highest number of children was registered in 2nd grade, as the year before the children go to the 1st communion, and in the 7th grade, a year before the confirmation. Almost all reports acknowledge this phenomenon.

were held secretly already in the 1960s,[197] it did not apply so much for the rural areas. A result of Vatican synod from 1977[198] brought a change in organization of RI, recommending to Church in Central and Eastern Europe to move the RI into the private family sphere. Hence, from 1977 there is a significant rise of domestication of religious education, now with the blessing of Vatican. Here I mean not religious education as upbringing in religious values, but the teachings of catechism, Church history required for the 1st communion or confirmation. Because family became the center of religious life and of religious upbringing already in the 1950s as the response to the restrictive politics towards churches. A common phrase used to be heard reacting to the intensified atheist education after 1968 claiming – "You comrades will give him education, we in family will give him upbringing. [199]

Though the state, through schools, informants in the localities, or through the secret police recognized this new and quickly spreading activity, they did not attack them systematically, only in some exemplary cases. Such was an example of Günter Matej Rompf, a priest in Bratislava who was systematically meeting with a group of Roma children. In 1981 he started with social work, trying to educate them in the basic principles of hygiene, and social skills, but since he did that in the parish house, he was sentenced and imprisoned. [200]

New forms of religious instruction took place in the privacy of apartments or parish houses where priests, laics, or parents held lectures and meetings for children, showed movies with religious topics, or led other activities with religious content, e.g. choir rehearsals.[201] In

[197] František Mikloško, *Nebudete ich môcť rozvrátiť.*
[198] Jiří Curha, "Stát, katolická církev a mládež v druhé dekádě normalizačního režimu."
[199] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266 "Too many children attending religious instruction." Radio Free Europe transcript of a broadcast of Rádio Hvězda, November 4, 1972.
[200] HU OSA 300-30-7, box 509. "Process with Matej Rompfl." Nov 21, 1981
[201] More on this in the Slovak context – Doelinger. *Turning Prayers into Protests.*
in Czech context Jiří Curha, "Stát, katolická církev a mládež v druhé dekádě normalizačního režimu." [State, catholic church and youth in second decade of normalisation regime.] in: *Ostrůvky svobody. Kulturní a občanské aktivity mladé generace v 80.letech v Československu.* [Islands of freedom. Cultural and civic activities of young generation in 1980s in Czechoslovakia.] edited by Miroslav Vaněk. (Praha : Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2002), 107-143.

summer months these groups usually organized camps for children. These camps were camouflaged as a family meeting, somewhere in the countryside. Besides that many priests adjusted the ritual, and implemented lessons for children into the masses, through catechization of sermons, or organizing children masses.[202] All these activities are signs that domestication of religious education/or the change of venue, was not a sign of disappearing religion. The modified form actually helped the Christians families to strengthen their mutual relationships, or the link to the church.

According to the report from Office for Religious Affairs, in 1985 about 70% of pupils "received religious education through different illegal forms outside the school."[203] However, not in every village developed an alternative to the school RI. Therefore the RI continued until 1989. During the registration period western media, the growing *secret church*, or Lay Apostolate encourage believers to register the children in places where no other option existed.

Hand in hand with the mobilization of church activity, the RI registration dynamics also shows a mobilization of believers - grouping of the parents and creating collective tactics for the registration. The secularizational endeavor of the state called for a patient persuasion and an individual work with believers. In practice, many times the convincing took place in front of a committee, an environment when the believer was alone facing a group. This led to grouping also on the side of believers, so that they do not stand alone when demonstrating their religious worldview.

In the descriptions of the responses to the oppressive treatment by the school in the state's reports, a tactics of mutual support notably stand out, mainly in the 1980s. In the archival collection there are letters signed by more parents, not only one couple, but by 18 parents in

[202] A very common acknowledgement in the reports from 1976. SNA MK OPVC 95, 96, 97, 98, 99.
[203] MK SSR SPVC box 97, Informácia - Prihlasovanie žiakov na vyučovanie náboženstva na ZDŠ v SSR v r. 1985/86

case of Raslavice, or 25 in case of Dolný Kubín.[204] Other example are counterfoils from registered priority mail via which nine families from Brezno sent on the same day the registration form in order to prevent the awkward situation at school. These traces might mean an initiative of a priest or an active lay member who organized a collective action, but it can also mean that parents grouped together to support each other, and to make the impression of a collective standing against the pressure of the school. In other cases the believers gain a support and credibility via sending the complaint through an institutional authority - a parish, or bishop office.[205] Although in the documents there are also complaints written by a single person, or a couple, however, situating the letters into a broader context of what the materials show can very often prove, that even these people had a supportive group behind them. Either these letters came from centers which appeared as strongly catholic communities,[206] or they refer to the same problem in the same place as other complaints,[207] or the letters were published in *samizdat* journals to be public. Such support groups were there to potentially help the person/family in case the act triggered further problems. Making the actions of challenging the state public, or including other people in the challenging, served as an encouraging instrument for the others to stand for their right.

Thirdly, the documents with information about the situation in enrollment for religious instruction (issued every year by the local, regional, and also all-country offices for religious affairs) are full of examples of parents from all around the country reporting the violations of the official directives and the imposed additional complications. The parents complained to parish offices, local municipalities, or to bishops, on the treatment they received in the school. These institutions advanced their reports to the Office for Church Affairs. The Office then had

[204] All present in SNA MK SR SPVC box 96. Cases of Dolný Kubín 1984, Raslavice 1984
[205] SNA MK SR SPVC box 96. Cases of Trnava, Raslavice, Šurany, and others.
[206] As was the case of Jana Mičiánová, since in Nová Dubnica developed an important center of the *secret church.*
[207] All present in SNA MK SR SPVC box 96. Cases of Dolný Kubín 1984.

to deal with the grievances and take a stand. When solving the problems, the Office stood in between two millstones, the official and unofficial stream of directives. Whereas the schools used these additional methods as a way to achieve the desired decrease in numbers, the Office as the institution established to supervise whether the "church and religious life in Czechoslovakia goes in line with the constitution,"[208] had to act according to the official rules. Therefore, when the office received and investigated a complaint, if none of the official directives were violated, the registration was valid and the school had to accept it. Since the majority of cases advanced to the Office were solved positively for the complaining families,[209] what encouraged others to do the same, if they felt the legislation was violated in their case.

The tactics of writing complaint letters was present from 1971 but became more common after 1977. The turmoil in society caused by Charta 77 and its aftermath, forced the state to watch more closely the application of official freedoms. Furthermore, it consecrated the language of human rights and legalism which became the tool for grasping the discrimination. Therefore for example in a report from 1979/80[210] the Office for Religious Affairs calls for adhering to the official directives shaping the RI enrollment and not creating additional bureaucratic obstacles for parents. The Office issued these requests in order to decrease the number of conflicts between schools and parents, since writing of complaint letters became a common tactics used by the parents and church. Moreover, these letters were more often addressed also to higher instances such as the Central Committee of the Communist Party, or even to the president. Also some of the conflictual cases reached the Western media.[211]

[208] "Law 218/1949, by which the State Office for Church Affairs is created" accessed June 6, 2015, http://www.upn.gov.sk/data/pdf/217-49.pdf

[209] In 1985 in Slovakia 31 complaints were directed to the Office (which is only a fraction of the complaints since some of them were already addressed at the local or regional level), and all were solved positively for the believers. SNA MK SR OPVC 96 Information about the process of enrollment for religious instruction in elementary schools in Slovak Socialist Republic, 1985/86.

[210] SNA MK SSR OPVC, box 96. Report from the Regional Office of Ministry of Education in the situation of religious instruction in schools in school year 1979/80.

[211] Several examples present in the HU OSA 300-30-7, box 266 – Reports on problems with registration for RI

The human rights movement also brought into consideration the issue of human dignity, which was suppressed by not adhering to human rights. In the first years after 1968 the complaints mentioned mainly the administrative obstacles which complicated the registration The writers of these letters called for rectification in their particular cases. In the 1980s the language and emphasis of the letters changed and mainly personal examples of humiliation and oppression of a believer's dignity in the meetings with the school structures were described. Although the letters described the subjective experience of an individual, they call the attention of the authorities to the treatment of believers in the socialist state in general. [212] This change demonstrates that in the 1980s believers started to emphasize the collectivity of believers, as opposing to the individual, private, one's own identity.

Finally, the process of enrollment itself required the active engagement of the parents, the signature and personal submission of the enrollment form. The fact that a significant number of children were registered every year shows that a considerable number of parents decided to actively declare their religious views notwithstanding the potential consequences. Going every year to the school with the enrollment form and experiencing the awkward situation then reinforced the parents' identities as religious persons who (due to the anticipated consequences) could not identify as fully fledged citizens of state socialism since they were not completely accepted by the state. As the letters of complaints then revealed, the conflicts and struggles around the registrations instigated the view which believers appropriated - the mutually opposite categories of us - the believers, the church, and them - the state.

The dynamics around the RI classes shows the process of mobilization of believers and church in the late socialist period. I argue, this mobilization process can be seen in the

[212] SNA MK SR OPVC, box 97, Anna Pružincová, "List prezidentovi Husákovi" [A letter to president Husák.] 1986. "*Year by year **I** encounter this situation. It is extremely awkward and exhausting for **me**. Therefore I would ask you for a short explanation, **whether catholic parents need to fight for their freedom of religion in such a way** ."* (emphasized by JK).

framework of *deprivatization* of religion. As Chapter 2 but also the school's policies around RI demonstrated, the state tolerated religion which was private, hidden. However, to register a child one had to declare religion, not hide it. Similarly, the declaring of what was supposed to be hidden, triggered forming collectives of believers. And finally, parents commenting and complaining on the treatment of believers receive in the socialist state, RI dynamics reached out to the public sphere and politics. All these aspects, I argue, are moments of *deprivatizing* religion, moments which changed the position of religion in society. That's why this small scale happening around RI sheds some light on the phenomenon of *deprivatization*, as described by Casanova.

Conclusion

When José Casanova entered the discussion about the process of secularization, he challenged two out of three propositions of the secularization theory. Firstly, the changing role of religion in the 1980s assured him that the process of modernization of society did not ultimately generate disappearance of religion. Secondly, he questioned the postulate about privatization of religion, in which religion is believed to become an individual affair, a subjective interpretation of life and world. Casanova argues that such process of privatization is not an inevitable consequence of the differentiation of the public sphere from religion, but, he claims, it is a historical option.

Moving from the general sociological theory to a particular historical situation in Slovak socialist society throughout the normalization period the question of privatization of religion gets a different dimension. The communist government adhering to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism regarded religion as the remnant of backwardness, which would disappear as the society reaches a higher stage of historical development. However, religion for communists was more than a supposedly disappearing phenomenon, it was an adversary against which they fought. Through policies of secularism the state took over the various roles of churches, which decreased the position of churches in society; through secularization endeavor the state claimed its aim to achieve a secular society, in which religion would be substituted by "reasonable and scientifically proven knowledge."

Although religion was legally granted, the experience of believers were fashioned by a *model of acceptable religion,* a combination of legal status of religion with practices of the state against religion and believers. According to this model, I argue, religion was accepted when it was kept private. Since reaching out of the model could lead to persecution, many people developed tactics to conceal religion. In such setting privatizing religion in Slovak

socialist context means the process of *making* religion private. Privatization that took place in socialist Slovakia was therefore not corresponding to privatization in the general secularization theory. People who would call themselves believers did not *privatize* religion and religious practice because of developing a different spirituality, in which church or religious practice would lose its meaning. Privatization of religion and religious practice was the (sometimes implicit sometimes explicit) demand which the state through its agents pursued, and also it was solution for diminishing the possibility of stigmatization in society or discrimination.

Along and in relationship to the *privatization* of religion, also another process appeared in Slovakia during normalization, the *deprivatization* of religion. On a bigger scale, it was the *secret church* which represented this phenomenon which Casanova theorized. It was *secret church* as a mass movement which brought religion from the "assigned place in the private sphere" and through which religion "entered the undifferentiated sphere of civil society [in case of late socialism in Slovakia only forming future civil society] to take part in the ongoing processes of contestation, discursive legitimation and redrawing of boundaries."[213] However, it was not exclusively the *secret church.* On a small scale of socialist schools we can see the small steps and processes of *deprivatizing* religion as carried out by believers. Although the mobilization of believers in the context of RI or in the the *secret church* was not a universal phenomenon which would include a majority of Catholic believers, it significantly contributed to the change of discourse on religion in Slovak society.

[213] Casasnova, *Public Religions in the Modern World,* 65-66.

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Appendices

Appendix I.
Religious affiliation according to census, according to Pešek, Barnovský. *Pod kuratelou moci.*

Year	1930		1950		1991	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total number of inhabitants	3,329,793	100	3,442,317	100	5,274,335	100
Not claiming any religion	16,890	0.51	9,679	0.28	515,551	9.77
Total number of believers	3,301,475	99.15	3,421,916	99.41	4,758,804	90.23
Roman Catholic	2,384,355	71.61	2,623,198	76.20	3,187,383	60.43
Lutheran	400,258	12.02	443,251	12.88	326,397	6.19
Other Christians	380,125	11.42	347,991	10.11	314,285	5.96
Jewish	136,737	5.73	7,476	0.22	912	0.02
Other					11,992	0.23
Unspecified	11,428	0.34	10,722	0.31	917,835	17.40

Appendix II. Indicators of religiosity, according to SNA MK SR OPVC, boxes 95-99.

Year		1968	1969	1970	1971	1976	1983	1986
Slovak Socialist Republic as a whole	**Total number of born children**	76,364	79,653	80,565	82,951	99,757	91,386	86,659
	Numer of baptized children	72,212	75,530	75,004	75,730	80,528	65,665	61,509
	% of baptized children, from the total number of born children	94.56	94.82	93.01	91.29	80.72	71.85	70.98
	Total number of weddings	33,782	34,858	35,939	38,117	44,089	40,056	38,316
	Numer of church weddings	27,756	30,060	29,754	29,209	23,143	22,016	21,552
	% of church weddings, from the total number weddings	82.16	86.24	82.79	76.63	52.49	54.96	56.25
	Total number of funerals	38,055	40,579	42,192	42,820	45,402	52,108	53,000
	Numer of church funerals	35,152	38,467	39,640	38,340	40,100	45,888	43,773
	% of religious funerals, from the total number funerals	92.37	94.80	93.95	89.54	88.32	88.06	82.59
Area of Bratislava, the capital	**% of baptized children**				90.37	68.27	65.75	67.90
	% of church weddings				60.98	29.01	28.68	26.90
	% of church funerals				89.98	78.78	71.79	70.62
District of Western Slovakia	**% of baptized children**				80.23	79.92	63.95	66.50
	% of church weddings				69.00	50.50	52.35	50.80
	% of church funerals				99.84	89.02	90.20	79.70
District of Central Slovakia	**% of baptized children**				99.84	80.14	73.08	67.90
	% of church weddings				86.49	54.60	55.41	61.60
	% of church funerals				97.58	87.90	87.90	83.10
District of Eastern Slovakia	**% of baptized children**				94.79	85.06	80.04	79.00
	% of church weddings,				79.47	59.90	64.72	64.90
	% of church funerals				94.64	90.34	89.52	89.30

Appendix III.
Religious instruction in Slovakia, according to SNA MK SR OPVC, boxes 95-99.

School year	Slovak Socialist Republic as a whole				
	Total number of pupils	**Pupils registered for the religious instruction**	**% of pupils registered for RI, from the total number of pupils**	**Number of children of communist functionaries registered for RI**	**% from all pupils registered for RI**
1968/69			39.78		
1969/70			61.60		
1970/71		274,038	53.11		
1971/72	507,431	236,279	46.56		
1972/73	506,104	203,612	40.23	12,155	5.97
1973/74	501,998	175,487	34.96	8,522	4.86
1974/75	487,964	142,820	29.27	6,219	4.35
1975/76	480,278	120,979	25.19	4,035	3.34
1976/77	469,798	101,110	21.52	3,496	3.46
1978/79	462,168	92,512	20.02		
1979/80	459,958	81,163	17.65		
1980/81	461,166	81,729	17.72		
1981/82	472,389	81,460	17.24		
1982/83	501,338	80,736	16.10		
1983/84	520,887	81,501	15.65		
1984/85	537,553	80,926	15.05		
1985/86	552,592	81,772	14.80		
1986/87	544,740	80,614	14.80		
1987/88	564,320	81,340	14.41		
1989/90	554,834	133,525	24.07		

Appendix IV. Religious instruction according in districts, according to SNA MK SR OPVC, boxes 95-99.

School year	Area of Bratislava, the capital			District of Western Slovakia			District of Central Slovakia			District of Eastern Slovakia		
	Total number of pupils	**Pupils registered for the religious instruction**	**%**	**Total number of pupils**	**Pupils registered for the religious instruction**	**%**	**Total number of pupils**	**Pupils registered for the religious instruction**	**%**	**Total number of pupils**	**Pupils registered for the religious instruction**	**%**
1971/72	24,684	3,175	12.86	170,204	86,755	50.97	160,391	77,189	48.13	153,152	69,160	45.16
1972/73	26,463	2,539	9.59	166,543	75,250	45.18	160,313	66,250	41.33	152,785	59,573	38.99
1973/74	25,741	1,640	6.37	165,120	65,955	39.94	159,742	56,608	35.44	153,795	51,284	33.35
1974/75	25,964	818	3.15	158,556	53,968	34.04	152,626	47,792	31.31	150,818	40,242	26.68
1975/76	26,060	535	2.05	156,609	44,824	28.62	149,378	40,852	27.35	148,231	34,768	23.46
1976/77	26,554	357	1.34	152,903	36,244	23.70	144,276	35,872	24.68	146,065	28,637	19.61
1980/81	29,340	197	0.67	152,604	27,334	17.91	145,589	31,213	21.44	144,856	22,716	15.68
1982/83	14,048	2,030	14.45	162,697	27,031	16.61	153,394	31,527	20.55			
1983/84	35,459	142	0.40	169,518	27187	16.04	158,972	32,568	20.49	156,928	21,604	13.77
1984/85	38,397	97	0.25	174,798	27,194	15.56	163,266	32,284	19.77	161,092	21,351	13.25
1985/86	40,189	70	0.17	178,800	27,828	15.56	168,827	32,731	19.39	164,776	21,143	12.83
1986/87	44,434	60	0.14	180,829	27,278	15.08	173,132	33,029	19.08	163,990	20,067	12.24
1987/88	44,434	60	0.14	180,829	27,278	15.08	173,132	33,029	19.08	165,925	20,973	12.64
1989/90	45,077	494	1.10	175,425	42,610	24.29	169,124	46,457	27.47	165,059	43,712	26.48