

**Christian Democratic Option:
On the Logic of Ideological Persistence**

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Abstract

Recent scholarship in comparative politics suggests that the stability of the center-right and its ability to counter hard-right challenges are crucial for the survival of European liberal democracy. *The Christian Democratic Option* contributes to this debate by offering an Eastern European perspective, focusing on a region from which many issues for the contemporary right originate. Despite its significance, the diverse conservative legacies of Eastern Europe remain underexplored. My study fills this gap by examining the Christian democratic tradition through a longitudinal case study of Czechoslovakia and its successor states, the regionally most successful Christian democratic projects. This dissertation proposes a new approach to understanding Christian democracy, exploring how this ideology persisted despite profound historical disruptions. It uncovers the untold story of how Christian democracy served as the central proxy through which liberal and anti-liberal scripts traveled to Czechoslovakia. By examining the language used by Christian democrats to confront post-fascist, communist, and post-communist regimes, I provide a much-needed comprehensive account of the mainstream right in Czechoslovakia. I approached this task through punctual history and institutionally embedded hermeneutical analysis to reconstruct the nearly forgotten Christian democratic canon, zooming in on key moments of ideological relaunches, canon articulations, and local adaptations. I argue that Christian democracy should be re-evaluated as the major right-wing ideology in Czechoslovakia in the latter half of the twentieth century. I demonstrate its alignment with Western counterparts and its role in articulating liberal ideas within Czechoslovak discourse. Finally, I propose to use “Christian democracy” as a broad analytical concept for studying the interactions between Christian political theologies, liberal democracy, nationalism, and socialism across various contexts to address biases in existing revisionist scholarship on Christian democracy.

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Introduction

On February 2, 1948, just weeks before the Communist Party took control of Czechoslovakia, Simeon Ghelfand, a top advisor to the local People's Party, entered the notorious Secret Service headquarters in Prague. He was called upon to explain the content of a lecture he gave a few days earlier in a small town in eastern Bohemia, titled *Christian: How Can You Be Marxist?* During the interrogation, Ghelfand acknowledged: "I argued that scientific materialism lacks objective foundations. I also stated that if any political majority were to implement the principles of dialectical materialism in our Republic, it would violate natural and human civil rights. A state governed by the popular will and not by objective norms of law and justice ceases to be a legal state and, as St. Augustine said, becomes a rogue's nest."¹ Ghelfand continued, "I also stated the scientific fact that Karl Marx was a student of the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. I also specified that Hegel's state philosophy was adopted by the German philosopher Othmar Spann and the Italian philosopher Sorel, whose teachings became the ideological blueprint of the fascist Italian state. From this, I deduced that if fascism and Marxism have the same spiritual father, then they must be in some kind of relationship."² Following the Communist Party's *coup d'état* at the end of February 1948 and continuing police harassment, Ghelfand escaped Czechoslovakia through the mountains to Bavaria and became a vocal anti-communist émigré.

Twenty years later, in July 1968, during the height of the Czechoslovak Prague Spring, Artur Pavelka, a Dominican philosopher, and organizer of pre-communist academic Catholic Action, was making his way to the meeting with the board of the only surviving non-socialist party. As a recently appointed chair of the party's Ideological Committee, he was tasked to

¹ Quoted in Cholínský, J. (2015). Sociální nauka katolické církve jako zbroj ve studené válce. In: *Vyjádření úcty a vděčnosti*. Edited by Žáček, P. (eds.), 204-237. Prague: VHU, 208.

² Ibid.

formulate a new party program that would reflect the sea changes brought by the “socialism with a human face,” the Second Vatican Council, and Marxist-Christian dialogue. “The core of the new program must become the respect for the unavoidable dignity of the person and universal human rights,” Pavelka contended. Christians should contribute to building “plural socialism” in the spirit of “dialogue” and “convergence” and strengthen the eclipse between Christianity and Marxism that must hinge upon “human dignity.”³ Nevertheless, Pavelka’s ideological proposal broke down a few weeks later when the Warsaw Pact armies invaded Czechoslovakia and halted any prospects of Christian politics.

Moving swiftly forward to the wake of the Eastern European *Annus Mirabilis* of 1989, on November 2, 1990, Anton Neuwirth, a former underground Church activist and newly appointed chair of the Ideological Commission for the Christian Democratic Movement, delivered an address to the party convention in Košice. In his speech, Neuwirth argued that the Movement must “depart from enduring, humanistic values, hierarchically organized in accordance with natural and supernatural laws.” He stressed that “only the concept of the human person embodies the full dignity of human life, from conception to death”⁴ and can be protected only through the “subsidiary organized democracy” against “totalitarian systems.”⁵ The convention approved the principles articulated by Neuwirth, and they remain central to the party's identity to this day.

How did such political vocabulary uttered in such diverse historical settings endure the many interruptions that Czechoslovakia experienced in the twentieth century? Beyond the shared Christian faith of their nearly forgotten proponents, did these languages possess a more profound, underlying connection? Can we think of a distinctive canon and political theory that

³ Pavelka, A. (1968). Nástin referátu. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40, 20.

⁴ Neuwirth, A. (1990). Ľudská sooba v centre nášho programu. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 17, 3-4.

⁵ Neuwirth, A. (1990). Ľudské spoločenstvá. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 18, 14-15.

brings them together? The ambition of this dissertation is to persuade the reader that these historical languages could and should be studied through a unifying framework: Christian democratic ideology and the way in which it adjusted and shaped post-fascist, communist, and post-communist orders.

In recent years, scholars in comparative politics have argued that the stability of the center Right and its capacity to counter radical Right challengers are essential for the survival of European liberal democracy. Even institutionalists believe that the conflict is not limited to party competition but takes place in the realm of political ideas.⁶ In this dissertation, I offer an Eastern European perspective, an area from which many issues for the contemporary Right originate. Yet, we know very little about the past and present of the diverse regional conservative legacies.⁷ I enter the debate by highlighting the often-overlooked Christian democratic ideology, providing a longitudinal case study of one of the most successful Christian democratic projects in the region: Czechoslovakia and its successor states.⁸

The *Christian Democratic Option* proposes a new way of thinking about Christian democratic ideology in Eastern Europe and beyond. It explains how the native Christian democratic ideology outlived the sweeping historical disruptions that rocked Czechoslovakia's relatively short history, including regime changes (autocratization and re-democratization),

⁶ Ziblatt, D., Gidron, N. (2019). Center-Right Political Parties in Advanced Democracies. *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, 17-35; Plattner, M. (2019). Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right. *Journal of Democracy*, 30, n. 1, 5-19; Grzymala-Busse, A. (2019). The Failure of Europe's Mainstream Parties. *Journal of Democracy* 30, n. 4, 35-47; Bale, T., Kaltwasser, R. (eds.). (2021). *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁷ This is an even more pressing issue that Eastern European parties grew into a dominant, although highly varied, component of the European People's Party (EPP), a key component in European politics.

⁸ We know little about these regional protagonists' institutional and ideological specificity because of the comparative politics assertion that the Christian democratic tradition is absent or evanescent in the region. This observation is dominantly anchored in the Polish case, an outlier that overshadows the sub-regional variation. See Bale T., Szczerbiak, A. (2008). Why is there no Christian democracy in Poland—and why should we care? *Party Politics* 14, n. 4, 479-500.

border shifts, ethnic transfers, economic and social restructuring, or communist homogenizing cultural policies. It narrates the untold story of how it came about that Christian democracy has served as one of the central proxies through which liberal and anti-liberal scripts traveled to Czechoslovakia and were diffused by local ambassadors.⁹

I present the reader with a comprehensive account of the much-needed history of the mainstream Right in Czechoslovakia from post-war to post-socialism, chronicling its remarkable transformations *vis à vis* the challenges coming from political adversaries ranging across extremes of the political spectrum. The thesis offers a historical analysis of the twentieth-century development of Christianity in Czechoslovakia and its responses to the tests of modern mass politics.¹⁰

I tell a novel story of Christian democratic institutional and ideological survival. Unlike Western Europe, where Christian democracy became the central governing force after 1945 with clearly discernible actors, canons, principles, and values, the Czechoslovak case embodies a more intricate story. Local Christian democratic parties played a key oppositional role in the postwar, waging an isolated struggle against Communist-led state capture. Throughout the autocratic communist rule, Christian democratic exiles and local counter-elite networks persisted and supplied the ideological content for emerging democratic opposition under late-state socialist rule. After 1989, the emerging Christian democratic parties played a prominent

⁹ I demonstrate that Christian democracy served as a platform for segments of the Catholic and Protestant milieus to accept tenets of liberal democracy even if not taking all liberal modules onboard.

¹⁰ Over the last decade, a significant shift occurred in the study of twentieth-century Roman Catholicism. A new wave of revisionist historiography emerged that bridged the gap between two traditional approaches: an often-uncritical ecclesiastical history and secular accounts that found Roman Catholicism insignificant. This integrative approach provided complex accounts of Catholicism and its multifaceted role in a rapidly changing world, allowing historians and scholars to take stock of Catholic political theory and the church's impact on global history without reducing it to simplistic narratives. See for instance, Grzymala-Busse, A. (2012). Why comparative politics should take religion (more) seriously. *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, 421-442; Chappel, J. (2013). Beyond Tocqueville: A plea to stop “taking religion seriously.” *Modern Intellectual History* 10, n. 3, 697 – 708.

role in democratic and economic transformation and forged the new post-communist social and political order.

This long-run historical perspective seeks to confront one of the big questions in comparative politics: the persistence and change of political phenomena.¹¹ The liminality and uncertainty that marked Czechoslovak and Eastern European history in the twentieth century provide a unique opportunity to study continuity despite change. Yet comparativists have broached the persistence problem through the ideational perspective only in passing due to the overriding institutionalist perspective and the methodological challenge of measuring the effects of intangible variables, including political ideology. Using the example of Christian democratic ideological evolution and adaptation across regime change, I put forward an alternative perspective, tracing ideological persistence through institutionally embedded punctual and nominalist history and semantic analysis.

Using the example of Christian democratic ideological evolution from postwar to post-socialism, my guiding puzzle is how to assert the endurance of political ideology across regime change. To unwrap it, I ask a set of interrelated questions: how do we conceptualize “Christian democracy,” i.e., How can we corral the historically and geographically diverse mix of moderate Christian-based political projects under one heading? What were the continuous elements of Christian democratic ideology in Czechoslovakia? What were the transmission mechanisms that assured ideological continuity across time and space? Who were the agents of transmission?

The Czechoslovak case is worthy of attention as it has rarely been approached in the debates about Christian democracy or discussions on the nexus of modern politics and religion. Despite Czechoslovakia constituting an exceptional case for Eastern European Christian

¹¹ See for instance, Kreuzer, M. (2023). *The Grammar of Time*. Cambridge: CUP.

democracy, it remains underexplored in both English-language literature and Czech and Slovak-language studies.

Although I primarily concentrate on the Czechoslovak case, I refer to the development of transnational Christian democratic political thought to challenge the dominant narrative of Eastern European intellectual “backwardness.”¹² I contend that the reception and adaptation of postwar European Christian democratic political theory elevated local political Catholicism from a peripheral and provincial fate to the transnational movement. I aim to indicate how the Czechoslovak case allows us to see other facets of Christian democratic projects that can be relevant in different national contexts or global settings.

I counter the widespread perception of Czechoslovakia, particularly the Czech part, as a protestant country. Czechoslovakia was a Catholic country; it constituted the Eastern periphery of the European Catholic belt. Although Catholicism was an official religion only until 1918 (and briefly during the Slovak State 1939-1944) and since then has been under pressure from various secular regimes that ruled over the Czechoslovak territory, it has remained a reservoir of vocabulary and symbols for various political projects. The *Christian Democratic Option* aims to persuade the reader that Czechoslovakia stands for an empirically and theoretically challenging case.

Objectives

I have a fourfold ambition. The first is to put Christian democracy in Czechoslovakia on the academic map by introducing new empirical evidence. I demonstrate the proximity of the Czechoslovak case to the European Christian democratic ideological family. In this sense, the project offers a modest answer to the longstanding question of the convergence between

¹² See Schöpflin, G. (1990). The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe. *Daedalus* 119, n. 1, 55-90.

Western and the “other” Europe,¹³ complicates generalizations on the relationship between religion and (il)liberalism in Eastern Europe, supplements the literature on conservative actors in democratization,¹⁴ and adds to the research on the history of political ideas writ large.¹⁵

Second, the project is a sourcebook for comparativists and intellectual historians. It supplements missing data on Christian democracy in Eastern Europe that are, for instance, missing in programmatic datasets (e.g., the *Manifesto Project*). I read Christian democracy as a unique phenomenon that links ideas and specific political platforms, and that has had a significant real-world impact. Hence, I catalog, amongst other things, the key protagonists and the cases of ideological institutionalization in party programs, party messaging, and issue positions.¹⁶

I provide the reader with a collective intellectual bibliography of political activists on the fringes of academic interest. I trace how these men and women - Catholics and Protestants alike - continually reimagined and reinvented ways to be politically engaged amid dramatic historical changes, crafting viable political projects to compete in modern politics. By bringing together around two dozen thinkers, I aim to establish a Czechoslovak Christian democratic canon. This endeavor inevitably highlights some figures while placing others in the background. My minimalist definition of a “Christian democrat” is someone who is openly

¹³ Rupnik, J. (2015). *1989 as a Political World Event*. London: Routledge.

¹⁴ Ziblatt, D. (2017). *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*. Cambridge: CUP. Ziblatt chronicled how the origins and persistence of democratic regimes in Western Europe until the Second World War in Germany and the UK were contingent upon the role of moderate right-wing political actors and their ability to hegemonize the right, limiting the power of far-right challengers.

¹⁵ Trencsényi, B. (eds.). (2018). *A History of Modern Political Thought. Part II*. Oxford: OUP.

¹⁶ For a more elaborate critique of insufficient data sets and Eastern European specificities concerning ideological space and party competition, see Savage, L., M. (2014). Who gets in? Ideology and government membership in Central and Eastern Europe, *Party Politics* 20, n. 4, 547–562; Tavits, M., Letki, N. (2009). When Left Is Right: Party Ideology and Policy in Post-Communist Europe. *American Political Science Review* 103, n. 4, 555-569.

Christian, upholds democratic values, actively participates in a political party or movement, and contributes intellectually to political discourse.

Third, I introduce a context-specific and time-bound reconstruction of the conceptual genealogy of what I identified as persistent Christian democratic core ideological concepts. I construct the ideological composition through the notions of (i) Christian personalist anthropology linked to “human dignity,” “human rights,” “responsibility,” and “conscience” talk, (ii) substantive democracy associated with “militant democracy” and “anti-totalitarian” theory; (iii) Christian social ontology correlated with the notions of “natural order,” “subsidiarity,” and “family;” (iv) civic nationalism in the form of Christian-tinted “patriotism” and civilisationism intertwined with “Christendom,” “Westernism” and “Europeanism;” (v) and social capitalism that combines “solidarity” with the ordo- or neo-liberal models.¹⁷

Finally, in an attempt to globalize the Czechoslovak case study, I propose using “Christian democracy” as an analytical concept that allows for study, across different geographical, temporal, and political contexts, the mode of relationships between Christian political theologies, liberal democratic scripts and forms of nationalism and democratic socialism. The concept of Christian democracy should serve as an umbrella category, a synecdoche that accommodates diverse iterations of moderate Christian-framed political projects. Such a conceptualization addresses the biases in the existing revisionist scholarship on Christian democracy (see the literature review).

¹⁷ In presupposing the existence of ideological core concepts, I draw inspiration from Michael Freeden’s morphological approach and Reinhart Koselleck *Grundbegriffe*’s project that refers to the “irreplaceable” social and political vocabulary of modern politics dating back to the *Sattelzeit*. See Richter, M. (2006). Introduction: Translation of Reinhart Koselleck’s “Krise,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, n. 2, 343- 356.

Literature Review

The *Christian Democratic Option* contributes to two bodies of literature: party politics and conceptual history.

Party Politics

I build on the scholarship that recognizes parties as the principal movers of political processes.¹⁸ The literature that attempts to characterize party politics in Eastern Europe comes, in general, in two flavors: the “historical legacy” and the “genetic” approaches.¹⁹

The “historical legacy” approach underscores the longstanding institutional and socio-economic processes, interrogating the (often distant) past to understand contemporary political outcomes. It focuses on the pre-communist and communist periods as determinants for post-communist developments. Scholars of “new historicism”²⁰ integrate the region into broader European democratization and modernization processes.²¹ At the same time, however, they

¹⁸ Huntington, S. (1991). How Do Countries Democratize? *Political Science Quarterly* 56, 579-616.

¹⁹ Pridham, G. (2014). Post-Communist Democratizations and Historical Legacy Problems. *Central Europe* 12, n. 1. 82-98.

²⁰ Capoccia, G. and Ziblatt, D. (2010). The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond. *Comparative Political Studies* 43, n. 8-9, 931-968; Ekiert, G. and Ziblatt, D. (2013). Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe One Hundred Years On. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 27, n. 1, 90-107; Ekiert, G. (2015). Three Generations of Research on Post Communist Politics—A Sketch. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, n. 2, 323-337; Kubik, J. (2015). Between Contextualization and Comparison: A Thorny Relationship Between East European Studies and Disciplinary “Mainstreams.” *East European Politics and Societies*. 29, n. 2, 352-365. In theorizing the regime change, this literature followed scholars who emphasized the role of *history* in their studies of political evolutions and regime changes. See Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some Social Requisites of Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 53, 69–105; Linz, J., J. (1997). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

²¹ My work is also consistent with Capoccia and Ziblatt’s suggestions to include new, underappreciated variables in the study of democratization, going beyond the pre-dominant institutionalist research. Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010). The Historical Turn, 948-951.

invoke history to make Eastern Europe a distinct phenomenon²² by underlining the unique inheritance of the pre-communist and communist orders.²³

New historicism approaches persistence through the concept of historical legacy as a formula that brings past and present together. I build on Jason Wittenberg's work,²⁴ which specifies three factors that indicate historical legacy across regime change. First, the studied political outcome cannot be (fully) explainable from contemporaneous factors and circumstances. There must be a reference from the present to the past. Second, an interrelationship must be clear between an outcome occurring in the former and succeeding regimes. Third, a specific mechanism that relates to and moves the antecedent to the outcome must be identified.

Additionally, Wittenberg proposed a typology of different pathways that indicate whether the studied outcome existed in all three periods (pre-communist, communist, post-communist), only one consecutive period, or two periods interrupted by the authoritarian rule. I propose that the Christian democratic legacy persisted in all three historical periods, and in Wittenberg's pathways typology, it falls under the rubric of "potential pre-communist legacy."²⁵

However, historical political science lacks a precise definition of criteria that would indicate persistence despite the constant flux of political phenomena. As a rule, it falls into the essentialist trap, working with a taken-for-granted premise of ontological equivalence in cross-temporal comparison. The legacy literature assumes the existence of a cluster of core features

²² Pop-Eleches, G. (2007). Historical Legacies and Post-Communist Regime Change. *The Journal of Politics* 69, n. 4, 908–09.

²³ New historicism assumes that the pre-communist legacies "may even carry more weight for some dimensions of change than the communist past." Ekiert, Ziblatt (2013). *Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, 93.

²⁴ Wittenberg, J. (2015). Conceptualizing Historical Legacies. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 29, n. 2, 366–378.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 372.

or attributes of a phenomenon across time to indicate persistence. In other words, it suffers from ahistorical claims. Besides, there is an evident absence of scholarly consensus on what constitutes the essence of a given phenomenon and an inability to make sense of even fundamental changes.²⁶

The historical legacy approach privileges the examination of organizational and institutional continuity. Although these variables undoubtedly carry explanatory traction, they eclipse the agency of political actors and the actual contents of politics. Furthermore, institutionalism abstracts from the semantical level of analysis, treating political ideology as an epiphenomenon, a side effect of economic and social processes.²⁷ Hence, the historical legacy approach resigns to resolve the puzzle of ideological continuity.²⁸ In the following paragraphs, I review several historical legacy accounts that offer the most proximate answers to the puzzle of ideological persistence in Eastern Europe in the twentieth century to document the necessity to spend more time on the “intangibles” to portray Eastern European politics.²⁹

Kitschelt and his co-authors’ seminal interpretation of the post-communist parties’ formation sought to supplement the standard cleavage theory.³⁰ It gleaned together several factors that determined the divergent post-communist outcomes in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria. These included the stage of cultural, social, and economic development, the spectrum of the pre-communist and communist regimes, the character of the 1989 exit from autocratic rule, and the post-communist institutional design. Through these intertwined factors, Kitschelt and his co-authors explained the “return to diversity” on the

²⁶ Wittenberg, J. (2024). *Logic(s) of Historical Persistence*. CES Research Seminar (10.3.2024).

²⁷ Berman, S. (2001). Ideas, Norms and Culture. *Comparative Politics* 33, n. 2, 231-250.

²⁸ See Berman, S. (2006). *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe’s Twentieth Century*. N.Y.: CUP.

²⁹ Stokes, G. (1993). Is it Possible to be Optimistic about Eastern Europe? *Social Research* 60, n. 4, 685-704.

³⁰ Kitschelt, H. (eds.). (1999). *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Cooperation*. Cambridge, MA: CUP.

subregional level, the divergent forms of party formation, and patterns of party system competition.

In the Kitschelt et al. typology of post-communist party systems, Czechoslovakia was placed on one pole of the spectrum, being the most socioeconomically advanced country (alongside Eastern Germany), having a robust pre-communist democratic political tradition with a structured party system, interrupted by one of the most oppressive communist regimes (dubbed “bureaucratic-authoritarian”), that was replaced in 1989 by a peaceful regime transition (replacement of political elites).³¹ These factors represented the best conditions for the emergence of highly developed programmatic competition early on, with unreformed left and social democrats on one side of the political spectrum and conservative or Christian democratic parties on the other.³² Kitschelt and his co-authors also observed that the programmatic competition in such party systems was close to the Western European model. Nevertheless, Kitschelt’s work overshadowed the actual content of politics and the strategic choices of political actors in exploiting these legacies.

Grzymala-Busse³³ supplemented Kitschelt’s work on post-communist party formation by focusing on the electoral (un)success of regional Christian democratic parties through the perspective of pre-communist legacies. She relativized the state-of-the-art works on Christian

³¹ In the Kitschelt typology, Hungary and Poland combined developed modernization, a “national-accommodationist” authoritarian regime, and negotiated exist that paved the ground for the emergence of the splinter communist parties prone to pro-market reformism and populist and ruralist conservative traditions.

³² Kitschelt and his co-authors observed that the programmatic competition in such party systems was close to the Western European model. For an opposite argument, see Innes, A. (2002). Party competition in post-communist Europe: The great electoral lottery. *Comparative Politics* 35, n. 1, 85–104.

³³ Grzymala-Busse, A. (2013). Why there is (almost) no Christian democracy in Post-communist Europe? *Party Politics* 19, n. 2, 319–342.

democracy by Kalyvas³⁴ or Kalyvas and van Kersbergen,³⁵ who argued that there is no Christian democracy in post-communist countries, grounding their claim in reference to Bale and Szerbiak's study.³⁶ I build on Grzymala-Busse's captivating finding that the electoral success of Christian democratic parties in post-communist countries did not necessarily hinge on current (i) popular religiosity, (ii) the structure of state-church relations,³⁷ or (iii) the cooperation between Christian democratic parties and the institutional churches,³⁸ but that legacies mattered.

Grzymala-Busse determined the varied success of post-communist Christian democracy by the ability of self-identified Christian democratic parties to refer to historical records of successful interwar state- and nation-building, governmental capacity, support of democracy, moderate positions, or non-clerical orientation. Only such a reservoir of interwar legacies permitted the exploitation of the “Christian democratic” brand “beyond the religious milieu” after 1989. The interwar legacy facilitated an “electoral boost” and coalition potential

³⁴ Kalyvas, S. (1996). *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

³⁵ Kalyvas, S., van Kersbergen, K. (2010). Christian democracy. *The Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 183–209. See also Pelinka, A. (2004). European Christian Democracy in Comparison. In: *Christian Democracy in Europe Since 1945: Volume 2*. Edited by Gehler, M., 169-181. N.Y.: Routledge.

³⁶ Bale and Szerbiak explained why there is no “genuine” Christian democratic party in Poland after 1989, scaling down the social determinism of cleavage theory. They argued that Christian democracy does not automatically arise from society, claiming that “sponsors” and institutions are crucial for facilitating the necessary resources for the emergence of a political party. In this case, the Polish Roman Catholic Church and Catholic lay movements were reluctant to lend support to a concrete political project. For a survey of failures to institutionalize a Christian democratic party in Poland, see also Bale, T, and Szerbiak, A. (2018). Explaining the Absence of Christian Democracy in Contemporary Poland. In *Christian democracy Across the Iron Curtain*. Edited by Kosicki, P., Łukasiewicz S, 232-411. Cham: Springer International Publishing. More recently, Hien made a similar remark. Hien, J. (2020): “European integration and the reconstitution of socioeconomic ideologies: Protestant ordoliberalism vs social Catholicism.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 17, pp. 1466-4429.

³⁷ See Kalyvas, S. (1996). *The Rise of Christian democracy*.

³⁸ See Warner, C., M. (2000). *Confessions of an Interest Group the Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

in the first two post-communist elections.³⁹ Grzymala-Busse assertion of similarity over time is thus a strategic usage of the past by political parties.

I expand Grzymala-Busse's longitudinal perspective and her nominalist conceptualization of Christian democratic ideology as a label⁴⁰ to come closer to the actual historical evolution of local Christian democratic protagonists and ideology. I go beyond Grzymala-Busse's essentialist assumption that the interwar confessional Czech and Slovak people's parties can be easily equalized with the late twentieth-century Christian democratic projects. The interwar confessional parties adopted anything but secular and, in the Slovak case, moderate positions. The parties lacked the lay character and were not deploying the "Christian democratic" brand. As I will show in the chapter on the pre-communist legacy, the Christian democratic parties in Czechoslovakia formed ideologically and, to some extent, institutionally only after 1945, mirroring broader European trends.⁴¹

Second, I relativize Grzymala-Busse's emphasis on the interwar context with institutional and ideological examinations of the communist era to account for the existence of other post-1989 Christian democratic parties. Third, by reconstructing the transnational links and ideological transmission between Czechoslovak Christian democratic protagonists and their Western European counterparts, I revise Grzymala-Busse's finding that the "post-communist Christian democracy appears to be a different creature altogether from its West

³⁹ Grzymala-Busse (2013). Why there is (almost) no Christian Democracy, 326.

⁴⁰ Following the *Comparative Political Manifestos Project* coding for Christian democratic families, Grzymala-Busse defines Christian democratic ideology as composed of the following set of random features: universality, solidarity, subsidiarity, and independence from the Church hierarchy.

⁴¹ The dominant force in Slovak politics, Hlinka's People's Party, grew into an extremist clero-fascist party in the 1930s and was abolished after 1944 due to its cooperation with the Nazi regime. See, for instance, Ward, J., M. (2013). *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Lorman, T. (2019). *The Making of Slovak People's Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early twentieth-century Europe*. London: Bloomsbury.

European eponymous parties.”⁴² I do so by showing the common ideological field between East and West.

Another example demonstrating the necessity of supplementing the legacy approach with a semantically oriented ideological perspective is Enyedi’s⁴³ study of the long-run persistence of the Hungarian People’s Party that outlived the communist era. He introduced the concept of the “subcultural party” to underline the party’s enduring linkages to society (associations, intellectual networks) that sustained the organizational infrastructure and aided the party’s (re)formation post-1989. Although I share the author’s focus on these actors, his account begs to explore how these networks cohered ideologically to survive the autocratic era.

The final example is Wittenberg’s complex study⁴⁴ of the persistent right-wing voting patterns in post-communist Hungary. He flagged the development of the church-state contestation during the Stalinist era as the reproduction mechanism that secured the loyalty of the faithful on the parish level through the communist period and co-determined the post-communist levels of secularisation and, hence, electoral loyalty to the Right. Wittenberg amplified various counter-intervention strategies by the low clergy against the communist cadres. Through the combination of archival, interpretivist, and statistical methods, Wittenberg underlined the importance of enrolment levels in religious instruction and correlated them with the (declining) religiosity rates and post-communist electoral behavior. Unlike Wittenberg, who portrayed the Christian laity as a passive object of clerical or state interventions during the Stalinist era, I include the Catholic and Protestant lay movements and exile networks in my analysis to highlight the supply side of the story in late socialism.

⁴² Grzymala-Busse (2013). Why there is (almost) no Christian democracy, 325; for similar evaluation, see Hloušek, V, Kopeček, L. (2016). *Origin, ideology and transformation of political parties: East-Central and Western Europe*. London: Routledge.

⁴³ Enyedi, Z. (1996). Organizing a Subcultural Party in Eastern Europe: The Case of the Hungarian Christian Democrats. *Party Politics* 2, n. 3, 291-312,

⁴⁴ Wittenberg, J. (2006). *Crucibles of Political Loyalty*. Cambridge: CUP, 114-200.

Scholars of the genetic approach criticized the legacy literature for failing to address the dynamics and vicissitudes Eastern European countries underwent throughout the forty years of communist rule and the political development beyond the immediate transition years. By implication, the genetic approach focuses on more proximate factors and the role of contingent choices made by political actors to characterize East European party politics. It foregrounds variables including the institutional framework, state subsidies for political parties,⁴⁵ parties' organizational structure and institutional infrastructure,⁴⁶ political learning,⁴⁷ Europeanization⁴⁸ and transnational links,⁴⁹ electoral turnout and volatility, or party system stabilization.⁵⁰ However, importantly for this thesis, the genetic approach also foregrounds the agency of political actors and credits political ideology with a critical role in party politics.⁵¹ It zeroes in on the ideological supply, the role and choices of ideological producers, and their impact on party formation in the strategical exploitation of legacies and social conflicts.⁵² In particular, "genetic" scholars recommend studying political ideology in highly unstable and uncertain contexts marked by the vacuum of political identities when political ideologies assume a strong currency.⁵³

⁴⁵ Casal Bértoa, F., van Biezen, I. (eds.). (2018). *The Regulation of Post-Communist Party Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.

⁴⁶ Kopecký, P. (1995). Developing Party Organizations in East-Central Europe. *Party Politics* 1, n. 4, 515–34.

⁴⁷ Bermeo, N. (1992). Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship. *Comparative Politics* 24, n. 3, 273–91.

⁴⁸ Vachudova, M., A. (2005). *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration After Communism*. Oxford: OUP.

⁴⁹ Holmes, M., Lightfoot, S. (2011). Limited Influence? The Role of the Party of European Socialists in Shaping Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. *Government and Opposition* 46, n. 1, 32–55.

⁵⁰ Enyedi, Z. (2006). Party politics in post-communist transition. In: *Handbook of party politics*. Edited by Crotty W. and Katz, R., S. London: Sage, 228–238.

⁵¹ Haughton, T., Deegan-Krause, K. (2020). *The New Party Challenge*. Oxford: OUP.

⁵² Hanley, S., Szczerbiak, A. (eds.). (2006). *Centre-right parties in post-communist East-Central Europe*. London: Routledge.

⁵³ I build on Hanson, who accommodates structuralist and agency approaches to account for the role of "ideologues" in party formation during critical historical junctures. He sheds light on the origin and causal impact

Even though commentators of the 1989 transformations claimed that “not a single new idea came out of Eastern Europe,”⁵⁴ only a few empirically and contextually sound accounts of ideological change and conceptual innovation have been delivered that could confirm or reject this zeitgeist observation. Notably, the dearth of literature on post-communist party ideologies contrasts with the sizeable literature on the thought of late Socialist dissidence,⁵⁵ economic experts,⁵⁶ and the putative foundations of the post-1989 “liberal consensus.”⁵⁷ Only in recent years has the ink been spilled on revising the entrenched premise of neoliberal hegemony in the region.⁵⁸ Scholars began to study the ideational foundations and the role of conservative elites and informal networks prompted by the “populist” or “illiberal” drift in Hungary and Poland, setting forth more interpretive-laden approaches tracing their conceptual origins to the early post-communist period.⁵⁹

of ideologies. Hanson assumes that ideologues are a rare species because only a limited number of actors in contexts marked by high uncertainty are able to set clear and consistent definitions for membership in the future political community. From this perspective, ideologues design recognizable and enforceable group boundaries that can be “policed.” See Hanson, S., E. (2010), *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia*. Cambridge: CUP, 31.

⁵⁴ Habermas, J. (1990) What Does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left. *New Left Review* 183; Krastev, I., Holmes, S. (2018). Imitation and Its Discontents. *Journal of Democracy* 29, n. 3, 117–28.

⁵⁵ Bozóki, A. (eds.). (1999). *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. Budapest: CEU Press; Eyal, G. (2003). *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁵⁶ Eyal, G. (eds.). (1998). *Making Capitalism without capitalists*. London: Verso.

⁵⁷ Ackerman, B. (1992). *The Future of Liberal Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁵⁸ See Ganev, V., I. (2005). The ‘Triumph of Neoliberalism’ Reconsidered. *East European Politics and Societies* 19, n. 3, 343–378; Bohle, D., Greskovits, B. (2012). *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁵⁹ Enyedi, Z. (2016). Paternalist populism and illiberal elitism in Central Europe. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, n. 1, 9–25; Buzogány, A., and Varga, M. (2018). The ideational foundations of the illiberal backlash in Central and Eastern Europe: The case of Hungary. *Review of International Political Economy* 25, n. 6, 811–828; Buzogány, A. and Varga, M. (2023). Illiberal thought collectives and policy networks in Hungary and Poland. *European Politics and Society* 24, n. 1, 40–58; Enyedi, Z. (2024). Illiberal conservatism, civilisationalist ethnocentrism, and paternalist populism in Orbán's Hungary, *Contemporary Politics* 30, n. 4, 494–511.

For instance, the authors of a recent special issue on illiberalism in *European Politics and Society* recognize that the constitutive conservative ideological concepts are older than the post-communist era but argue that these concepts were latent and became part of the public discourse only in the 2010s in Poland and Hungary.⁶⁰ By presenting a historically deeper perspective, I show that anti-liberal ideas were a permanent part of the Christian democratic ideological itinerary throughout the studied historical eras, and the Christian democratic ideologues never shied away from using them in political contention, even during the alleged 1990s “liberal consensus.”⁶¹

I hold that there was no *Stunde Null* in 1989; a host of ideas from the past that had been suppressed in the communist era survived and were repurposed to fit the new context. In this sense, I contest one of the assumptions of literature on Eastern European democratic transformations and ideological development that asserts the existence of “local” or “indigenous”⁶² ideological traditions. As I show in the subsequent sections, political ideologies, as a rule, constitute hybrids in the context of peripheries.

⁶⁰ There is endless literature on the populist and neoliberal turn in 2010s Poland and Hungary. See for instance, Zielonka, J. (2007). The Quality of Democracy after Joining the European Union. *East European Politics and Societies* 21, n. 1, 162-180; Rupnik, J. (2007). From Democratic Fatigue to Populist Backlash. *Journal of Democracy* 18, n. 4, 17-25; Müller, J., W. (2013). Defending Democracy within the EU. *Journal of Democracy* 24, n. 2, 138-149; Kornai, J. (2015). Hungary’s U-Turn: Retreating from Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 27, n. 3, 34-48; Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy* 27, n. 1, 5-19; Appel, H., Orenstein, M. (2016). Why Did Neoliberalism Triumph and Endure in the Post-Communist World? *Comparative Politics* 48, n. 3, 313-331; Sajó, A., Uitz, R., S. Holmes (eds.). (2021). *Routledge handbook of illiberalism*. N.Y.: Routledge. Coman, R., Behr, V. & Beyer, J. (2023). The shaping power of anti-liberal ideas, *European Politics and Society*, 24:1, 1-4.

⁶¹ See Laruelle, who traces the origins of illiberalism as *ideology* – and not only as an adjective to democracy – only to the 1970s. Laruelle, M. (2022). Illiberalism: A conceptual introduction. *East European Politics* 38, n. 2, 303-327.

⁶² Falk, B. (2003). *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*. Budapest: CEU Press, xviii.

The scholarship on the post-communist moderate Right⁶³ is surprisingly limited.⁶⁴ Christian democratic ideology, even though an important segment of the center-right, remains stubbornly ignored or considered self-evident.⁶⁵ Furthermore, this absence of literature is starker if compared to the rich literature on the regional left-wing parties.⁶⁶ The Christian democratic phenomenon is further eclipsed by the research on “religious hijack”⁶⁷ and “Christian right,”⁶⁸ which describes the new subset of the European far-right.⁶⁹ This literature assumes that the exploitation of religious semantics in exclusionary or anti-liberal repertoires distorts the “genuine” tenets of Christian confessions. However, this scholarship fails to acknowledge that moderate Christian democracy has historically also profited from employing religious language and symbols, at times very controversially, as I show throughout the empirical chapters.

⁶³ Comparativists offer the following “minimalist” definition of the mainstream right: loyalty to the democratic system (they often created) and the liberal democratic norms (the rule of law), and moderate ideological positions and policies. Ibid. See Ziblatt (2017). *Conservative Parties*.

⁶⁴ See Hanley, S. (2008). *The New Right in the New Europe*. Oxford: Routledge; Roubal, P. (2015). Anti-Communism of the Future. Czech Post-Dissident Neoconservatives in Post-Communist Transformation. In: *Thinking through Transition. Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe after 1989*. Edited by Kopeček, M., Wcislik, P., 171-200. Budapest: CEU Press; Kosicki, P. (2020). Conclusion: Beyond 1989: The Disappointed Hopes of Christian Democracy in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe. In: *Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism*. Edited by Gehler, M., Kosicki, P., Wahnout, H. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

⁶⁵ Scholars give four reasons for the insufficient literature on the mainstream right: (i) overall affinity with and, therefore, interest of political scientists in the (center) left; (ii) on the flip side, their strong rejection and, therefore, interest in the far right; and (iii) persuasion that center right is a dull and banal and historically immutable phenomenon. See Bale, Kaltwasser (2021). *Riding the Populist Wave*.

⁶⁶ Bozóki, A and Ishiyama, J. (eds.). (2002). *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, New York: ME Sharpe; Grzymała-Busse, A. (2002). *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Successor Parties*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁶⁷ Marzouki, N. (eds.). (2016). *Saving the People*. London: Hurst & Company.

⁶⁸ Mascolo, G. (eds.). (2024). *The Christian Right in Europe*. Bielefeld: Transcript Publishing.

⁶⁹ See Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: CUP.

The available comparativist literature on *Western European Christian democracy*⁷⁰ focuses primarily on institutional factors and marginalizes the role of ideological producers and semantics. It was Kalyvas's groundbreaking study of the origins of Christian democratic parties in Western Europe that brought Christian democracy back to academic attention. He located the origins in the interwar period and identified that the impetus for forming the Christian democratic parties was the experience of participation of lay Catholics and low clergy in diverse types of associations (Catholic Action in particular) and trade unions.⁷¹

Christian democratic parties took off after 1945, contrary to the initial mobilizing intentions of Catholic Church elites:⁷² “as an unplanned, unwanted, and ultimately detrimental

⁷⁰ The study of the Christian democratic phenomenon in Western Europe came in two waves and was built on classical studies of Christian democracy (Almond, G. (1948). *The Christian Parties of Western Europe*. *World Politics* 1, n. 1, 31-58; Fogarty, M.P., (1957). *Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953*. London: Routledge; Irving, R., E., M. (1979). *The Christian Democratic Parties of Western Europe*. London: Allen and Unwin). First, the study of Christian democracy took off in the mid-1990s in the context of the downfall of once-dominant European Christian democratic parties (Hanley, D. (eds.) (1994). *Christian Democracy in Europe. A Comparative Perspective*. London and N.Y: Pinter; van Kersbergen, K. (1995). *A Study of Christian Democracy and the Welfare State*. N.Y.: Routledge. Kalyvas (1996). *The Rise of Christian Democracy*; Conway, M. (1997). *Catholic Politics in Europe, 1918-1945*. London and New York: Routledge). This path-breaking research was followed by renewed interest from the mid-2010s that (amongst other things) reflected the search for usable right-wing ideological legacies and canons to bolster the mainstream right against the nativist hard right or the counter-intuitive conceptual origins of human rights. See Müller, J.-W. (2013). Towards a new history of Christian Democracy. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, n. 2, 243–255; Moyn, S. (2015). *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press; Invernizzi-Accetti, C. (2019). *What is Christian Democracy*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁷¹ Kalyvas (1996). *The Rise of Christian democracy*. See also Caciagli, M. (2010). Christian democracy. In *Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. Edited by Ball, T., Bellamy, R. Cambridge: CUP.

⁷² Christian democratic parties grew out of the confessional parties that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as part of the Church's reaction to growing secularization. The standard reference here is Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1885), which mobilized Catholics to build political parties and participate in the democratic processes. Catholic forces were mobilized not only to legitimize the traditional instances of political power but also to participate in mass politics across Europe. Another key encyclical of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1893) was directed, among other things, against socialist movements and offered a positive Catholic attitude towards the working class. See. Pombeni, P. (2013). Christian Democracy. In *Oxford Handbook of*

by-product of the strategic choices the church made under constraints.”⁷³ Christian democratic parties developed a distinctive political theory from the official Church social teaching and “challenged the religious primacy of the Church in political matters.”⁷⁴ After 1945, the Christian democratic movement established a hegemonic position in the party systems of Western Europe.⁷⁵ As Kalyvas argued, the Christian democratic adjustments and concessions to modern mass politics led to the secularization of the political domain: “In a paradoxical way, the politicization of religion contributed to the secularisation of politics.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, Kalyvas and others referred to the “assimilation” of Christian democracy with social democracy through self-secularization that silenced religious associations.⁷⁷ However, Kalyvas and others resigned to deliver a fine-grained ideological analysis that fueled these developments.

Conceptual History

Here, I turn to revisionist accounts that emerged in the last decade and reconstructed the distinctive ideological profile of Western-style Christian democracy, previously ignored as a

Political Ideologies. Edited by Freedman, M., Stears, M. (eds.). Oxford: OUP, p. 374; Kaiser, W. (eds.). (2003). *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷³ Kalyvas (1996). *The Rise of Christian democracy*, 18.

⁷⁴ See also Kersbergen (1995). *A Study of Christian Democracy*, 2. As Grzymala-Busse shows, the Roman Catholic Church in the late twentieth century began to prefer direct and informal institutional access to policymaking and bypassed the traditional channels such as partisan coalitions. See Grzymala-Busse, A. (2016). Weapons of the Meek. *World Politics* 68, n. 1, 1–36.

⁷⁵ Conway, M. (2015). *Christian Democracy, One word or two*. Working paper.

⁷⁶ Kalyvas (1996). *The Rise of Christian democracy*, 245.

⁷⁷ On that note, Invernizzi-Accetti recently relativized Kalyvas’ thesis, claiming that “the Christian democratic efforts to reconcile Christian values with modern democratic politics cuts both ways: on the one hand, accepting and even appropriating a version of the secular principle of “separation between Church and state, but on the other, reformulating it in a way that preserves a fundamental role for religion (and in particular Christianity) in politics.” See Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What Is Christian Democracy*, 180.

plain vanilla project driven by day-to-day contingent and opportunistic politics. The conceptual and intellectual history scholarship attempted to counterbalance the rich literature on the ideological aspects of liberalism⁷⁸ and social democracy.⁷⁹ These works contended that the Catholic turn to pluralism and democracy did not begin in the 1960s with the Second Vatican Council, as previously assumed, but took place in the 1930s and 1940s.

The research unearthed the problem of how the long historical journey that political Catholicism undertook in modernity culminated in its support of democratic regimes after 1945.⁸⁰ It presented Christian democracy as a distinctly Catholic response to modernity, not only an expression of a Catholic trauma with communism. It introduced a new story of how the postwar liberal democratic regimes were invented when the Christian democratic movements, as a “third force,”⁸¹ came to terms and negotiated their position with liberal democracy and defended “Western Christendom” against fascist and Soviet forms of “secular totalitarianism.” In the era of “liberalization without liberal thinkers,”⁸² it was Christian democracy as a central governing ideology (in the European Catholic belt) that supplied crucial ideas for post-war democratic reconsolidation, the institutionalization of universal human rights norms, cross-confessional collaboration, and international cooperation formalized in the European Communities.⁸³

⁷⁸ Freedman, M. (2015). *Liberalism. A very short introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

⁷⁹ Berman (2006). *The Primacy of Politics*.

⁸⁰ Pombeni, P. (2000). The ideology of Christian democracy. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5, n. 3, 289-300.

⁸¹ Almond, G. (1948). The Political Ideas of Christian democracy. *The Journal of Politics* 10, 734-63.

⁸² Müller, J.-W. (2008). Fear and Freedom. On ‘Cold War Liberalism.’ *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, n. 1, 45-64.

⁸³ For this line of argumentation, see Caciagli (2010). Christian democracy; Müller (2013). Towards a new history of Christian Democracy; Moyn (2015). *Christian Human Rights*; Duranti, M. (2018). *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution*. Oxford: OUP; Chappel, J. (2018). *Catholic Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Chamedes, G. (2019). *A Twentieth-Century Crusade*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy?*

Conceptual and intellectual historians focused on distinctive Christian democratic principles or reconstructed the personal histories of various Christian democratic founding fathers.⁸⁴ Moyn, in his pioneering work, recast the postwar reinvention of conservatism through the Catholic and Protestant trailblazing turn towards the language of human rights.⁸⁵ In turn, Moyn's students attempted to introduce a new historiography of Christian democracy and Catholic modernity writ large.⁸⁶

Chappel introduced the collective intellectual history of a transnational group of European Catholic elite between the 1920s and 1960s. He stressed the productive synergies between marginal “fraternal” (anti-fascist) and mainstream “paternal” (anti-communist) political Catholicism⁸⁷ in the post-war years that fuelled the success of Christian democratic parties. He foregrounded the shift of Catholic vocabulary towards “human rights,” “anti-totalitarianism,” and “consuming family,” arguing that the Church conceptually transformed from an “anti-modernist” to an “anti-totalitarian” institution⁸⁸ to sustain the ability to police private and public spaces. However, Chappel stopped his story just before the new challenges

⁸⁴ See Thomassen, B., Forlenza, R. (2016). Christianity and Political Thought: Augusto Del Noce and the Ideology of Christian Democracy in Post-War Italy. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, n. 2, 181–99; Kaiser, W. (2018). “Introduction: From Siege Mentality to Mainstreaming? Researching Twentieth-Century Christian democracy. In *Christian democracy Across the Iron Curtain*. Edited by: Kosicki, P., Łukasiewicz, S., 3-25. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

⁸⁵ Moyn (2015). *Christian Human Rights*.

⁸⁶ See also Shortall, S., Steinmetz-Jenkins, D. (eds.). (2020). *Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁷ Chappel devotes little attention to the analytical meaning of “modernity,” and his fraternal-paternal distinction resembles, in many ways, the logic of cultural wars in the U.S. Recently, Forlenza and Thomassen contested Chappel's thesis for discussing Catholic modernity only in relation to secular liberal modernity and downplays the existence of independent Catholic modernities.

⁸⁸ Chappel, J. (2011) The Catholic Origins of Totalitarianism Theory in Interwar Europe. *Modern Intellectual History* 9, n. 3, 261-90.

of post-modernity or “silent revolution,”⁸⁹ which decisively altered the Christian democratic discourse. Having in mind the liberal version of modernity, Chappel contends that Catholics, either traditional or progressive, became modern when they accepted the liberal-secular separation between public and private and learned how to police both domains with a distinctive set of concepts.

Chamedes, against the backdrop of the birth of twentieth-century Catholic internationalism, unpacked Christian democracy in the post-war era as an ideology defined by internally conflicted conceptual pairs that secured the catch-all Christian democratic parties’ success, such as “anti-statism” and “pro-welfarism,” “anti-individualism, and pro-communitarianism,” or “technocratic common sense and utopianism.”⁹⁰

Invernizzi-Accetti offered an ideal-typical model of Christian democracy ideology based on analyzing programs and messaging of Christian democratic parties in a historical snapshot mostly centered on post-war France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany. Invernizzi-Accetti delivered, to some extent, a de-contextualized and overly progressive portrait of the postwar Christian democratic parties. He pinned down six core ideological concepts,⁹¹ cherry-picked from the different national contexts, disregarding cross-national variation and the actual conceptual usage.⁹²

⁸⁹ Inglehart, R. (1971). The silent revolution in Europe: Intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. *American political science review* 65, n. 4, 991-1017.

⁹⁰ Chamedes (2019). *A Twentieth-Century Crusade*, 249.

⁹¹ Invernizzi-Accetti ideological composition comprises six, in some cases highly abstract, interrelated ideological principles: anti-materialism, personalism, subsidiarity, popularism, social capitalism, and religious inspiration to politics. However, he neglected several constitutive notions of Christian democracy, including nationhood and family.

⁹² I venture to disagree with Invernizzi-Accetti’s proposed Christian democratic canon. In the construction of the ideological morphology, Invernizzi-Accetti promises to work with in-between figures as the key group of thinkers who cultivated the Christian democratic discourse. However, he primarily works with first-class thinkers to explain conceptual semantics, primarily Jacques Maritain. Invernizzi-Accetti acts as an all-knowing narrator to

Others clarified the genealogy of individual concepts associated with the Christian democratic movement. Kosicki spelled out the travel of French Catholic personalism to Poland in the 1930s and 1940s⁹³ and the antisemitic elements of Christian personalism.⁹⁴ Jiménez Botta looked beyond Europe and traced the imprint of the German CDU in the human rights language of Central America in the 1970s.⁹⁵ Forlenza reconstructed the semantical genealogy of the Christian democratic concept of Europe as *Abendland*⁹⁶ and, most recently, with Thomassen, set out an overarching but detailed history of the Italian Christian democratic movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹⁷ Krarup⁹⁸ and Oudampsen⁹⁹ accounted for the conceptual reconciliation of postwar Catholic corporativism and Protestant ordoliberalism.

The available conceptually oriented research on Christian democracy suffers from four interconnected setbacks that this dissertation aims to (at least partially) remedy: geographical, temporal, normative, and nominalist. First, it largely screens out the ideological development and sway of Christian democracy in Central Europe,¹⁰⁰ separating the Czechoslovak

deliver a coherent and normative portrayal of Christian democracy and underplays the actual conceptual universe of the historical actors by privileging the philosophical over the historical-intellectual context.

⁹³ Kosicki, P. (2018), *Catholics on the Barricades*. New Haven: YUP.

⁹⁴ Kosicki, P. (2017). Masters in their own Home or Defenders of the Human Person? Wojciech Korfanty, Anti-Aemitism, and Polish Christian Democracy's Illiberal Rights-Talk. *Modern Intellectual History* 14, n. 1, 99-130.

⁹⁵ Jiménez Botta, F., A. (2020). From Antifascism to Human Rights. Politics of Memory in the West German Campaigns Against the Chilean and Argentinean Military Regimes, 1973–1990. *Zeithistorische Forschungen—Studies in Contemporary History* 17, n. 1, 63-90.

⁹⁶ Forlenza, R. (2017). “The Politics of the *Abendland*.” *Contemporary European History* 26, n. 2, 261-268.

⁹⁷ Forlenza, R., Thomassen, B. (2024). *Italy's Christian Democracy: The Catholic Encounter with Political Modernity*. Oxford: OUP.

⁹⁸ Krarup, T. (2019) ‘Ordo’ versus ‘ordnung’: Catholic or Lutheran roots of German ordoliberal economic theory? *International Review of Economics* 66, n. 3, 308-309.

⁹⁹ Oudenampsen, M. (2022). Neoliberal sermons: European Christian democracy and neoliberal governmentality. *Economy and Society* 51, n. 2, 330-352.

¹⁰⁰ An exception to this rule is Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*. In general, Christian democratic research is overly Europe-centered and omits the study of Christian democracy as a *global* phenomenon. For exception, see Van Kemseke, P. (2006). *Towards an Era of Development*. Leuven: Leuven University Press

protagonists from the entangled transnational Christian democratic history.¹⁰¹ Second, the scholarship is predominantly limited to one historical snapshot only (the immediate postwar era) and does not broach the later ideological evolution. These two weaknesses leave the scholarship with an overly Western- and Catholic-centered description of Christian democracy and a reduction of the ideology to one (transhistorical) set of conceptual features.

Third, the literature suffers from a normative pitfall.¹⁰² The various ventures to define what Christian democracy *is* necessarily led to mischaracterizations, muting the internally conflicted ideological positions and change over time.¹⁰³ Above all, most of the normative accounts on Christian democracy resist associating Christian democracy with its “dark” legacies, including the fascist scripts, Christian nationalism, or exclusionary conceptions of personhood (confessional or gendered). The last bias present in the literature is nominalist, limiting the study only to self-defined Christian democratic actors, which does not exhaust the richness of this phenomenon.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ The scholarship that unpacks the Czechoslovak case (written in Czech or Slovak) is bound only to the snapshots of the institutional development of the Czechoslovak People's Party or intellectual profiles of individual Christian thinkers. Only scratching the surface, the research fails to link the Christian democratic phenomenon to the broader European context. Trapl, M. (1990). *Politický katolicismus a Československá strana lidová v Československu v letech 1918-1938*. Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství; Marek, P. (2003). *Český katolicismus 1890-1914*. Brno: Gloria; Marek, P. (2008). *Teorie a praxe politického katolicismu 1870–2007*. Brno: CDK; Brenner, C. (2004). A Missed Opportunity to Oppose State Socialism? The People's Party in Czechoslovakia. In: *Christian Democracy in Europe Since 1945: Volume 2*. Edited by: Gehler, M., 151-169. N.Y.: Routledge; Gjuríčová, A. (2011), Dvě cesty “křesťanské politiky.” In: *Rozdělení minulostí*. Edited by Kopeček, M., 183-217. Prague: Knihovna Václava Havla; Cabada, L. (2018). Among the Hussites, Communists, and Neo-Liberals. Christian Democratic Political Actors in Communist Czechoslovakia and the Democratic Transition. In *Christian Democracy Across the Iron Curtain*. Edited by Kosicki, P. and Łukasiewicz, S., 247-273. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

¹⁰² For instance, Dierickx referred to Christian democratic ideology in the countries of the Catholic belt as a set of doctrines rooted in a critique of modernity. Dierickx, G. (1994). Christian Democracy and Its Ideological Rivals. In: *Christian Democracy in Europe*.

¹⁰³ Wollkenstein, F. (2022). *Die dunkle Seite der Christdemokratie*. München: C. H. Beck.

¹⁰⁴ See Gehler, Kosicki, Wonnout (2018). *Christian Democracy and the Fall of Communism*.

Internal complexity and historical development amount to standard problems in defining the constant and distinctive features of any political ideology and its self-understanding(s). Scholars have pinned down various Christian democratic pointers to assert continuity, although the issue has mainly remained unproblematic because of the uninterrupted continuity of the Western European post-1945 political regimes. Hence, most scholars asserted rather lethargic or essentialist accounts of ideological continuity.

To name just a few, Van Kersbergen underlined “religion” or “Catholic social doctrine” to accord “the movement an unparalleled opportunity to adapt to changing circumstances.”¹⁰⁵ However, besides a statist understanding of “religion,” Van Kersbergen underplayed the persistence of *political* principles and values. Dierickx underlined the continuity of “anti-modern” discourses in the Christian democratic strategy. However, such a claim cannot hold if we consider the historical iterations of Christian democracy that (amongst other things) reflected (post)modernity in both *positive* and *negative* modes. Hanley asserted that “personalism” is *the* persistent aspect of Christian democracy.¹⁰⁶ However, Christian personalism represents a highly heterogeneous current in philosophical and theological anthropology, which was historically employed to achieve various aims (inclusionary and exclusionary) and was devised by the far-right and the far-left. Invernizzi-Accetti concluded that the mode of persistence of Christian democratic values and principles is sedimentation in the “institutional framework and background political culture” post-1945.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, in Eastern Europe, which is marked by forty years of autocratic disruption, such a continuity model simply cannot work.

¹⁰⁵ van Kersbergen (1995). 28-29.

¹⁰⁶ Hanley, D. (1994). Introduction: Christian Democracy as a Political Phenomenon. In: Christian Democracy in Europe, 1-15.

¹⁰⁷ Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy*, 6.

To overcome the essentialist trap in defining Christian democracy, scholars came up with the “functionalist” assertion of persistence. They declared that Christian democratic continuity rests in a “challenge” to reconcile Christianity and modern mass democracy and to protect religious institutions and semantics.¹⁰⁸ Such a perspective is partially justifiable if applied to the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Catholic political theory but loses relevance from the postwar period onwards when democracy became the only game in town for European Catholics.¹⁰⁹ In the Czechoslovak case, during the Third Republic (1945-1948), the problem was not the reconciliation with democracy but the challenge of *liberal* democracy and autocratic socialism. During the Communist era (1948-1989), the key task dwelt in the construction of a survival strategy facing autocratic communist rule. After 1989, the challenge lay in adjusting to (neo)liberal democracy in the context of forging the new post-communist order. In simpler terms, in the studied period and region, the acceptance of democracy was not the key problem for Christian democratic protagonists.

Therefore, I follow Conway,¹¹⁰ who argues against any theological narratives and privileges the contextual approach against any claims of “substantive continuity.” I believe any continuity can be studied only on the level of concrete usage by concrete political actors acting under specific political circumstances. That is why I combine punctual and nominalist history to resist the temptation to reduce the phenomenon or climb up the level of abstraction too high. I also likewise trace the ideological composition in the critical moments of re-canonizations and ideological institutionalization.

Additionally, scholars of Christian democracy often neglect what centrally animates Christian democratic self-understanding: the theory of the nexus between individuals, society,

¹⁰⁸ Müller (2013). Towards a new history of Christian Democracy.

¹⁰⁹ See Chappel (2018). *Catholic Modern*. 147.

¹¹⁰ Conway (2015). *Christian Democracy*.

and transcendence.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, the theological substance is the central distinctive feature of Christian democracy and sets it apart from other secular ideologies. Hence, I integrate the development of theology and theological semantics into the ideological reconstruction of Christian democracy,¹¹² excavating the conceptual innovations that conceal themselves under the façade of a “supposed return”¹¹³ to older traditions.

Research Design

To disentangle the dilemmas of Christian democracy in Czechoslovakia across the twentieth century, I supplement comparative politics with pioneering conceptual methods used in contemporary political theory and historiography and study Christian democratic phenomena through diachronic and synchronic comparative perspectives to document the mechanisms that secured ideological persistence despite the change.

In the spirit of methodological pluralism, I employ (i) elements historical institutionalism to embed the ideological analysis institutionally (i.e., chronicle the agents of transmission), (ii) the morphological approach to political ideologies to excavate the Christian democratic distinctive conceptual structure and shifting semantics,¹¹⁴ (iii) the theory of recanonization to study canons and anti-canons through which the ideologues (re)constructed

¹¹¹ See Thomassen, Forlenza. (2016). *Augusto del Noce*, 14.

¹¹² Shortall, S. (2021). *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: Catholic Theology and Twentieth-Century French Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹¹³ Kirwan, J. (2018). *An Avant-garde Theological Generation: The Nouvelle Théologie and the French Crisis of Modernity*. N. Y.: Oxford University Press, Kosicki, P. (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*. Müller, J.-W. (2011). *Contesting Democracy. Political Ideas in 20th Century Europe*. New Haven: YUP, 130.

¹¹⁴ Freedman, M. (1996). *Ideologies and Political Theory*. Oxford: OUP.

the ideological profile,¹¹⁵ and (iv) transnational conceptual history to detail how the ideology was localized and rephrased in the Central European periphery.¹¹⁶

Morphological Theory

I test the applicability of Michael Freeden's morphological theory for the study of ideological persistence across hybrid, authoritarian, and democratic regimes. Morphological theory represents the most used empirical approach to the conceptual content of political ideologies.¹¹⁷ It studies the mechanisms that secure ideological continuity through conceptual "decontestations" and permutations of the ideological structure. Importantly, morphological analysis offers tools to conceptualize Christian democracy (or any other tradition) as a distinctive political ideology. Yet it remains limited because it (to some extent) brackets and ignores the institutional structures through which ideology is supplied, transmitted, or diffused. The morphological approach offers great utility to this study as it evades essentialism. Although it describes ideology through a set of substantive features (political concepts), these features succumb to change and discontinuity. Political concepts are containers of meaning that can remain nominally similar. In what follows, I spell out the fundamental principles and assumptions of morphological analysis that guide my analysis.

¹¹⁵ Moyn, S. (2023). *Liberalism Against Itself*. New Haven: YUP.

¹¹⁶ Nygård, S., Strang, J. (2016). Facing asymmetry. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, n. 1, 75-97.

¹¹⁷ See also Freeden, M. (2013). *Comparative Political Thought: Theorizing Practices*. London: Routledge; Freeden, M. (2017). Conceptual History, Ideology and Language. In: *Conceptual History in the European Space*. Edited by: Freeden, M., Steinmetz, W. and J. Fernandez-Sebastian, 118-139. London and New York: Berghahn; Goes, E. (2021). Ideas and Party Change: The Role of Redistribution in Labour's Ideological Renewal. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 26, n. 2: 180-200.

Political ideology represents a window to “the forms and substance of political thought” and an interpretative key for studying political space.¹¹⁸ Political ideologies are constructed by political concepts, “fundamental units of meaning,” representing, generating, and referring to political reality. Political ideologies are indispensable proxies through which individuals relate to the political space, interpret their position in the world, and construct and structure their actions and judgments. Ideology is not an individual belief but a group phenomenon intended for public consumption and uptake by political actors.

Through language, political ideology limits what can be said and done; thus, the object of morphological analysis is (mainly) language.¹¹⁹ The varying conceptualizations of political concepts stand for the core units of analysis. Concepts represent nodes in the ideological structure that “inject order and meaning into observed, or anticipated sets of political phenomena and hold together an assortment of related notions.”¹²⁰ Regarding the conceptualization of the “concept,” morphological analysis assumes political concepts to hold an *indeterminate*, *ambiguous*, and *vague* character¹²¹ that is reduced or “frozen” by the mechanism of decontestation.

¹¹⁸ Freeden’s project divests the category of political ideology from the “serious reputational problems” brought by Marxist-laden scholarship, which, in Freeden’s reading, limits the analytical potential of political ideology. Marxist understanding presupposes that ideology merely reflects socioeconomic structures and class domination. Freeden (1996). *Political Ideologies*, 15, 27.

¹¹⁹ Recently, Freeden also explored the role of emotions, gestures, or silences. See Freeden, M. (2015). Silence in political theory: A conceptual predicament. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, n. 1, 1-9

¹²⁰ Freeden, M. (1996). *Political Ideologies*, 53.

¹²¹ I share Freeden’s rejection of “perfectionist” approaches to political theory that are set to overcome conceptual fluidity, indeterminacy, and vagueness. The ideal normative political theory suggests sophisticated and authoritative answers to the semantic complexity of social and political concepts. Therefore, it detaches from empirical practices and concentrates on producing coherent, logical, and universally acceptable philosophical academic argumentation (Freeden 1996: 51). In Freeden’s reading, facilitating “precise meaning” is a pipe dream as concepts always “appear in fragmented form in relation to the full semantic potential they are capable of carrying.” Freeden (2018). *Conceptual History*, 126.

Concepts are *indeterminate* because they are polysemic, composed of different layers of meanings that hinder any “interpretative closure.” Concepts accumulate various meanings across time and space and serve as “containers of sedimented meanings” that can be re-called, exploited, or silenced.¹²² Political concepts are *ambiguous* because they are susceptible to semantic equivocation, as one word can signify disparate phenomena. The conceptual *vagueness* denotes the overlapping tendency; concepts have multiple conceptual borders and resist clear-cut differentiation, thus producing constant interpretative competition. Although the individual concepts are *indeterminate*, *ambiguous*, and *vague*, they always possess components constrained by logical and cultural *adjacency* determined by political and social contexts.¹²³

Further, morphological analysis assumes political concepts to have a three-dimensional structure: (i) multiple internal components (conceptualizations) that constitute (ii) the concept and (iii) the macrostructure that combines concepts into interrelated conceptual clusters, which amount to political ideologies. Studying political ideology as a “semantical package” discloses how political concepts are conceptualized and combined into distinctive configurations in a concrete historical and cultural context. Notwithstanding, political ideologies are far from exclusive sets of ideas and thus overlap.¹²⁴

The morphological perspective determines the conceptual localization, proximity, and hierarchy amongst the concepts in one semantical field.¹²⁵ Freeden differentiates between *core*,

¹²² Freeden (1996). *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 55-60.

¹²³ Ibid., 61-2.

¹²⁴ Freeden (2018). *Conceptual History*, 123-125.

¹²⁵ What separates morphological analysis from another influential approach to political thought, primarily the Bielefeld School of *Begriffsgeschichte* or *historical semantics*, is holism. The Bielefeld School focuses on “key concepts” (*Grundbegriffe*), i.e., concepts that are unavoidable for political actors if they are to participate in the political space. This approach studies political concepts in relative isolation, which goes against Freeden's assumption that concepts acquire meaning by being related to other concepts. See Olsen N. (2012). *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books; Koselleck,

adjacent, and *peripheral* concepts. The *core* concepts around which all other concepts orbit tend to be the most abstract and, therefore, persistent. The ideological core represents the central features the ideology promotes and defends and produces recognizable ideological singularity. The structurally *adjacent* concepts “color the meaning of the core concept and pull it in this or in that direction.”¹²⁶ The ideological adjacency assigns concrete connotations (conceptualizations) to the core concepts contingent upon historical and cultural context. The *peripheral* concepts affect the adjacent conceptual meaning and are most prone to changing historical contexts and transform the fastest. However, the peripheral meaning assures the link and relevance of an ideology to the concrete historical-political situation and can be studied through, for instance, policy preferences.¹²⁷ Peripheral concepts represent the instances of ideological institutionalization concerning concrete issue agenda. The peripheries of conceptual meaning are not necessarily shared across different articulations of one ideology. Also, as the ideology develops, the core concepts might migrate to the peripheries and vice versa.¹²⁸

In Freeden’s morphological theory, politics are driven by the struggle to control political language and claim semantic hegemony that would conserve a particular conceptual meaning through the mechanism of decontestation. Political ideologies limit the conceptual meaning

R. (2002). *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing history, spacing concepts*. Stanford: SUP; Steinmetz, W. (eds.). (2013). *Writing Political History Today*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

¹²⁶ Freeden (2018). *Conceptual History*, 128.

¹²⁷ See classical study of the correlation between ideas supplied by intellectual, social learning and policymaking. Hall, P., A. (1993). Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain. *Comparative Politics* 25, n. 3, 275-296; Berman (2001). Ideas, Norms and Culture in Political Analysis, 238.

¹²⁸ Freeden (1996). *Political Ideologies*, 75–84.

and manipulate it into a singular definition that silences other possible interpretations.¹²⁹ Hence, the decontestation mechanism temporarily freezes the conceptual contention process.¹³⁰

Freeden's conceptual approach assumes that language represents both a factor and an indicator of historical change when studying ideology in time. Thus, the change in political ideologies can be explored through the language variation apparent in the concrete conceptual decontestations.¹³¹ Freeden works with the metaphor of temporal morphological layers as one single layer in time cannot capture the ideological diversity and complexity. Therefore, the morphological analysis can incorporate different temporal layers within one ideological family. Some morphological layers are continuous, and some are "disjointed or patchily linked" rather than "seamlessly continuous"; alternatively, different morphological layers can work in parallel.¹³²

From the sociological perspective, political ideologies are for Freeden produced on three levels: (i) first class-thinkers who deliver the most abstract contents of political thought; (ii) political party programs, public speeches, partisan or movements programs, policies, and

¹²⁹ For this reason, Freeden refutes critical discourse analysis (CDA) because it holds a strong normative premise about language as a means of oppressive power and hegemony; it tends to overestimate the entrapment in the discursive structure and leaves very little space for individual or group agency and conceptual and ideological innovations.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 100.

¹³¹ The morphological approach represents an alternative to the Cambridge School of intellectual history. See Skinner, Q. (1969). Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas. *History and Theory* 8, 3-53. Although Freeden follows Skinnerian contextual premises, he criticizes the over-emphasis on synchronous analysis. Freeden accentuates that political concepts have diachronic structures and, therefore, "contain other times that reach beyond, often far beyond, the immediacy of the present." Freeden further enlarges the corpora of texts to be analyzed to the in-between figures that participate in creating the socio-political space, going beyond the Skinnerian approach limited to the canon of classical thinkers (in particular, English early modern intellectuals). To be sure, Freeden is attentive to the political thought of the classical thinkers but also includes their multifaceted reproductions. In addition, Freeden seeks to surmount Skinner's individualist bias, asserting that ideologies are a group phenomenon and cannot be reduced to an analysis of the intentionality of a single thinker. Freeden, M. (1996). *Political Ideologies*, 102-103.

¹³² Freeden, M. (2015). *Short History*.

laws; and (iii) individual political attitudes. In this dissertation, I tackle the first two categories. The latter is beyond the scope of this project.

Recanonization

I supplement the morphological analysis with the recanonization theory introduced by Duncan Bell in his pathbreaking study of political liberalism¹³³ to take stock of the role of strategic choices of local ambassadors when forging the Christian democratic ideological profile. Bell's nominalist approach to the history of political ideas analyzes (trans)formations of ideological canons as a crucial dimension for understanding ideological change. Recanonization uncovers the canon construction process and the self-descriptions crafted by ideologues of concrete political traditions. The ideologues act as gatekeepers, deciding which political thinkers, corpora of literature, legacies, movements, and the plausible interpretation of these resources are desirable at a given historical moment. In other words, the (re)canonization approach reconstructs the selection process in which the ideologues define what should represent the ideological identity.

Yet, Bell's account remains limited because it considers only the explicit self-identification of political actors with a given ideological current. His approach screens out ideologues who elaborate on ideological identity without using concrete labels ("liberal," "social democratic," or "Christian democratic"). I use an inductive perspective that assumes that crucial features of political ideology can be developed and sustained, even if the political actors are unaware or even if they silence (for strategic reasons) established labels of political ideologies.¹³⁴ Hence, my conceptual analysis goes beyond nominalist reductionism and zeroes

¹³³ Bell, D. (2014) What is Liberalism?" *Political Theory* 42, n. 6, 682-715.

¹³⁴ See Müller (2013). Towards a new history of Christian Democracy.

in on the actual semantic usage. Additionally, I build on Moyn's recent differentiation¹³⁵ between canon and anti-canon, i.e., I also put emphasis on the censorship and negative definitions in the constant re-articulations of ideological identities.

Transnational Conceptual History

One of the assumptions of this dissertation is that Czechoslovak Christian democratic ideology is contingent upon the development of Western political thought. My work considers how the Christian democratic ideology traveled to and was localized in Czechoslovakia as a hybrid of Western political thought and local rephrasing and adjustment.¹³⁶ I supplement my analysis with transnational conceptual history insights¹³⁷ that help to explain the complex spatial dynamics in which concepts were used across language-defined communication spaces to spell out the diverse conceptual interpretations across national boundaries. Transnational conceptual history undermines methodological nationalism and conceptual universalism by detecting concepts' shifting meaning through translation and vernacularisation.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Moyn, S. (2023). *Liberalism Against Itself: Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of Our Times*. New Haven: YUP.

¹³⁶ Nygård, S., Strang, J. (2016). Facing asymmetry, 82; Marjanen, J. (2017). The Spatial Dimension: Nations and Regions, Centres and Peripheries. In: *Conceptual History in the European Space*, 147.

¹³⁷ The transnational approach to conceptual history sparked in the last two decades and marked the shift in the field from methodological nationalism to comparative political thought. Hence, the problem of conceptual transfers helps to deconstruct the "nation" as the predominant unit of analysis. Ostrowski, M., S. (2022). Ideology studies and comparative political thought. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 27, n. 1; Haupt, H.G.; Kocka, J. (eds). (2009). *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*. New York: Bergham Books; Burke, M., Richter, M. (eds.). (2012). *Why concepts matter: Translating social and political thought*. Boston: Brill.

¹³⁸ See Cassin, B. (2014). *Dictionary of Untranslatables*. In: *A Philosophical Lexicon*. Edited by: Cassin, B., Apter, E., Lezra, J. and M. Wood. N. J.: Princeton.

As I have shown, most studies on Christian democratic ideology have focused primarily on Western European cases, and the conceptual transfers and intellectual exchanges were considered an unproblematic analytical model. Hence, the center-periphery dynamics, cultural asymmetries, and hierarchies of the Christian democratic phenomenon have been overlooked, together with their effects on the traditions of political thought in small peripheral countries and intellectual communities.¹³⁹

I suggest that the Czechoslovak Christian democratic intellectual space has been far from a borderless flow of ideas. On the contrary, spatial (center-periphery) and temporal asymmetries have played a crucial role, particularly under communist duress.¹⁴⁰ These asymmetries alert us to radically different semantic fields in which Christian democratic ideologues operated and the various speeds of Christian democratic ideological development in Europe: the “lagging behind” and “catching up.”¹⁴¹ In line with the transnational conceptual history, I concentrate on the transformations of conceptual meaning in the process of reception and adoption, i.e., which concepts made it through the borders, how they fertilized the peripheral political theory, and how local actors struggled over implementing the transmitted political concepts.

Political ideologies do not have agency on their own and must be carried by local ideologues. I zoom in on three generations of Catholic and Protestant elites in Czechoslovakia who were (or still are) active in politics across political parties and movements from postwar

¹³⁹ For an exemption to this rule, see Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*.

¹⁴⁰ The center-periphery asymmetrical relations do not bear the same meaning as the work in postcolonial studies, as the intra-European peripheries have multiple centers and thus avoid one-way dominance. See Pernau, M. (eds.). (2015). *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*. Oxford: OUP.

¹⁴¹ Jordheim, H. (2018). Europe at Different Speeds: Asynchronicities and Multiple Times in European Conceptual History. In: *Conceptual History in the European Space*, 47.

to post-socialism.¹⁴² The first generation was active in the postwar Christian democratic ideological and party formation (1945-1948) and remained so in exile until the late 1950s. The second generation was heavily marked by the experience of the Stalinist era, and the last one came to maturity during the Prague Spring to define the transition to democracy in 1989.

During the pre-communist and post-communist eras, the ideologues, who reproduced the Christian democratic ideological identity, were scattered across party boards, editorial boards of party-sponsored journals or publishing houses, high-ranking functions within the party apparatus, or influential Church networks (Catholic Action). During the communist phase, I zero in on the Catholic activists in transnational Christian democratic networks (exile Catholic Action, People's Party, Democratic Party, or Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe) and domestic dissent networks (underground Church, movements, and samizdat). In all the studied historical periods, the ideologues acted as sharpeners of the broader European developments of Catholic and Protestant political theory and assured the institutional conditions for ideological re-adaptation.

My approach taps into already quoted literature in comparative politics that has focused on policy-making shifts through the prism of what scholars defined as “intellectuals,”¹⁴³ “thought collectives,”¹⁴⁴ “second-hand dealers with ideas,”¹⁴⁵ or “epistemic communities.”¹⁴⁶ I use the term ideologues to underline the particular role of Catholic and Protestant figures in

¹⁴² See the review of a “dramatic comeback” of the research focused on the elites in comparative politics. Krcmaric, D., Nelson, S., C. and Roberts, A. (2020). Studying Leaders and Elites: The Personal Biography Approach *Annual Review of Political Science* 23, 133–51

¹⁴³ Hall (1993). Policy Paradigms.

¹⁴⁴ See, for instance, Mirowski, P. and Plehwe, D. (2015). *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Cambridge: HUP; Slobodian, Q. (2018). *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: HUP.

¹⁴⁵ Müller (2011). *Contesting Democracy*. New Haven: YUP, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Haas P., M. (1992). Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *International Organization* 46, n.1, 1-35.

shaping the ideological identity of Christian democratic political projects.¹⁴⁷ Hence, the Christian democratic ideologues were not secluded bookworms but indulged in political practice, getting their hands dirty in party politics and governments, pressure groups, or anti-regime opposition. These activities had high stakes, resulting in payoffs: either governmental positions, high advisory positions, or incarceration and exile.

In the spirit of contemporary political science longing for parsimony but also to streamline my arguments, I identify and group the main protagonists into tables¹⁴⁸ at the beginning of each chapter and provide short biographies to save the reader from reading through unfamiliar Czech and Slovak names. Via tables, I assert the shifting structure of the ideological composition and issue agenda at the end of each chapter.

Evidence

The empirical evidence is grounded in archival research of institutional archives (archives of Christian democratic parties – KDU-ČSL and VPN, the Archive of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, KADOC. Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society at KU Leuven, and the Historical Archives of EU at EU), collections of individual party ideologues (Adolf Procházka collection in National Archive of the Czech Republic, Ivo Ducháček collection at Hoover Archive, or Ladislav Hejdlánek Archive attached to Václav Havel Library), the Czechoslovak samizdat archive (the Libri Prohibiti Archive of the Czech National Library, Harvard Widener Library Archive, and the University Library in Bratislava). I anchor my analysis in close reading of primary sources: party instruction books, manifestoes, records of partisan meetings, minutes of parliamentary committees, party-sponsored

¹⁴⁷ See Hanson (2010). *Post-Imperial Democracies*.

¹⁴⁸ The tables contain the names, biographical notes, party or movement affiliation and position, critical works, and data on canon transmission.

independent and exile journals, memoirs, diaries, samizdat sources (letters, campaigns, documents), and secondary literature (biographical and prosopographical data). I triangulate the evidence from Czechia, Slovakia, and exile entities.

Structure

The *Christian Democratic Option* offers a synoptic history of the ever-morphing Christian democratic ideology in Czechoslovakia. To tell that story, the dissertation falls into five chapters. Each chapter provides historical context, which is followed by the analysis of ideological recanonization, composition, and institutionalization.

The first part concerned with the pre-communist legacy, entitled *Catholicism Meets Liberalism*, reconstructs the transformation from transwar political Catholicism to the institutional and ideological birth of the Christian democratic catch-all parties during the Third Republic (1945-1948). In the 1946 election, the Czech and Slovak Christian democratic parties attracted cumulatively over thirty percent of the Czechoslovak constituency, recording comparable results to their Western counterparts. In their electoral strategy, these parties absorbed the liberal democratic precepts and framed them as a Christian legacy to confront and resist the Communist-led authoritarian drift. The Christian democratic ideologues reformulated and extended the ideological canon that previously relied predominantly on papal encyclicals by espousing the pioneering Catholic French political theory, German ordoliberalism, and tenets of the nascent Cold War liberalism.

The Third Republic Christian democratic parties, the only non-socialist protagonists, became the self-described guardians of individual and universal human dignity and rights, political and social pluralism, democratic and constitutional rules, supranational governance, social capitalism, and forerunners in cross-confessional collaboration. The chapter reveals that

the local adaptation of Christian democratic ideology was foundational for the political language of Czechoslovakia's late Socialist democratic opposition.

The second chapter, *The Early Cold War Exile*, traces the displaced afterlife of the postwar Christian democratic parties and their imprint on Christian democratic internationals. Although to some extent frozen in time, I show that ideological innovations occurred in terms of anti-totalitarian theory and the civilizational discourse that countered the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.

The third chapter, the *Christian Democratic Prague Spring*, unearths the resuscitation of the Christian democratic ideological legacy in the context of Czechoslovak socialist democratization (1968-1969). It argues that the historiography of the Prague Spring screened out a key moment of Catholic and Protestant modernization by focusing only on the fiasco of Socialist modernization. However, this Christian democratic re-launch was marked by pathbreaking conceptual innovations, including the language of "conscience," "ecumenism," and "convergence theory."

The fourth chapter, *Christian Democratic Post-Modern*, examines Christian human rights campaigning under late-state socialism. It is well documented that the language of human rights in the late 1970s gave rise to a coalition of strange bedfellows comprising reform communists, socialists, and Christians. However, in the mid-1980s, this consensus was over due to the application of human rights talk beyond the confines of abstract universalist jargon. This chapter narrates the downfall of the human rights compromise by recasting Christian democratic memory politics, anti-abortion, and religious freedoms campaigning that demonstrated a robust mobilization potential that left the liberal and socialist opposition far behind. Besides, this chapter traces the conceptual origins of the Czechoslovak New Right, which paralleled the trans-Atlantic rise of neo-conservatism.

The fifth chapter, *The Neo-Liberal Challenge*, is devoted to Christian democratic parties' ideological formation in the early years of post-communism, in which they assumed an active role in building the new social, political, and economic order. Christian democratic parties established robust organization and institutional infrastructure, paralleling the strength of CDU/CSU. The ideological formation was marked by a revival of the early Cold War canon, late socialist Christian democratic political thought, imitation of the CDU/CSU model, and the U.S. neo-conservatism. The chapter highlights that the Czechoslovak "Gentle Revolution" in Czechoslovakia was far from gentle. Christian democratic protagonists waited for over forty years for the moment of the practical impact of their core principles and values, and they succeeded in pushing through their ideological commitments through several policy schemes centered on "decommunization."

Table 1: Christian democratic protagonists: Institutional level

Temporality	Third Republic (1945-1948)	Early Cold War (1948-1956)	Prague Spring (1968-1969)	Late Socialism (1977-1989)	Post-communism (1989-1992)
Protagonists	Czechoslovak People's Party, Democratic Party, Catholic Action	Exiled Christian democratic parties and Catholic Action, Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe	Czechoslovak People's Party, Conciliary Renewal Movement, Marxist-Christian Dialogue	Underground networks (samizdat, universities, Church), Exile Christian democratic networks, Czechoslovak People's Party	Christian Democratic Movement, Christian Democratic Party, Czechoslovak People's Party, Civic Democratic Alliance, affiliated think tanks

Introduction

This chapter examines the Christian democratic ideological formation in Czechoslovakia during the Third Republic (1945-1948). I highlight this overlooked historical period as a key turning point for modernizing local Catholic political theory. I unearth the conceptual origins of Christian democratic robust ideological legacy and document how the newly organized Christian democratic parties transmitted critical intellectual innovations from their Western counterparts to retool pre-war integralist political Catholicism into a cross-confessional catch-all party project.

Due to the linkage to the transnational party network, the adoption and dissemination of the Western-style Christian democratic scripts in Czechoslovakia were swift, as fully-fledged Christian democratic communication could already be recorded in the 1946 electoral campaigns. The party ideologues reformulated and extended the ideological canon that relied predominantly on official Catholic social doctrine by espousing the pioneering Catholic French political theory, German ordoliberalism, and precepts of the nascent Cold War liberalism. The Christian democratic parties absorbed the liberal democratic commitments and framed them as a Christian legacy to confront and resist the Communist-led state capture.

The postwar Christian democratic parties – the Czechoslovak People's Party (*Československá strana lidová*, ČSL) and the Democratic Party (*Demokratická strana*, DS) – became the self-described guardians of human rights, political and social pluralism, democratic and constitutional rules, supranational governance, social capitalism, and forerunners in cross-

confessional collaboration.¹⁴⁹ ČSL and DS represented the only non-socialist alternative in the Third Republic.¹⁵⁰ Even though the ČSL and the DS did not manage to consolidate the cooperation across the Czech-Slovak divide, the Christian democratic parties attracted cumulatively over thirty percent of the Czechoslovak constituency, recording comparable results as the French Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP), Italian Democrazia Cristiana (DC) or the Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) in the first postwar elections.

In what follows, I outline the “transwar” historical and institutional context to understand the conceptual transformation that marked the rise of the Christian democratic movement after 1945. I chart the development of various streams of political Catholicism and specific political platforms against the backdrop of the development of the state-church relationship and regime change in the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1938), the authoritarian Second Czechoslovak Republic (1938-1939), and the clerical fascist Slovak State (1939-1944). Then, I turn to the Third Republic (1945-1948) and discuss the transmission and dissemination of Christian democratic ideology and reconstruct the ideological composition and institutionalization.

Historical Context

Born on the ruins of the Habsburg empire, the Czechoslovak state faced re-occurring legitimacy crises fuelled by the highly fragmented and ideologically polarized party system. From the left, the new regime was attacked by the communists and, from the right, by fascists.

¹⁴⁹ The cross-confessional cooperation on the institutional level arose only in the Slovak DS as the Czech Protestant churches sided with the “Czechoslovak Road to Socialism” and were far from collaborating with the “Catholic” ČSL.

¹⁵⁰ See Abrams (2004). *Struggle for the Soul*; Brenner (2004). *A Missed Opportunity*.

Czechoslovakia was further imperilled by internal ethnic divisions¹⁵¹ and by territorial claims of neighbouring countries.¹⁵² In this contentious and uncertain context, a coalition of five political parties (the “Big Five”) partially stabilized the government.¹⁵³ It comprised partisan elites loyal to the Czechoslovak state-building and effectively controlled the political system for most of the First Republic.

Political Catholicism in interwar Czechoslovakia can be distinguished into four currents. First, the most influential Czechoslovak Catholic¹⁵⁴ party, Czechoslovak People’s Party (ČSL), was established in 1919. It integrated all Czech and Slovak Catholic parties until 1921, when the Slovak People’s Party emancipated. The ČSL party elite was dominantly clerical¹⁵⁵ and adopted a moderate, centrist position with a broad coalitional potential, polling around eight percent on average. Given the extreme multipartyism of the First Republic, these

¹⁵¹ While the “Czechoslovak” nation numbered nearly ten million citizens, approximately one-third of the population were Germans, Magyars, and Ruthenians (half a million)

¹⁵² The short-lived Czechoslovak First Republic recorded several small-scale wars, with Poland in 1919 and Hungary between 1918 and 1919 and faced several German insurgencies. See Tomášek, D. (2005). *Nevyhlášená válka: boje o Slovensko 1918-1920*. Prague: Epoque.

¹⁵³ The Big Five comprised the Agrarians, the Czechoslovak National Democracy, the Czechoslovak People’s Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the National Socialist Party. In 1926, the coalition co-opted the German Agrarian Party together with the German Christian Social People’s Party and, in the 1930s, also the German Social Democratic Workers Party.

¹⁵⁴ Czechoslovak society was predominantly Catholic. According to the 1930 census, in the Czech lands, out of nearly eleven million citizens, over eight million identified as Catholic, while the Protestant churches together recorded half million adherents, and the newly established Czechoslovak Church attracted nearly one million believers. In Slovak lands, out of three million citizens, two and a half million identified as Catholics, and half million as Evangelicals.

¹⁵⁵ Mihola, J., Pehr, M. (2019). *Lidově, národně, křesťanský*. Prague: Filip Tomáš, 22-29.

were solid electoral gains.¹⁵⁶ The ČSL was incumbent in all interwar governments,¹⁵⁷ actively participating in the state- and nation-building. Yet, it failed to create a multi-ethnic Christian party for its “pro-Czechoslovak” commitments. The ČSL electoral programs pressed for the freedom and rights of the Roman Catholic Church,¹⁵⁸ its legitimate role in the public space, family protection, and ideational unity under the Catholic auspice. The ČSL opposed liberal parties, which it associated with frivolous market capitalism and atheism, as well as communist parties, highlighting the threat of “bolshevization.”¹⁵⁹

The ČSL was under constant pressure from the socialist parties and the Protestant elite,¹⁶⁰ supported by the founding father of Czechoslovakia, President Tomáš G. Masaryk.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ ČSL recruited the electorate predominantly from smallholders and the peasantry. The party membership numbered around two hundred thousand and was conditioned by the membership in the Roman Catholic Church. Suppan, A. (2004). Catholic People's Parties in East Central Europe: The Bohemian Lands and Slovakia. In *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-45, Vol. I*. Edited by: Kaiser, W, 217-34. London and New York: Routledge, 178.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ After a series of disputes between the new state and the Vatican, a concordat, known as the “modus vivendi,” was signed in 1928 between Czechoslovakia and the Vatican. The state guaranteed the Church's autonomy, and the Holy See agreed to consult with the state on the appointment of bishops. See Tretera, R. (2002). *Stát a církev v České republice*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 39-40.

¹⁵⁹ Fiala, P. (1995). *Katolicismus a politika*. Brno: CDK, 203

¹⁶⁰ Czech Protestantism was linked to the Lutheran Reformation but even more to the tradition of the fifteenth-century Czech Reformation (the so-called Hussite tradition). In 1918, the Lutheran and Hussite churches merged and formed the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. Despite being smaller in number compared to the Catholic Church, Protestant intellectuals had a significant influence in the political sphere. Other protestant churches merged into the Czechoslovak Evangelical Church in 1919 and, in 1924, the German Evangelical Church in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The biggest Slovak Protestant church was the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.

¹⁶¹ For instance, Masaryk supported publicly and financially the establishment of the new Czechoslovak Church to counterbalance the power of Roman Catholicism. Šmíd, M. (2017). T. G. Masaryk: His Spiritual Life and His Disputes with the Catholic Church. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7, n. 1, 58-75.

They labeled political Catholicism as a barrier to the Czechoslovak state-building and as the potential Trojan horse of the Habsburg revivalism.¹⁶²

The ČSL long-serving leader Jan Šrámek (1870-1956),¹⁶³ a priest and a pre-war founder of Christian trade unions and the Christian Social Party in Moravia, managed to temper these anti-Catholic and anti-clerical sentiments. He quickly grew into one of the most influential politicians in Czechoslovakia, acting as the party leader between 1919 and 1948 and a minister in virtually all Czechoslovak governments. Šrámek is also considered the key party ideologue who adopted the Catholic social doctrine, *Rerum Novarum* in particular,¹⁶⁴ and orientated the ČSL strategy towards the model of the German Zentrumspartei.¹⁶⁵

Alongside the dominant moderate ideological current within the ČSL, the party also housed a more right-wing ideological branch, embodied by a priest and party general secretary, Bohumil Stašek (1886–1948). Although Stašek accepted party pluralism and parliamentary democracy, he viewed political parties as creating “unnatural” social relationships, unlike vocational relationships, which he believed best reflected the natural order. Stašek was critical of Italian forms of fascist corporativism and instead referred to Pius XI’s encyclical *Quas Primas* (1925) to articulate modern democratic forms of corporativism and state

¹⁶² Importantly, the First Republic memory regime was forged in line with the work of influential Czech Protestant historian František Palacký (1798-1876), who injected his historical grand narrative with anti-Catholic elements, defining as the pinnacle of Czech history, the fifteenth century Hussite movement. This interpretation was extrapolated by Masaryk’s nation-building scheme, which identified the Czech national character with the Protestant spirit. Masaryk, T. (1924). *Česká otázka, Naše nynější krize, Jan Hus*. Prague: Statní nakladatelství.

¹⁶³ Alongside his political engagement, Šrámek was also a professor of Christian sociology at Brno Theological Seminary.

¹⁶⁴ Šrámek’s interest in *Rerum Novarum* can be documented by his frequent correspondence with the *Rerum Novarum* co-drafter, the professor at Freiburg University, Caspar Decurtins (1855-1916). See Marek, P. (2011). *Jan Šrámek a jeho doba*. Prague: CDK, 35-46.

¹⁶⁵ Štofanič, R. (2021). Reception and Adaptation of Neo-Thomism in East-Central Europe. In: *Neo-Thomism in Action: Law and Society Reshaped by Neo-Scholastic Philosophy, 1880-1960*. Edited by Decock, W., 97-119. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

decentralization. At the same time, however, he strongly supported the Austrian model of the Fatherland Front (*Vaterländische Front*), which aimed to elevate Catholicism as a dominant political force.¹⁶⁶

The third stream of political Catholicism consisted of an integralist, non-partisan Thomist intelligentsia closely associated with the Dominican and Redemptorist orders. This intellectual network included public intellectuals, journalists, novelists, poets, and clergy who were dissatisfied with Catholicism's new, and in their view, diminished role in the secular Czechoslovak state. They advocated for ultramontane, integral Catholicism as the foundation for building a Christian state based on organic communitarianism, anti-egalitarianism, anti-pluralism, directive corporatism, and ethnonationalism.¹⁶⁷ Catholic integralism gained new currency after the economic crisis that struck Czechoslovakia in the early 1930s.¹⁶⁸

The fourth stream was represented by the Slovak People's Party (Slovenská ľudová strana, SĽS), which quickly became a dominant political force in Slovakia, securing over thirty percent of the electorate. Led by clergymen, the SĽS gained significant support among the peasantry in predominantly agricultural Slovakia. The party originated from the Slovak National Party and was founded by the priest Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), who led it alongside the prominent ideologue Monsignor Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), a future president of the Nazi-puppet Slovak State (1939–1944). Hlinka's faction supported the idea of a "Czech-Slovak" state that would ensure political and administrative autonomy for Slovakia. He opposed the

¹⁶⁶ Kotous, J., Pehr, M. (2009). *Bohumil Stašek (1886-1948)*. Prague: Karmelitánské nakladatelství.

¹⁶⁷ See Šmíd, M. (2011). K příčinám politizace katolických intelektuálů v meziválečném Československu. In *Jan Šrámek a jeho doba*. Edited by Marek, P. Prague: CDK, 337-341.

¹⁶⁸ The integralist positions matched the transnational autocratic Catholic Right that surfaced across the continent, particularly in the 1930s. Feldman, M., Turda, M., Georgescu, T. (2008). *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*. N.Y.: Routledge.

Czechoslovak national conception¹⁶⁹ inscribed in the 1920 Constitution, which rejected the existence of an independent Slovak nation. In the late 1920s, the party was rebranded into Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSL'S), and the new party ideologues innovated the party program with anti-liberal and anti-Semitic ideological features.¹⁷⁰

Similar to the pre-1918 strategy of building a Catholic stronghold against Protestant Magyarization, in the 1930s, the HSL'S continued to emphasize Slovak autonomy in political, cultural, and economic spheres. This approach intertwined Slovak nationalism and Catholicism in opposition to the dominant liberal-secular ideology of Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the task of Czechoslovak state-building in Slovakia was taken up by Lutherans active in the strongest Czechoslovak party, the Agrarian Party. The Slovak Agrarians focused on implementing measures from Prague to reduce the influence of the HSL'S and the Church.

Amid the rising power of Nazi Germany and the irredentist forces in the Sudetenland, the United Kingdom and France accepted Adolf Hitler's demands over the Sudeten region by signing the Munich Agreement on September 30, 1938. This agreement led to the formation of the Second Czechoslovak Republic, which lasted until March 1939. As a result, Czechoslovakia lost over a third of its territory and nearly five million citizens. The Sudetenland was annexed by the Third Reich and occupied by German forces. In October 1938, Slovak political parties declared Slovak constitutional autonomy.¹⁷¹ Additionally, the Second Republic faced numerous attacks from Polish and Hungarian armies. Subsequently, in early November, the so-called First Vienna Award mandated the cession of southern Slovakia and

¹⁶⁹ The struggle for Slovak autonomy cuts back to the (unfulfilled promises of) the 1918 Pittsburgh Treaty signed by Slovak and Czech exile organizations in the U.S. with the commitment to build a common federative state. See Rychlík, J. (2012). *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*. Prague: Vyšehrad.

¹⁷⁰ Lorman, T. (2019). *The Making of Slovak People's Party*. London: Bloomsbury.

¹⁷¹ Rychlík (2013). *Češi a Slováci*, 150.

southern Carpathian Rus' to Horthy's Hungary, leading to the forced relocation of Slovaks from these territories.¹⁷²

In response to these political developments, Czech right-wing political elites adopted a fascist model. The political party system was reduced to just two parties, with the Agrarians emerging as the dominant force. The leadership of the ČSL fled to London in 1938. There, Šrámek was elected prime minister of the Czechoslovak exile government (1939–1945) and became vice president of the International Christian Democratic Union, serving alongside the influential figure of Italian Christian democracy, Luigi Sturzo.

The emigration of the ČSL elites led to the rise of an integralist Catholic intelligentsia, which the new regime placed in key political and cultural positions.¹⁷³ These Catholic integralists, acting without the official Church's endorsement, openly collaborated with local fascists.¹⁷⁴ They infused the guiding principles of the Second Republic with Catholic authoritarian scripts, aiming to replace the First Republic's liberal democratic framework and its prominent leftist avant-garde culture. In doing so, they redefined exclusionary Catholic nationalism, which initially focused on the rights of the Czech and Slovak majority, into an antisemitic nationalism—a “community of blood” that excluded Jews from the nation and supported antisemitic laws and Aryanization. Furthermore, the integralists replaced the interwar cosmopolitan discourses with pan-Slavic and national traditions against the Bolshevik threat. On top of that, they portrayed Czechoslovakia as a part of German *Mitteleuropa*.¹⁷⁵

The Nazi occupation in March 1939 marked the final loss of any remaining state sovereignty and established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The new Nazi regime

¹⁷² Kuklik, J., Gebhart, J. (2004). *Druhá republika, 1938-1939*. Litomyšl: Paseka.

¹⁷³ Rataj, J. (1998). *O autoritativní národní stát*. Prague: Karolinum, 119.

¹⁷⁴ The most critical ideological resources for the nascent authoritarian regime became the integralist political theory of Rudolf Malý (1889-1965), condensed in his 1935 treatise *Cross over Europe* and Ladislav Švejcar's *Outline of the Corporativist Democratic Constitution* from 1939. Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Rataj (1998). *O autoritativní stát*, 104-144.

dissolved the remaining political parties and stripped the Catholic intelligentsia of any political or public influence. As a result, the occupation of the Czech lands and the elimination of public space somewhat prevented Czech integralist Catholics from creating a reputational problem for political Catholicism. However, this was not the case for Slovak political Catholicism, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs.

In October 1938, the Slovak party system collapsed, leaving the newly established Slovak National Assembly entirely under the control of the HSĽS. At the end of that year, Jozef Tiso succeeded the late Andrej Hlinka as the party leader and steered the party toward fascist positions. Inspired by the Italian Blueshirts, Tiso's radical faction formed paramilitary units known as Hlinka's Guards, advocated for collaboration with Nazi Germany, and played a crucial role in the establishment of the Slovak State in March 1939. In the Slovak State, Slovak Catholic intellectuals and clergy enjoyed a privileged status, holding key positions in both government and administration.¹⁷⁶

HSĽS expanded the primarily nationalist ideology to synthesize integral Catholicism with the German antisemitic national socialist model.¹⁷⁷ The key figure was Prime Minister Vojtěch Tuka, who declared in one of his speeches in 1940: "The party will be led by the spirit of Hlinka, but will operate by methods of Hitler."¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, HSĽS switched from the

¹⁷⁶ Suppan (2004). *Catholic People's Parties, 187-189*; see also Felak, J., R. (2009). *After Hitler, before Stalin*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

¹⁷⁷ For example, the Aryanization decree issued in September 1941 empowered the Slovak government to "eliminate Jews from economic and social life." The government introduced the so-called "Jewish Codex," which was modeled after the 1935 German Nuremberg Laws. Later, Constitutional Law 68/1942 further stripped Jews of their civil rights and freedoms. During 1942 and 1943, around ninety thousand Jews were deported from Slovakia to Poland, with only a few hundred surviving to return after the war. Vaško, V. (2004). *Dům na skále*. Prague: Karmelitánské nakladatelství.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Pekár, M. (2014), *Štátna ideológia a jej vplyv na charakter režimu*. In *Slovenský štát 1939 – 1945*. Edited by Fiamová, M., 137-152. Bratislava: SAV, 147.

strategy of a protective nationalism directed against Hungarians and Czechs outside of the Slovak territory to an exclusionary nationalism that targeted internal foes: Czechs and Jews.

To exemplify the guiding ideology of the Slovak State, I sketch the work of one of its leading ideologues: Štefan Polakovič (1912-1999). Polakovič was a fresh graduate of Lateran University in Rome and systematized the official state doctrine in his *Fundamentals of the Slovak State* (1939). Polakovič defined the state ideology as “Christian totalitarianism” grounded in the Italian model and Thomist natural order principles, Maurice Blondel’s concept of collectivism, and Otomar Spann’s corporatist ideas.¹⁷⁹ In his 1941 treatise *Slovak National Socialism*, Polakovič further explained the links between Slovak nationalism and stateness and argued that Slovak national socialism is an “organic” and “inevitable” result of Slovak nation-building. However, he distinguished the Slovak state ideology from Nazism as being determined not by racial theory but by Thomist natural order and local Slovak aims, not imperial projects.¹⁸⁰

In 1944, the German military occupation of Slovakia gave rise to the Slovak Uprising. The uprising was primarily organized by the newly established Democratic Party and the Slovak Communist Party. The cooperation between these two groups was certified by the 1943 “Christmas Agreement,” which, amongst other goals, listed “liquidation of the Church’s influence on public affairs.” Even if unsuccessful, the exiled Czechoslovak government promised greater autonomy for Slovakia in the post-war republic. Indeed, the postwar governmental *Košice Program* approved the existence of the autonomous Slovak National

¹⁷⁹ Polakovič, Š. (1939). *K základom Slovenského štátu*. Martin: Matica Slovenská, 117-175

¹⁸⁰ Polakovič, Š. (1941). *Slovenský národný socializmus*. Bratislava: Generálny sekretariát Hlinkovej slovenskej ľudovej strany, 17. See Lenčేశová, M. (2022). The Concept of “Nation” and “National Community” in the Thinking of Štefan Polakovič: A Case of the Nazi Idea of Volksgemeinschaft Spread within Slovak Catholic Nationalism. *Forum Historiae* 16, n. 1, 69-87.

Council (legislative body) and the executive Body of Commissioners, giving Slovakia a more autonomous status (on the paper) compared to the inter-war period.¹⁸¹

In 1944, the German military occupation of Slovakia led to the Slovak Uprising, primarily organized by the newly established Democratic Party and the Slovak Communist Party. The cooperation between these two groups was formalized by the 1943 “Christmas Agreement,” which, among other objectives, aimed to “eliminate the Church's influence on public affairs.” Although the uprising was unsuccessful, the exiled Czechoslovak government promised greater autonomy for Slovakia in the post-war republic. Indeed, the postwar Košice Government Program approved the existence of an autonomous legislative Slovak National Council and the executive Body of Commissioners, theoretically granting Slovakia more autonomy compared to the interwar period.

In the spring of 1945, the Third Czechoslovak Republic was reconstructed according to the interwar territorial borders, except for Carpathian Ruthenia, which was ceded to the Soviet Union. The Third Republic underwent profound political, social, and economic transformations,¹⁸² similar to those in other Eastern European states, as Communist parties, trained and backed by the Soviets, rose to power.¹⁸³ The Third Republic's system of *people's democracy* is described in the literature as a hybrid regime, blending elements of parliamentary democracy with authoritarianism.¹⁸⁴ This regime featured a limited party system, the demotion of key political institutions (such as the Senate and Constitutional Court), the revocation of

¹⁸¹ See Rothschild, J. (1999). *Return to Diversity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 35.

¹⁸² See Kaplan, K. (1991). *Československo 1945-1948*. Prague: SPN; Kalinová, L. (2004). *Východiska, očekávání a realita poválečné doby*. Prague: ÚSTR.

¹⁸³ Judt, A. (2006). *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. London: Penguin Book; Applebaum, R. (2019). *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹⁸⁴ Balík, S. (2003). *Politický systém českých zemí 1848-1989*. Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav.

citizenship for German and Hungarian ethnic groups, widespread nationalization of property, the dissolution of mid- and low-level autonomous political and administrative units, and the gradual infiltration of the Communist Party into all administrative and political institutions.¹⁸⁵

The interim postwar Czechoslovak government was created by a fusion of the (pro-communist) Moscow and (liberal democratic) London exile governments to the so-called National Front of Czechs and Slovaks. Eventually, six political parties formed the National Front and excluded any opposition. In the Czech lands, the National Front members included the renewed Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL), the Czechoslovak Communist Party,¹⁸⁶ the National Socialist Party,¹⁸⁷ and the Social Democratic Party,¹⁸⁸ and in Slovakia, the newly established Democratic Party (DS) and the Slovak Communist Party. The National Front governmental program (*Košice Program*)¹⁸⁹ predicted Czechoslovakia's (geo)political re-orientation to the Soviet Union, wide economic nationalization, land reform, and ethnic transfers, and prohibited the existence of confessional parties.¹⁹⁰

In the single 1946 nationwide election to the unicameral Constituent National Assembly with a two-year mandate,¹⁹¹ the two Communist parties polled 38%, the Czech National Socialist Party 18%, and the Social Democrats 12%. ČSL received 15%, doubling the gains

¹⁸⁵ Kokošková, Z (eds.). (2005). *Československo na rozhraní dvou epoch nesvobody*. Prague: Národní archiv.

¹⁸⁶ The Czechoslovak Communist Party was regionally the strongest. Although the Nazis decimated the party membership – it shrank to twenty thousand members in 1945, in 1948, it reached more than two million members – double the amount compared with other Soviet satellites. See Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 117-118.

¹⁸⁷ Alongside the ČSL and DS, the only non-Marxist party was the National Socialist Party. It held a strong reputation for its war resistance. National Socialists emphasized in the 1945 electoral program social reformism, ethnonationalism directed against ethnic Germans, anti-clericalism, and economic and political plurality.

¹⁸⁸ The postwar Social Democratic Party found itself in poor shape and was internally split between the pro-communist and pro-democratic wings. See Abrams (2004). *Struggle for the Soul*, 178.

¹⁸⁹ Košice Program also served as a provisional Constitution alongside portions of the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution.

¹⁹⁰ After 1945, clergymen could be appointed or run for public office only at the discretion of the episcopacy.

¹⁹¹ In the 1946 election, more than half of the electorate could not vote for the political parties they voted for in the last free and plural nationwide parliamentary election in 1935.

compared to the last election, and DS gained 14%.¹⁹² Christian democratic parties secured over two million votes, controlling eight governmental seats out of twenty-six in the newly communist-led Klement Gottwald government (1946-1948).

However, the Communist forces gradually took control of state institutions, particularly the State Security and the army, and effectively curtailed Slovak autonomy to limit the influence of the DS. After the 1947 founding meeting of Cominform, Stalin dressed down the Czechoslovak Communist Party for its moderate stance and pressured it to abandon the doctrine of national paths to socialism. As a result, the Communist Party reversed the government's decision to participate in the Marshall Plan. This reversal and a season of drought triggered an economic crisis in 1947.

In February 1948, amidst the economic crisis and various anti-democratic policies implemented by the Communists, the pro-democratic majority in the government chose to resign. However, the Communist Party, in collaboration with State Security, orchestrated a state coup. In response, the ČSL leadership decided to dissolve the party. Nevertheless, pro-Communist factions within the ČSL kept the party operational, subordinating it to the so-called "Regenerated National Front." The DS was forcibly dissolved, and its leaders were imprisoned or fled abroad.

Protagonists and Canon Re-Articulation

I identify two clusters¹⁹³ of Christian democratic ideologues within the milieus of the ČSL and DS. In the Czech lands, the ČSL, along with the Catholic Church, was widely recognized as

¹⁹² The DS won 62% of the Slovak constituency.

¹⁹³ Czech Protestant public intellectuals supported the "Czechoslovak Road" to socialism. While the details of Protestant political theory are beyond the scope of this chapter, they are thoroughly explored in the chapter dedicated to the early Cold War era.

part of the anti-Nazi resistance, making it difficult for the Czech Communists to launch defamation and anti-clerical campaigns against them.¹⁹⁴ This situation contrasted sharply with Slovakia, where the Communists exploited the ongoing threat posed by the recently banned HSLS and its underground and exile networks.

After 1945, the re-consolidated ČSL de-emphasized its partisan ties to the Roman Catholic Church and rebranded itself as an interdenominational “Christian democratic party,”¹⁹⁵ moving away from the framework of political Catholicism. A new cohort of lay party ideologues—comprising party instructors, ministers, parliamentarians, journal editors,¹⁹⁶ and Catholic Action activists—replaced the discredited interwar authoritarian integralists. However, the partially conserved interwar clerical leadership somewhat hindered the rise of this new generation of Christian democrats, who advocated for solid anti-communist positions,¹⁹⁷ party laicization, a clear geopolitical orientation toward the West, and liberal democratic principles aimed at attracting the cadres and electorate of banned center and right-wing parties.

The DS Christian democratic circle included both Catholic and Lutheran ideologues, reflecting the ideological positions and strategies of the ČSL network but with a greater

¹⁹⁴ Additionally, a significant portion of the new postwar members of the Communist Party were Catholic, and the party strategically aimed to rally support from the Catholic electorate. See Abrams (2004). *Struggle for the Soul*, 68.

¹⁹⁵ Apart from the Christian democratic stream, a pro-socialist political branch (a communist cell within the ČSL) existed but had a limited influence until 1948. In Czechoslovakia, left-leaning political Catholicism was small compared to, for instance, Poland. See Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*.

¹⁹⁶ All religious newspapers and journals were established, printed, and maintained under the patronage of either the ČSL or the DS. However, the media landscape was tightly controlled and unfree, with the Communist-led Ministry of Information regulating paper distribution.

¹⁹⁷ The ČSL and DS participation in the anti-Nazi resistance and the exile newly emboldened the cooperation with the Communist Party, unthinkable in the interwar period, but stirred up discussion about the breadth of concessions to the Communist Party.

emphasis on Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak state.¹⁹⁸ Formed in 1944 by Lutheran ex-agrarian anti-fascist groups, the DS in 1946 negotiated a cross-confessional agreement with untainted Catholic political activists who had the backing of the Slovak episcopacy. As a result, the DS filled the vacuum left by the prohibition of the HSEŠ, becoming the only significant alternative to the Slovak Communist Party. Like the ČSL, DS ideologues were dispersed throughout the party infrastructure, associated journals, and the Catholic Action movement.

Both groups aimed to replicate the French MRP's party program and electoral strategy, which had succeeded in the postwar French nationwide elections. This ideology entered Czechoslovakia through transnational party networks formed during the London wartime exile, connecting European Catholic politicians and intellectuals, particularly within the International Christian Democratic Union. This influence was further strengthened after 1945 through the New International Teams (*Nouvelles Équipes Internationales*).¹⁹⁹

The ideologues modernized the ideological canon through party-commissioned translations, commentaries, and publications of the official Catholic social doctrine and the pioneering French Catholic political theory related to the *Esprit* journal, instrumental for the “Christian democratic moment” in postwar Europe.²⁰⁰ In the following sections, I will explore how Thomism reached the Czechoslovak periphery and how it was subsequently modernized by French Catholic political theory after 1945.

The recent scholarly interest in twentieth-century Roman Catholicism has provided diverse perspectives on the Thomistic doctrine and its influence on modern social and political thought, exploring its various interpretations and applications through different labels:

¹⁹⁸ Felak (2009). *After Hitler*, 5.

¹⁹⁹ See Kaiser, W. (2000). Co-Operation of European Catholic Politicians in Exile, in Britain and the USA during the Second World War. *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, n. 3, 439–465.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Müller (2011). *Contesting Democracy*, 140.

“Thomism,”²⁰¹ “neo-Thomism,”²⁰² “nouvelle théologie,”²⁰³ “scholasticism,”²⁰⁴ or “Neo-Scholasticism.”²⁰⁵ I use “Thomism” to refer to the official Catholic social and political doctrine since the late nineteenth century and the political theory of influential lay Thomist personalists.

Thomism reemerged in the late nineteenth century as a Catholic response to the challenges posed by modernity. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) actively promoted Thomism in his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, advocating a return to the thirteenth-century philosophical method of Thomas Aquinas.²⁰⁶ Aquinas’s emphasis on reason was seen as a suitable foundation for Catholics to engage with and respond to modern scientific rationalism. The Thomistic movement gradually spread through the Church’s established and newly created institutional

²⁰¹ Kosicki used the term “Thomism” to trace conceptual transfer and reception of French personalism in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century. Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*.

²⁰² Invernizzi-Accetti worked with the label “neo-Thomism” to flesh out the adaptation of Thomist personalism in the programs and messaging of the Christian democratic parties in France, Germany, and Italy. The prefix “neo” emphasizes the novel role Thomism played in the official Catholic doctrine since publishing the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879. Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy?*

²⁰³ Shortall showed through the proxy of French *nouvelle théologie* the innovations in Catholic social and political theory between the 1920s and the 1950s and their imprint on French intellectual history and the Second Vatican Council. Although the French-Jesuit *nouvelle théologie* thinkers received Thomistic training, they relaxed the overly rationalist Thomistic system. They focused on the work of St. Paul, the Church Fathers, and pre-modern mysticism to underscore “eschatological distance from the secular” and contest Thomist Dominicans who sought to “incarnate” and accommodate Catholic principles in secular space. *Nouvelle théologie* theologians contested the instrumentalization of Thomism in Christian democratic or Thomist-Marxist political projects that, in their view, made too deep concessions to modernity. According to *nouvelle théologie* thinkers, the Church shall take inspiration from its allegedly original historical role as a critical instance in the secular world. Shortall (2022). *Soldiers of God*.

²⁰⁴ Moyn used the term “Scholasticism” to underline the inspiration of the Catholic version of natural law tradition in the 1940s when reconstructing the Catholic-conservative revision and adoption of human rights language. Moyn (2015). *Christian Human Rights*.

²⁰⁵ Barring referred to “Neo-Scholasticism” to describe the entanglements between Catholic philosophy and European continental phenomenology in the first part of the twentieth century. Barring, E. (2019). *Converts to the Real*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

²⁰⁶ However, it would be inaccurate to describe this as a sudden Thomistic revival. Thomism had long served as a consistent source of inspiration for Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit religious orders over the centuries.

infrastructure, such as pontifical universities. By 1914, it had become “the first continental philosophy of the twentieth century.”²⁰⁷ In 1917, the study of Thomism was made mandatory for seminarians, and Thomistic manuals replaced the older Cartesian seminary curricula.

The wave of Thomism reached the Habsburg monarchy in the 1880s through the Dominican order.²⁰⁸ In the 1880s, the Thomist approach became part of curricula at Bohemian and Moravian theological seminaries. On the brink of the twentieth century, Catholic activists used the Thomist language to tackle the emerging Socialist parties. As already noted, one of the pre-First World War ambassadors of Thomist social teaching was the future leader of the ČSL, Jan Šrámek.²⁰⁹

During the Czechoslovak First Republic, the main driving force behind the Thomist diffusion was the Dominican order, braced by the renewal of the independent Czech Dominican province. The leading local ambassadors were theologians who studied at pontifical universities in Belgium, Switzerland, and Rome. They founded Thomist journals, published local Thomistic research, translated papal encyclicals, and published Thomist lay authors.²¹⁰ Most importantly, the Dominicans published Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* between 1937 and 1940. Compared to the Czech lands, the presence of Thomism in Slovakia was much weaker, and it did not have robust publication platforms. The only exception was a Dominican revue entitled *Smer*, published between 1941 and 1948, which focused on practical theology and dogmatics, not social and political thought.

The Dominicans in Czechoslovakia established another channel for disseminating Thomist elements: Catholic Action. This movement aimed to engage the laity in re-

²⁰⁷ Barring (2019). *Converts to the Real*, 20.

²⁰⁸ In 1883, at the Dominican seminary in Brno, Josef Pospíšil published two volumes on Aquinas’s work in Czech and created Czech Thomistic vocabulary.

²⁰⁹ Štofanič (2021). *Reception and Adaptation*, 97.

²¹⁰ The translations specifically highlighted the works of prominent European lay Thomists, including Roman Ingarden, Ludwig Landgrebe, and Jacques Maritain.

Christianizing a secularizing society and reorganizing the Church. Rooted in Pius XI's 1922 encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei*,²¹¹ Catholic Action emphasized the development of individual Catholic virtues among the laity, prayer in small, informal communities, and self-education. The interwar Czechoslovak Catholic Action adopted the "Italian model," which stressed that lay communities should be led by priests and organized by gender.

After 1945, Czechoslovak Catholic Action shifted to the Belgian Jocist-Jesuit model, which was based on vocational organization and emphasized lay self-governance, with priests serving only in a supporting role. This Jocist model had already spread in Slovakia during the Second World War, thanks to the influential Jesuit priest Tomislav Kolakovič and his Catholic Action circles known as "the Family," which focused on university students.²¹² Similarly, the Czech postwar Catholic Action was closely connected to "The Association of the Catholic Youth" and the Czech Academic League, which operated under the auspices of the ČSL.

Although the fundamental ideological commitments of the post-1945 ČSL and DS still relied heavily on the Catholic social encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), the ideologues innovated the canon through the pioneering French Catholic political theory, in particular the personalist political theory of Jacques Maritain. The local ideologues emphasized Maritain's drift from the theocratic, confessional model that would assume a strong position of the institutionalized Church in politics and pressed for the accommodation of "integral Catholicism" in the conditions of

²¹¹ Conway, M. (1997). *Catholic Politics in Europe 1918–1945*. London: Routledge, 40-4; Forlenza, R., Thomassen, B. (2022). The Globalization of Christian Democracy: Religious Entanglements in the Making of Modern Politics. *Religions* 13, n. 7. For details concerning the Holy See strategy to establish a "Catholic International" and win back Europe through international concordats and investments in civil society. See Chamedes (2019). *The Twentieth Century Crusade*.

²¹² For Polakovič's clandestine Catholic Action activities (underground university, youth organization, etc.) in Croatia, the Slovak State, and postwar Czechoslovakia, see Father George (2021). *God's Underground*. Melbourne: Hassell Street Press.

modern, pluralist politics through “human dignity,” “human rights,” and democratic political theory.

The Czechoslovak readership was familiar with Maritain *Art et scolastique* (1920), published in 1933, and *Religion et culture* (1930), published in 1936. However, only after 1945 did Maritain’s political theory become widely translated, interpreted, and adopted by the political parties. For instance, Maritain’s 1936 fundamental treatise *Humanisme integral* was published in 1947 by the Dominicans as *Christian Humanism* (*Křesťanský humanismus*) to avoid associations with integralist interwar Catholics. In Slovakia, Maritain’s *Trois réformateurs* (1925), which delineated the Christian democratic conception of modernity, was published in 1947 by the local Catholic Action. The reviews and excerpts of Maritain’s *Christianity and Democracy*²¹³ or *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* were published in leading Catholic journals. The reception of another influential and left-leaning *Esprit* author, Emanuel Mounier, who enjoyed widespread popularity in Poland, was limited. His *Manifeste au service du personnalisme* (1936) was published by the ČSL publishing house only in 1948.²¹⁴ Alongside the adaptation of lay Thomist political thought, the Christian democratic movement in Czechoslovakia also borrowed from French *nouvelle théologie*, specifically from Henri de Lubac’s treatise on “atheist humanism” to counter the socialist humanistic discourse.²¹⁵

²¹³ Maritain, J. (1986[1943]). *Christianity and Democracy, The Rights of Man and Natural Law*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

²¹⁴ Furthermore, various Catholic journals translated and published numerous short pieces on European federalization from *Esprit* circle author, Swiss protestant philosopher Denis de Rougemont. Another often-referenced French Catholic modernist was Georges Bernanos (1888-1948), particularly his *Letter to Europeans* (1941).

²¹⁵ The *nouvelle théologie* strongly impacted the Christian democrats during the Prague Spring and in late Socialism, especially the work of the French Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Alongside these French progressive authors, the local ambassadors rearticulated the canon through conservative and traditionalist Catholic thinkers. In the interwar period, Gilbert Chesterton was praised for his criticism of modern scientific rationalism and appreciation of medieval localism, understood as a plea for national cultural autonomy and Christian apologetics. After the war, the Dominicans focused on Chesterton's Thomist exegesis and published his *St. Thomas Aquinas* (1933) in 1947, *Orthodoxy* (1908) in the same year, and *Heretics* (1905) in 1948.

Another critical conservative thinker of the postwar Christian democratic canon was Swiss philosopher Max Picard. Picard was already known before the war thanks to translations of *Die Flucht vor Gott* (1934). After the war, the Christian democratic ideologues adapted the central ideas from Picard's *Hitler in Uns Selbst* (1946), underlying the “irrationality” and “animality” of the masses and the threat of unconstrained proceduralist democracy. In political economy, Wilhelm Röpke's ordoliberalism²¹⁶ became a reference for the Christian democrats, and his concept of totalitarianism was laid out in his *Die Deutsche Frage* (1945).

This ideological blend was further enriched by the interwar liberal democratic model advocated by Tomáš G. Masaryk and the postwar liberal constitutionalism of Salvador de Madariaga. As previously noted, ČSL and DS ideologues aimed to adapt the core principles of political liberalism to capitalize on the electoral vacuum left by the ban on right-wing parties. Although they ostensibly critiqued interwar liberalism, I will demonstrate in the following chapters that they fundamentally embraced liberal democratic principles to craft a new, non-authoritarian response to the challenges of the “post-liberal” and “post-fascist” eras and the communist authoritarian hardening.

²¹⁶ See Röpke, W. (1942). *Die Gesellschaftskrisis der Gegenwart*.

As already noted, the postwar Christian democratic ideologues were predominantly lay Catholics with ČSL or DS membership and operated in elite functions in the party organization, government, Constitutional Assembly, or editorial teams. Besides the party structure, they regularly met through informal networks, including Catholic Action or parish communities. These circles were crucial in transmitting and processing the Christian democratic ideology. The key media platforms of these two circles were Czech-based *Vývoj*, *Obzory*, and *Lidová demokracie* and Slovak *Katolícke noviny*, *Naše prúdy* and *Čas*, which operated across the national divide.

The ČSL Circle

Bohdan Chudoba (1909-1982) was a Czech philosopher, historian, and journalist. In the 1930s, he studied in Madrid under Miguel de Unamuno. He served as editor-in-chief of Czechoslovakia's leading Catholic conservative journals, critical to parliamentary democracy and market capitalism. However, after 1945, Chudoba reshuffled his political views to become a ČSL's MP and a member of the influential Constitutional Committee of the Constitutional Assembly. In 1946, Chudoba published the key Christian democratic programmatic document called *What Christian Politics Is*. He was an editor of *Obzory* and a leader of the ČSL Youth organization with circa a quarter million

members. Chudoba was a key ambassador of Maritain's vision of Christian democracy but with an anti-communist edge. During the Third Republic, Chudoba was detained several times, and after the 1948 February coup, he was kicked out of all positions. Thanks to Graham Green's support, he escaped Czechoslovakia to Western Europe.

Miloslav Skácel (1914-1974) was a lawyer and a leading (lay) Thomist philosopher and Maritain ambassador in the Third Republic who, together with Chudoba, forged the ideological profile of ČSL. He published four programmatic manuals of Christian democratic politics in the ČSL's edition *Nové dílo*. Moreover, he worked as an official in several governmental bodies and an instructor at the party-political

school. After the communist coup, Skácel was dismissed and became an editor of the ČSL publishing house Vyšehrad. After a short arrest in 1951, he worked as a manual worker and boiler operator.

Pavel Tigrid (1917-2003), a Jewish convert to Catholicism (born Schönfeld), was one of the most prominent Czech journalists of the twentieth century, influenced by personal friendship with Graham Green, whom he met during the war while working for the BBC anti-communist propaganda in London. In 1946, he was dismissed from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs after publishing critical views on the Soviet Union's geopolitical strategy. Subsequently, he was appointed editor-in-chief of ČSL journals *Obzory* and later *Vývoj*. He was crucial for broadcasting liberal scripts to the ČSL milieu. In February 1948, Tigrid participated in a Christian democratic youth convention in the British-German zone and observed the 1948 communist coup from abroad. Consequently, he moved to the United States and later France to establish a central Czechoslovak exile journal, *Svědectví*.

Ivo Ducháček (1913-1988), the pre-war correspondent in France, served in the exile London government as a close advisor of the PM Jan Šrámek and worked in the BBC

alongside Tigrid. After 1945, he served in crucial ČSL party positions. He became the chair of the Foreign Committee in the Constitutional Assembly and sought to sew diplomatic ties with France and the UK. For instance, he prepared an international agreement for Czechoslovak-French cooperation with Georges Bidault. He was well-embedded in the New International Teams (as its vice-chairman) and served as the editor-in-chief of *Obzory*. He left Czechoslovakia for the U.S. in 1948 and accepted a position at CUNY.

Adolf Procházka (1900–1970) studied law under František Weyr, the founder of the Czech normative legal “Brno school.” During the Second World War, he acted as a legal advisor of the exiled PM Jan Šrámek. After 1945, alongside his governmental position (Minister of Health), he was the chairman of the ČSL Prague regional organization. He escaped Czechoslovakia in 1948.

Simeon Ghelfand (1895-1964), another Jewish convert to Catholicism in the ČSL circle, was a prominent Christian democratic economic expert. In 1942, Ghelfand was sentenced to death for approving the Reinhard Heydrich assassination. However, he managed to escape during the transportation to the concentration camp and went into hiding.

After 1945, he became an editor of the central ČSL daily *Lidová demokracie* and served as a political instructor and tutor for party ministers, MPs, and rank-and-file partisans. Ghelfand broadcasted the economic principles of *Quadragesimo anno* (his mentor, Jesuit František Krus, collaborated on drafting this encyclical) and the political economy of Werner Sombart. After the 1948 coup, Ghelfand managed to escape Czechoslovakia.

František Weyr (1879-1951) was a constitutional law professor in Brno. As a close friend of Hans Kelsen, he co-edited *Revue Internationale de la Théorie du Droit*. He was an active member of the Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European Movement. After the war, he became a member of ČSL, thanks to his former student Adolf Procházka. According to Weyr's memoirs, he became a ČSL member because of the new party identity that expanded from narrowly Roman Catholic to the interconfessional and more liberal profile. Weyr, who had already participated in drafting the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution, was a ČSL appointee in the Constitutional expert team and prepared ČSL's personalist and militant democracy-oriented constitutional drafts.

Adolf Kajpr (1902-1959) was a Jesuit priest who studied philosophy and theology

in Leuven under the leading Thomist of the time, Joseph Maréchal, and in Innsbruck under the liturgist Josef A. Jungmann. Kajpr received ordination in 1935. For his criticism of the Nazi Protectorate (1939-1945), Kajpr was interned between 1941 and 1945 in Theresienstadt, Mauthausen, and Dachau. After the war, he was appointed editor-in-chief of the re-established journal *Katolík*, Czechoslovakia's leading platform of cutting-edge Catholic thought. He adopted the program of Catholic Action and acted as an ambassador of French *nouvelle théologie*. In 1950, Kajpr was sentenced to twelve years for espionage and state treason (participation in Catholic Action) and died in prison in 1959.

The DS Circle

Jozef Lettrich (1905-1969) was a lawyer and key Lutheran political figure. After 1944, he injected Christian democratic discourse into the DS profile, particularly after the 1946 cross-confessional April Agreement. In the First Republic, Lettrich was a member of the Agrarian Party, advocating against Prague centralism and the Catholic-fueled separatism of the Hlinka's People's Party, but upheld the idea of a common Czechoslovak state. During the war, Lettrich was one of the leading figures of the Slovak Uprising. In the fall of

1944, Lettrich was elected the leader of DS and the chairman of the Slovak National Council. During the Third Republic, he promoted the autonomy of Slovak national administration within the Czechoslovak federation. After 1948, Lettrich emigrated to the U.S.

Ján Kempný (1912-1997) was an economist and a rank-and-file Catholic member of HSL'S. After the war, based on Lettrich's invitation, he became DS's MP of the Interim National Assembly (1945-1946). Kempný was not compromised by the clero-fascist regime. Backed by the Slovak episcopacy, Kempný and other lay Catholics endeavored to create and negotiate an autonomous Catholic party based on the French MRP model at the end of 1945. Eventually, the effort transformed into the April Agreement, thanks to which Kempný became the DS general secretary and promoted the critical principles of Christian democracy. During the 1947 Fall Crisis (the communist crackdown on the Catholic elite in Slovakia), Kempný and other high-profile Catholic politicians were interned but sentenced only after the communist 1948 coup. The allegation was grounded in the alleged effort to undermine the Republic through cooperation with the HSL'S underground and exile.

Ladislav Hanus (1907-1994) was a leading representative of Slovak Catholic theology in the second part of the twentieth century. He studied in Innsbruck under the supervision of Romano Guardini (1885-1968). Another source of influence was the *Esprit* circle, especially Jacques Maritain, whose work Hanus promoted during the existence of the Slovak clero-fascist state, as editor-in-chief of the Catholic journals *Slovak Perspectives* and editor of *Culture* and *Renewal*. Hanus lectured moral theology in the seminary at Spišská Kapitula, the easternmost Slovak bishopric led by controversial bishop Ján Vojťaššák (1875-1966). After the war, Vojťaššák was one of the most strident anti-communists who pushed forward the formation of a purely Catholic party in Slovakia. Hanus was not active in any political institution due to the Slovak episcopacy direction that excluded clergy from political offices or candidacy lists and served as an editor of the post-war avant-garde Catholic journal *Verbum* (parallel to Czech *Katolík*). Hanus was sentenced in 1951 to fifteen years of imprisonment for state treason (alleged participation in the Catholic Action).

Štefan Hatala (1915-1990) was a Jesuit priest, active during the Third Republic in Spišská Kapitula seminary as a lecturer and editor of *Verbum* and *Nová práca*. He was the ambassador (translator, exegete) of the

social and political thought of Jacques Maritain and a proponent of the lay Catholic Action model and Catholic economic thought. In 1951, he was sentenced to thirteen years of imprisonment.

Štefan Nahálka (1916-1975) was another activist in Spišská Kapitula during the Third Republic. He graduated from the

Lateran University in Rome and, in 1946, became secretary of bishop Ján Vojťaššák and, from 1948, lectured at the Spišská Kapitula seminary. In 1946, he translated fragments of Maritain's *Integral Humanism*. After 1948, Nahálka flew to exile and assumed an active role in building the exile structure of Slovak Catholic Action.

Table 2: Third Republic Christian Democratic Ideologues

Name	Affiliation	Resources	Canon Transmission
Bohdan Chudoba (1909-1982) historian	ČSL MP, chairman of the youth section, editor <i>Obzory</i> , <i>Lidová demokracie</i>	<i>O novou českou školu</i> (1945), <i>Co je křesťanská politika</i> (1946), <i>Jindy a nyní</i> (1946), <i>Křesťanský realismus a dialektický materialismus</i> (1946) <i>Práce, matejek a sociální úkoly</i> (1946)	Jacques Maritain, Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno, official Catholic social doctrine, Wilhelm Röpke, MRP model
Miloslav Skácel (1914-1974) lawyer	ČSL ideologue and instructor, editor	<i>Demokracie a demokratické stranictví</i> (1946), <i>Člověk a společnost</i> (1946), <i>Podstata a úkol státu</i> (1947), <i>Hospodářství a politika</i> (1947)	Jacques Maritain, official Catholic social doctrine, Wilhelm Röpke, August Hayek, Hillarie Belloc, MRP model
Pavel Tigríd (1917-2003) journalist	Editor <i>Vývoj</i> , <i>Obzory</i>	Editorials and articles in ČSL outlets	Jacques Maritain, Max Picard, T. G. Masaryk, MRP model
Ivo Ducháček (1913-1988) diplomat journalist	ČSL MP, chairman of the Foreign Committee in the Constitutional Assembly, vice-chairman at NEI, editor-in-chief <i>Obzory</i> ,	Essays in ČSL outlets	MRP model
Adolf Procházka (1900-1970) lawyer	ČSL vice-chairman, Minister of Health	ČSL programmatic materials, <i>ČSL v Národní Frontě</i> (1946)	Jacques Maritain, official Catholic social doctrine, MRP model
Simeon Ghelfand (1895-1964) economist	ČSL economic expert, instructor	<i>Marxismus a křesťanský sociální reformismus</i> (1946), <i>Dialektický materialismus</i> (1947)	Official Catholic social doctrine, Werner Sombart
František Weyr (1879-1951) Constitutional lawyer	ČSL constitutional expert	Commentaries in ČSL outlets, drafts of the new constitution	Hans Kelsen, 1920 Constitution
Adolf Kajpr (1902-1959) Jesuit priest	Editor-in-chief <i>Katolík</i>	Editorials and articles in <i>Katolík</i>	<i>Nouvelle théologie</i> , Jacques Maritain, Max Picard, MRP model
Jozef Lettrich (1905-1969) lawyer	DS leader, party ideologue	Editorials and essays in <i>Čas</i>	Interwar agrarianism, T. G. Masaryk, MRP model

Ján Kempný (1912-1997) economist	DS general secretary, party ideologue	Editorials in <i>Čas</i>	Official Catholic social doctrine, MRP model
Ladislav Hanus (1907-1994) priest	Editor <i>Verbum</i> , <i>Obroda</i> , advisor to bishop Ján Vojtáššák	Editorials and articles in <i>Verbum, Obroda</i>	Jacques Maritain, Romano Guardini, MRP model
Štefan Náhalka (1916-1975) priest	Secretary of bishop Ján Vojtáššák	Articles in <i>Verbum, Obroda</i>	Jacques Maritain, Gabriel Marcel
Štefan Hatala (1915-1990) priest	Editor of <i>Verbum</i> and <i>Nová práca</i>	Articles in <i>Verbum</i> and <i>Nová práca</i>	Jacques Maritain

Ideological Morphology

The postwar Christian democratic ideologues in Czechoslovakia did not enter an ideological vacuum. They arrived at a historically patterned political landscape and focused on reinvigorating the moderate ideological current of the interwar Christian Right. And similarly to their European counterparts, they struggled to conceal the “antidemocratic, anti-Semitic, anticapitalistic, antiparliamentary, corporatist, and authoritarian” legacy of the past.²¹⁷ The local ideologues sought to tap into the European wave of renewed Christian-inspired political projects and the “Christian democratic” re-branding.

I constructed the ideological morphology through five core concepts that overhauled the interwar ideological principles and values.²¹⁸ First, the ideologues newly put to the center the notion of *person (osoba)* coupled with individually and universally conceived *human dignity (ľidská dôstojnosť)*, human rights (*ľidská práva*), and *responsibility (zodpovednosť)*. Second, the Christian democratic ambassadors promoted the concept of *organic pluralism*

²¹⁷ Kalyvas and van Kersbergen (2010). *Christian Democracy*, 190.

²¹⁸ As scholars of Christian democracy have highlighted, the European Christian democratic movement was far from “uniform” but shared a set of fundamental ideological commitments. See for instance van Kersbergen (1996). *Social Capitalism*.

(*organický pluralismus*) in the framework of the Thomist *natural order* (*přirozený řád*). Third, the substantively defined concept of Christian democracy was newly intertwined with features of militant democracy and the concept of totalitarianism (*totalismus*). Fourth, the pre-war exclusionary nationalist discourse was demoted in exchange for precepts of civic nationalism based on the concept of *patria* (*domov, vlast*) and *West* (*Západ*) or *Europe* (*Evropa*). Finally, the principle of Catholic corporativism was decontested in a democratic language and innovated by the ordoliberal principles. From a comparative perspective, the Czechoslovak ideological structure represents only a slight leeway from the French, Italian, or German Christian democratic scripts.²¹⁹ The variation occurred on the level of the conceptual periphery – conceptual usage – the object of scrutiny in the following chapters.

Person

In this dissertation, I draw on recent historiography from the early 2010s that explores the connections between human rights, Roman Catholicism, and Christian democracy.²²⁰ This scholarship traces the origins of the modern human rights paradigm to the 1930s and 1970s through detailed historical analysis. It demonstrates that the international human rights regime emerged as part of the postwar Christian Right's consolidation efforts, which subsequently influenced the Cold War ideological conflict and contributed to the rise of neoliberalism.²²¹

The temporal scope of these revisionist accounts contested the *longue durée* human rights historiographies that came, in general, in Christian and secular flavors. The former located the origins of human rights in antiquity, in the canon constructed by the Christian

²¹⁹ See for instance the ideological composition offered by Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy?*

²²⁰ Moyn, S. (2010). *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Cambridge: HUP; Hoffmann, S.-L. (eds.). (2010). *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: CUP.

²²¹ Moyn, S. (2018). *Not Enough*. Cambridge: HUP.

Scriptures, St. Augustine's theology, Thomist tradition, or Protestant Reformation.²²² The latter placed the origins of modern human rights discourse in the Enlightenment and French Revolution, based on the rejection of Christian metaphysics.²²³

The pioneering work of Moyn²²⁴ on human rights and its connection with Christianity has significantly shaped the new historiography of Christian democracy. Moyn and his students have revealed that, although Christian democratic actors employed the language of human rights, their interpretation differed significantly from the liberal-secular understanding. Instead, it was rooted in rejecting secular philosophical foundations, mainly through critiquing "moral relativism." Additionally, these scholars have shown how Christian thinkers adapted to modern political challenges by using Thomist concepts such as a person, human dignity, human rights, and conscience, including nationalism,²²⁵ fascism,²²⁶ communism,²²⁷ neoliberalism,²²⁸ or decolonization.²²⁹

Building on this literature, I zoom in on the Czechoslovak context to go beyond the current historiography on Czechoslovakia that locates the conceptual origins of human rights vernacular only to the 1960s and 1970s²³⁰ and document the postwar existence of Christian democratic use of human rights talk.

²²² Witte, J., Alexander, F. (2011). *Christianity and Human Rights*. Cambridge: CUP.

²²³ Hunt, L. (2007). *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York: Norton.

²²⁴ Moyn (2015). *Christian Human Rights*.

²²⁵ Forlenza (2017). The Politics of the *Abendland*.

²²⁶ Chappel (2018). *Catholic Modern*.

²²⁷ Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*.

²²⁸ Slobodian, Q. (2018). *Globalists*.

²²⁹ Greenberg, U. (2017). Protestants, Decolonization, and European Integration, 1885–1961. *Journal of Modern History* 89, n. 2, 318–354.

²³⁰ Kopeček, M. (2016) Human Rights between Political Identity and Historical Category: *Czech Journal of Contemporary History* 4, n. 1, 5-18.

I show that the core concept of person prefigured Christian democratic ideological building blocks. The idea of person rested in the tradition of Christian negative anthropology (natural sinfulness of human beings) lingering from the Church Fathers, particularly St. Augustin. The concept of person was decontested by a set of adjacent concepts: responsibility, human dignity, human rights, subsidiarity, and anti-totalitarianism. The ideologues presupposed a divine foundation of human nature embedded in the “objective reality of God-centered order” and granted human beings an inviolable, God-given dignity within the order. A person assumes a special status in the God-created world. In line with the Thomist blueprint, Czechoslovak ideologues also conceptualized a person as comprised of transcendental (spiritual) and material features (body, animality).²³¹

The local ambassadors contrasted Christian personalism with what they dubbed “secular humanism” or “anthropocentric humanism”²³² to assert the kinship of all modern ideologies (liberalism, socialism, nationalism) and their failure to justify an inherent value of human beings.²³³ Additionally, reiterating a typical catchword of conservative political thought since the nineteenth century, the ideologues contested the anthropological notions of modern ideologies as “abstract” or “utopic.”²³⁴

²³¹ See for instance, Kajpr, A. (1946). V čem se vlastně rozcházíme? *Katolík* 9, n. 4, 1.

²³² The Christian democratic ambassadors transcribed Maritain’s genealogy of secular modernity from his *Three Reformers* and built on the concept of “new humanity.” Maritain’s anti-canon prominently figured Martin Luther, René Descartes, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, who impersonated the modern turn to individualism and materialism. In this tale, the Renaissance and the “reformist individualism” separated politics and morality and destroyed the European community and unity. This was followed by the invention of the “abstract” human rights during the French Revolution and the liberal negative freedom together with the secularization process (privatization of religion) that produced morally unconstrained individuals and atheist ideologies. See Hanus, L. (1948). Protestantismus ako náboženský typ. *Verbum* 5, n. 47, 29.

²³³ Notwithstanding, Christian democrats exhibited clear overlaps with the adversary secular ideologies: they shared the emphasis on individual freedom and rationality with liberalism, the importance of solidarity with socialism, and patriotism and communitarianism with modern nationalism.

²³⁴ Chudoba, B. (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*. Prague: Universum, 91. See Fawcett, E. (2020). *Conservatism: The Fight for a Tradition*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Czechoslovak Christian democrats constructed liberal “individualism” and socialist and nationalist “collectivism” to offer a distinctive “personalist” program. In the Christian democratic doctrine, human beings are interdependent social beings²³⁵ rooted in organic social structures: patriarchal family, municipality, the Church, and vocational groupings. The ideologues argued that the liberal negative freedom cannot hold as it only “liberates man from accountability and responsibility to God and community” and results in “anarchy” and “the rise of totalitarianism.”²³⁶ They thus emphasized responsibility or duty (towards God, oneself, and the community). The notion of responsibility was a translation of individual religious faith. It denoted the personal commitment and obligation to engage in politics and work towards terrestrial “common good” on the path toward Salvation. Additionally, pace liberal notions of rights, Christian democrats sought to replace “liberal relativism” with a substantively defined common good rooted in the objective natural order.

Despite the nominal critique of political and economic liberalism, the ideologues framed themselves as guardians of the emancipatory promises of the French Revolution to compete over these principles with their moderate socialist adversaries, accentuating the norms of “freedom, liberty, and fraternity” that were, in their narrative, depleted by “atheistic ethics.”²³⁷

With reference to the work of Max Picard, Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno, and other critics of modern mass society, the ideologues contested the communist “collectivist”

²³⁵ To underscore the natural sociability of individuals, one of the *nouvelle théologie* ambassadors explained the concept of a person through the relational principle of the Trinity. A person is “created” as a relational and, therefore, sociable being and thus can develop personality in an inter-subjective community (*communio, společenství*). Personal flourishing can grow only in communion with others and Christ. Kajpr, A. (1946). *Communio. Katolík* 9, n. 3, 1.

²³⁶ Chudoba. (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 27. See also Kajpr, A. (1946). *Sisyfova práce II. Katolík* 9, n. 20, 3.

²³⁷ Skácel (1946). *Demokracie*, 8; cf. Maritain (1986). *Christianity and democracy*, 25.

conception of freedom because it eclipses individual autonomy.²³⁸ They underlined that if the individual as a theoretical construct is collectivized, his freedom would succumb to social and material determinism. Collectivism negates individual responsibility and transfers it to the class or state. Such a collectivist account of freedom, claimed Christian democrats, obliterates democratic forms and necessarily establishes a “totalitarian state.”²³⁹

The personalist program was also at odds with the nationalist understanding of national collectivism. The ideologues argued that nationalism turned twentieth-century global politics into the interplay between national collectives at the expense of individual “civil rights” and “freedoms.” This implied that the goal of the postwar Christian democratic movement was to rearticulate national identities through personalist language rooted in absolute, transcendently granted autonomy and freedom to relax the collectivist obligations individuals have as members of modern nations.²⁴⁰

In line with the new historiography of human rights, I see as a fundamental Christian democratic innovation the shift from a collectivist to an individual and universal understanding of human dignity. In the interwar period, Catholic thought linked human dignity to membership in organic communities within the natural order, emphasizing the protection of intermediary institutions like families, churches, or vocational units and confessions. After the war, however, Christian democratic ideologues redefined human dignity—and, by extension, human rights—in individual²⁴¹ and universal terms, consistent with the updated Church doctrine.²⁴² Henceforth, the ideologues endorsed scripts of the formerly rebutted liberal-universalist human rights language.

²³⁸ Chudoba, B. (1946). Vývoj či dobrodružství. *Národní obroda* (29.6). In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*. Edited by Drápala, M. Praha: Prostor, 169.

²³⁹ Skácel. (1946). *Demokracie a demokratické stranictví*. Prague: Universum, 24-25.

²⁴⁰ Kolár, J. (2000 [1947]). Mladý člověk. In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 311.

²⁴¹ See Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (article 34) for the conceptualization of *individual* human dignity.

²⁴² See for instance Pope Pius XII's 1942 *Christmas Address*.

The transmission of Martian's pioneering human rights theory was crucial. Maritain constructed the principle of the new postwar consensus through the human rights idiom that would bring together divergent ideological and confessional currents. Although Maritain understood human dignity and rights through Thomist personalism, he believed atheists could accept the human rights discourse without transcendental justification as a "secular faith."²⁴³ In line with Maritain, the Czechoslovaks also linked natural human rights with Thomist social ontology, presupposing that individuals are firmly integrated into the natural order via divinely grounded personal dignity.

Furthermore, the local Christian democrats equipped human dignity and rights with adjectives linked to the concepts, such as "natural," "inviolable," or "sacrosanct," which were aimed at emancipating the notion of a person from political contestation. The ideologues followed the overarching strategy of European Catholic intelligentsia to reinvent itself from "anti-modern" to "anti-totalitarian," making claims on states through the notions of human dignity and rights to police the independent private space and intervening in the public. The Christian democrats reserved the right to intervene in politics precisely when the Christian meaning of personhood was imperiled, introducing the intentionally ambivalent strategy of depoliticizing and politicizing the notion of person, which simultaneously justified the presence of Catholicism in the public square. In the Christian democratic political theory, human dignity and rights began to pre-condition politics.²⁴⁴

The personalist strategy relied on the Christian democratic anti-totalitarian theory developed already in the 1930s that considered "secular" and "bureaucratic" "totalitarianism" (including Fascism and Communism) to remove the (precious) barrier between public and

²⁴³ Maritain (1986 [1943]). *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*.

²⁴⁴ See Chappel, J. (2021). Explaining the Catholic Turn to Rights in the 1930s. In *Christianity and Human Rights Reconsidered*. p. 8

private to control all facets of life and delimit the state authority. Hence, the ideologues repurposed anti-statism – an old trope of Catholic political thought since the rise of modern states – with a state-centered anti-totalitarian theory to redefine the private and public domain.²⁴⁵

Furthermore, the ideologues braced anti-totalitarian theory with the principle of “subsidiarity,” demanding state decentralization against the top-down, centralized model of Czechoslovak people’s democracy.²⁴⁶ Subsidiarity became instrumental in justifying the state power restraint by pluralizing the instances of political power on a horizontal level (counter-majoritarian rules) and vertically transferring the decision-making processes to the possibly lowest levels of “organic” and autonomous social units.²⁴⁷

Party Programs

The postwar “rights talk” also defined the partisan self-presentations. The ČSL inserted the concept of a person and the protection of universal human dignity and rights as the fundamental ideological principle into the main party programmatic directions entitled *What the Czechoslovak People’s Party Wants*, approved by the 1946 party convention. The leader Jan Šrámek, repeatedly in his electoral speeches, referred to the “universal” concept of human rights that he identified with the “Western” political tradition. The ČSL programmatic materials accentuated the personalist anti-statism as the party’s core strategy, paraphrasing Maritain’s dictum, “The state is only a device, and man is the aim of human organization.”²⁴⁸

More intricacies marked the “personalist” formation of the DS program. The early Lutheran party program, drafted in 1944, defined “man” as the first ideological principle

²⁴⁵ See Chappel, J. (2011). The Catholic Origins of Totalitarianism Theory in Interwar Europe. *Modern Intellectual History* 9, n. 3: 261-90.

²⁴⁶ Skácel (1946). *Demokracie*, 18.

²⁴⁷ Skácel, M. (1946). *Člověk a společnost*. Prague: Universum, 18.

²⁴⁸ Šrámek, J. *Poselství víry a naděje*. 1945. London: Týdeník Českoslovák.

conceptualized through secular-communitarian terms.²⁴⁹ Initially, the DS cooperated with the Slovak Communist Party to pass anti-Catholic bills, especially concerning the nationalization of the Church parochial schools and dormitories, confiscation of Church land, dissolution of various Catholic associations, prohibition of Catholic periodicals, and incarceration of dozens of clergymen and several bishops who participated in the Slovak State administration.

In 1945, parallel to the DS formation, lay Catholic activists, blessed by the powerful Slovak episcopacy, began building an independent Catholic political party under the “Christian-Republican Party.” This effort was supported by the Slovak Communist Party, which aimed to counterbalance the DS in the 1946 electoral race and even recommended Catholics to imitate the French MRP party model that would unlock the cooperation between Catholics and Communists in Slovakia.²⁵⁰ The Christian-Republican Party’s preliminary program referred to “person” and “natural order” as the “central principles.”²⁵¹ However, the negotiations between Catholics and Communists broke down, and the National Front eventually rejected the proposed party statute and program.²⁵²

The DS exploited the Communist inability to seal the deal with the Christian-Republican Party and integrated Catholics into the DS structures through the cross-confessional agreement sealed in March 1946. DS handed over seats in the party board and the lower party hierarchy with a 7:3 ratio in favor of Catholics. On the candidacy lists, the ratio

²⁴⁹ (1944). Program Demokracickej strany zo Slovenského národného povstania. *Čas* 1, n. 11-14, 1.

²⁵⁰ The imitation of MRP was fueled by the reception of the MRP-related outlet *Chretien Contemporain*, available at the French General Council, closely related to the Catholic political elites (2002 [1946]). *Zásadné programové smernice křestansko-republikánskej strany*. In: *Slovenské občianske politické strany v dokumentoch (1944-1948)*. Edited by Šutaj, Š. Košice: SAV, 178; see. Čarnogursky, P. (1997). *Sivedok čas*. USPO.

²⁵¹ (2002 [1946]). Odpoveď zakladateľov Křestansko-republikánskej strany z 5. Marca 1946. In: *Slovenské občianske politické strany*, 176-177.

²⁵² Syrný, M. (2010). *Slovenskí demokrati 1944-48*. Banská Bystrica: Muzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, 213.

was 2:1.²⁵³ In return, the Catholic episcopacy supplied resources for the DS, diffusing through parishes an explicit recommendation (entitled *Instructions for Elections*) to vote in the coming parliamentary election for the DS.²⁵⁴

The revisited DS electoral materials absorbed the Christian-Republican Party program, accentuating Christian personalism and human rights as a precondition for any democratic regime and state-building.²⁵⁵ DS newly framed the parliamentary elections as a referendum between “the Christian versus materialist understanding of democracy.”²⁵⁶ Slovak communists countered this interconfessional strategy as the DS legitimization of the HSĽS. Notwithstanding, the DS’ interdenominational strategy successfully transferred the HSĽS voters, securing a landslide victory in the Slovak constituency.²⁵⁷

Notwithstanding, this interconfessional cooperation persisted for only a year, aborted by the Communist defamation campaigns against the Catholic party wing, culminating in the massive wave of arrests of the Catholic party leaders in late 1947.²⁵⁸ In turn, the DS reconsolidated the Lutheran leadership but preserved the Christian democratic programmatic principles to attract Catholic voters in the scheduled 1948 election. The second party convention in January 1948 approved the Christian democratic ideological outlook but also revived the human rights talk regarding the protection of the Slovak “national dignity.”²⁵⁹

²⁵³ Šutaj (2002). *Slovenské občianske*, 191-193

²⁵⁴ Muklík P (1997). Katolicizmus v politickom myslení predstaviteľov Demokratickej strany v rokoch 1945-1948. In: *Verbum*. Edited by Harčar, A. Bratislava: Verbum, 18

²⁵⁵ Lettrich, J. (1945). Za demokratickú, pokrokovú a sociálne spravедlivú Republiku. Program Demokratickej Strany z Apríla 1945. *Čas* 2, n. 4, 1.

²⁵⁶ Felak (2009). *After Hitler*, 56

²⁵⁷ Syrný (2010). *Slovenskí demokrati*, 226

²⁵⁸ In the context of this defamation campaign, around eight hundred members of Catholic intelligence were arrested.

²⁵⁹ Šutaj (2002). *Občianske slovenske*, 66.

The Thomist personalist elements became a core part of the identity of Czechoslovak Christian democratic parties and played a crucial role in shaping their policy messaging. In the following sections, I explore how the language of human dignity and rights was employed in specific political struggles, including the fight for school reform, constitution-making, and ethnic transfers.

Christian democratic ideologues retained the interwar features of the collective dignity of intermediaries, accentuating the independence and rights of the family and the Church. A person can develop and perfect only within these natural social units. According to the subsidiarity principle, these social units were set to moderate the polarity between the individual and the “all-powerful” state and to protect persons against the state apparatus that seeks to control the entire society by weakening the autonomy of families and churches.²⁶⁰

The ideologues defined the family as the fundamental unit of society, viewing it as an inviolable space of freedom, dignity, and equality, emphasizing procreation.²⁶¹ The family stood for the “last refuge of freedom,” the essential safeguard against excessive state powers, either capitalist or socialist. The family secured individual and collective freedoms against the modern capitalist or socialist systems that isolate individuals to exploit them. Therefore, the Christian democrats advocated the fundamental “human right of private property” of families

²⁶⁰ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 17.

²⁶¹ For instance, the party’s economic expert, Antonín Pimper, in his 1946 *Christian Solidarism*, presented a “paternal Catholic” take on the family. He referenced Pius XI’s *Casti Connubii* to accentuate that marriage and familial life yield to the Church’s control as marriage can be only established by the sacrament of matrimony. Therefore, state authorities cannot step into the prerogatives of the Church. In this context, Pimper underlined the threat of communist and socialist campaigns for women’s emancipation that could constrain family life and lead to “unfortunate forms of partner cohabitation, use of anti-conception, abortions, and sexual diseases.” Pimper underscored the pro-creative functions of family and traditional gender roles: a woman is “first a mother and an educator and only then a member of certain vocation.” Pimper, A. (1946). *Křesťanský solidarismus*. Prague: Universum, 115-116.

that can secure their self-sufficiency and independence (for instance, through family wage), which liberalism and socialism try to remove.²⁶²

The Church was another sight of Christian democratic collective dignity discourse. In the early postwar years, these parties could no longer openly defend the Church's prerogatives, interests, and public status due to the ban on confessional parties. As a result, Christian democrats turned to the language of dignity and rights, focusing on the family to protect the Church's interests and counter state secularization policies. One of the major political conflicts in the Third Republic was the Communist-driven school reform.²⁶³ Christian democrats opposed the exclusively state-based school system that would disregard the role of families, claiming that “only a totalitarian, fascist state has such intentions.”²⁶⁴ ČSL ideologues framed education as a “human right” of families, albeit admitting that upbringing and education cannot be limited only to families due to modern plural societies.²⁶⁵ They accepted the plurality of public schools (state and religious) that can help cement different worldviews, transcend social differences, and guarantee social mobility and equality.²⁶⁶ Notwithstanding, Christian democrats remained adamant that religious instructions remain in place to secure social integration.

The ČSL reverted the first communist-proposed school reform in 1945 that proposed school nationalization (including parochial schools) and the limitation of religious instruction

²⁶² Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 17. See also Pěcháček, J. (1946). *Co chce česká strana lidová*. Prague: Universum

²⁶³ See Kaplan, K. (1993). *Stát a církev v Československu v letech 1948–1953*. Brno, 11.

²⁶⁴ Chudoba, B. (1945). *O novou českou školu*, Prague: Universum, 6.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 6. Compare this with the German Article 7(3) of the 1949 *Grundgesetz*, which introduced mandatory religious instructions in state schools. Gordon, P., E. (2013). Between Christian Democracy and Critical Theory: Habermas, Böckenforde, and the Dialectics of Secularization in Postwar Germany. *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 80, n. 1, 173-202

²⁶⁶ See a similar statement made by Archbishop Josef Beran, Beran, J. (1947). O zestátnění škol. *Obzory* 3, n. 13, 171.

(up to that point mandatory) in state schools. The Communist-led National Front discussed the school reform again in May 1947. This time, the Christian democratic parties and episcopacies launched massive campaigns and rallies and pulled off the proposition.²⁶⁷ The initial Communist reform proposition was, however, approved immediately after the Communist coup in April 1948.²⁶⁸

Another area where Christian democrats applied personalist principles was in the constitution-making process.²⁶⁹ The Assembly's Constitutional Committee, responsible for drafting the new constitution since 1946, found itself at an impasse in 1947.²⁷⁰ Based on the appeals from the ČSL and National Socialist Party, the Constitutional Committee created an expert team of lawyers and legal experts to formulate constitutional principles and reconcile the conflicting views.²⁷¹ Each political party could nominate its representative.²⁷²

The expert team met around sixty times between July and November 1947 but was deeply divided. The main conflict was over the constitutional framework: whether to amend

²⁶⁷ DS had a more ambivalent position. Although it acted (unofficially) as a representative of the Church after the interconfessional agreement in 1946, it was the DS, together with the Slovak Communist Party, that, in September 1944, nationalized Slovak religious schools at all levels and allowed the state administration to ban clerics, who received state salary, from educational vocations.

²⁶⁸ See Felak (2009). *After Hitler*, 144.

²⁶⁹ For the survey of European postwar Christian democratic constitution-making, see Lamberts, E. (2003). *Christian Democracy and the Constitutional State in Western Europe 1945–1995*. In: *European Christian Democracy. Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives*. Edited by Kselman, T., Buttigieg, J. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

²⁷⁰ The constitution was scheduled to be authorized by the Assembly in the spring of 1948, aligning with the timing of the second parliamentary election. However, the new constitution was never completed. After the state coup, the Communist Party pushed through the constitution just before the manipulated election. The “May Nine Constitution” of 1948 was coercively approved by a two-thirds majority of the Interim Constitutional Assembly. Grónský, J. (2006). *Komentované dokumenty k ústavním dějinám Československa II. díl*. Praha: Karolinum.

²⁷¹ Weyr, F. (2004). *Paměti 3. Za okupace a po ní (1939–1951)*. Brno: Atlantis, 203.

²⁷² ČSL appointees were legal scholars who had already participated in drafting the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution. See Weyr, F. (1947). Úvodní slovo prof. Dr. Fr. Weyra. In: *Problémy nové československé ústavy*, 7-9. Brno: Právnická Fakulta Masarykovy University, 8.

the 1920 Constitution, as supported by ČSL and the DS, or to create an entirely new one, as favored by the other National Front parties. Ultimately, the basis for negotiation was the Communist Party's constitutional proposal.

The minutes of the National Front meetings and the expert team materials reveal that Christian democratic MPs and experts tried to inject the concept of person, human dignity, and fundamental human rights into the constitutional draft, imitating the strategy of their counterparts in the constitution-making process across postwar Europe, particularly the Bavarian Christlich-Soziale Union.²⁷³ They framed the incorporation of these principles into the constitution as a necessary step to comply with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.²⁷⁴ Christian democratic ideologues argued that the new constitution must become “personalist” and embody the highest “objective” norm, a legal expression of the natural law, which popular sovereignty cannot create nor override.²⁷⁵

According to the last available constitutional draft from the winter of 1948, Christian democrats injected the concept of a person into the third article, a constitutional innovation absent in the 1920 Constitution, however, without a reference to natural human dignity or human rights, but to social rights.²⁷⁶ Interestingly, the notion of a person also remained a part of the Communist *May Nine Constitution* from 1948 to the 1960 Constitution.

The final instance of Christian democratic discourse on human rights in the Third Republic emerged in the context of postwar ethnic transfers and partially eclipsed the language

²⁷³ Moyn (2015). *Christian Human Rights*, 31

²⁷⁴ Kučera, B. (1946). Charta S. N. a lidská práva. *Obzory* 2, n. 9: 138, cf. Duranti (2017). *The Conservative Human Rights*.

²⁷⁵ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 45

²⁷⁶ (1993 [1947]). Návrh expertů Pešky, Weyra, Hoetzela ke kapitole 1, hlavě 1 ústavy. In: *Příprava Ústavy ČSR v letech 1946-1948*. Edited by Kaplan, K. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 224-226.

of interwar minority rights.²⁷⁷ Emboldened by the Potsdam Conference resolution,²⁷⁸ president Beneš issued several decrees in the fall of 1945 that stripped ethnic Germans and Hungarians of their civic rights. One of the decrees (the so-called “small retribution”) retrospectively pardoned the period of “wild transfer,” which was not organized by state authorities²⁷⁹ but by local groups and Communist-backed Revolutionary Guards and was marked by vigilante violence against ethnic Germans.²⁸⁰

The Christian democratic party ideologues held an isolated position concerning the ethnic transfers in the atmosphere of heavy anti-German sentiments. The Socialist and Communist parties explained the recent loss of Czechoslovak sovereignty and deterioration through the collective guilt of the “fifth columns”: Germans and Magyars. Moreover, these parties capitalized on confiscating the German “collaborationist” property by distributing the assets to its (potential) electorate. Simultaneously, the Communist Party presented itself as the only guarantor of these property transfers against a possible German revanchism.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 35.

²⁷⁸ The Potsdam Conference determined that around three million ethnic Germans, based on the 1930 census, and roughly one hundred thousand Hungarians were to be relocated to Germany and Hungary in an organized populational transfers. In total, about twelve million ethnic Germans were expelled from Central Eastern Europe, especially from Poland and Czechoslovakia. See Lowe, K. (2012). *Savage Continent. Europe in the Aftermath of World War II*. St. Martin Press, 243.

²⁷⁹ In the first phase of the state-organized transfers, ethnic Germans were assembled in the concentration camps while continuing to attend to their regular jobs before they were transferred to German zones. Ethnic Germans were deprived of all immobile property and could take fifty kilos per person to transport.

²⁸⁰ The wild transfer was marked by the brutal handling and killing of the ethnic Germans, such as the so-called “Aussig Catastrophe” or the “Brno Death March.” See Brandes, D. (2002). *Cesta k vyhnání: 1938–1945*. Prague: Prostor, 331-337. Importantly, there was a Christian democratic silence regarding the reflection of Czech or Slovak antisemitism before, during, or after the war (e.g., the expulsion of German Jews from Czechoslovakia). The genocide of Roma, executed by the Czech Protectorate police, remained also under the radar of Christian democrats. See Donert, C. (2011). Charter 77 and the Roma. In: *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*.

²⁸¹ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 89.

In contrast, in the fall of 1945, Christian democrats began to message the ethnic transfers through inviolable human dignity and rights, accentuating the rule of law and the drawbacks of the collective guilt principle. The Christian democratic ministers and MPs voted in the Constitutional Assembly against the “small retribution.”²⁸² In 1947, Christian democratic MPs initiated the Assembly’s investigative committee²⁸³ mandated to inspect the violence against ethnic Germans. This committee began to investigate the “Postoloprty Massacre” and commanded an exhumation of the victims and found nine mass graves with 763 bodies. However, due to pressure from the Communist Party, the committee’s final report was kept classified. After the 1948 coup, the investigation was halted, and the ČSL MP was sentenced to death in absentia.

Furthermore, the ČSL outlet *Obzory* launched a specialized rubric in 1945 to present excesses linked to the “wild transfer.” It published evidence of the Czech violence against the transferred Germans and the inhuman conditions in the concentration camps in the form of anonymous testimonial letters. Shortly after that, the *Obzory* editorial team responded to the testimonial letters with critical reflections and began incorporating human rights and anti-totalitarian rhetoric into their discourse.

Based on the evidence of the inhuman handling of Germans in the wild phase but also in the concentration camps, Christian democrats warned against the potential public distrust in the rule of law and state institutions.²⁸⁴ The editors highlighted the violations of human dignity and rights faced by ethnic Germans in a situation where they were deprived of civil rights. They linked human rights infringement with the future impossibility of nation-building and lasting

²⁸² Drápala (2000). *Antologie*, 42.

²⁸³ The investigative committee was formed by the initiative of the ČSL MP Bohumír Bunža, a future prominent émigré in the Christian Democratic internationals.

²⁸⁴ Tigríd, P. (1945). Odsun Němců, Západ a my. In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 196-199.

European cooperation.²⁸⁵ The ideologues used the rights talk to equalize the Revolutionary Guards with the Communist Party and frame their conduct as the continuation of Nazi practices.²⁸⁶ Hence, the postwar transfer of ethnic Germans enabled Christian democrats to formulate the Catholic totalitarian thesis, which argued for a kinship between Communism and Fascism.

Alongside the individual human rights talk, Christian democratic ideologues retained the reference to the principles of minority rights.²⁸⁷ Such a critical discourse on the postwar ethnic transfers and cleansing in Czechoslovakia wedded with human rights language re-emerged only in samizdat in the late Socialism through Christian democratic memory politics campaigns. Their evidence was grounded in the *Obzory* testimonials.

Despite their professed commitment to fundamental human rights, the ČSL leadership refrained from questioning the initial, unconstitutional, and illegal deprivation of citizenship for the entire ethnic German population. Likewise, certain official ČSL statements adhered to collective guilt and ran an uncompromising campaign for the German transfer.²⁸⁸

In Slovakia, grounded in the inter-governmental agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary from February 1946,²⁸⁹ the transfer of Magyars did not record instances of violence as in Czech lands.²⁹⁰ Still, the process involved extensive incarceration of Hungarian

²⁸⁵ Kajpr, A. (1946). Polský president o poměru k Vatikánu. *Katolik* 9, n. 28, 2; Jsme i my rasisty, *Katolik* 9, n. 3, 4. The motive of building the postwar Czechoslovakia on unjust grounds was reinvigorated in the late Cold War by Christian democratic dissidents.

²⁸⁶ Tigrid, P. (2000 [1946]) Od Zlatého pobřeží. In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 233.

²⁸⁷ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 35.

²⁸⁸ Ducháček, I. (1946). *Naše účast v zahraničním odboji*. Prague: Universum, 11-13.

²⁸⁹ Dohoda mezi ČS a Maďarskom zo dňa 27. Februara 1946, o vymene obyvateľstva (č. 145/1946 sb.). In Grónsky (2006). *Komentované*, 162-9.

²⁹⁰ The actual transfer of roughly ninety thousand Hungarians from Slovakia and seventy thousand Slovaks from Hungary started only in 1947 and continued through 1948. Felak (2009). *After Hitler*, 83.

clergy and confiscation of the Church property. Therefore, the Catholic wing of the DS²⁹¹ introduced counter-ethnonationalist discourse, framing the shortage of Hungarian-speaking priests as a violation of the fundamental religious rights and freedoms of the Hungarian minority. On top of that, in a pastoral letter published in *Katolícke noviny* in the fall of 1946, Slovak bishops rejected the Hungarian collective guilt. This position was followed by a joint letter of Slovak and Czech episcopacies to the National Front, which pointed out injustices committed against Germans and Magyars and the conditions in internment camps.²⁹²

Organic Pluralism

In conjunction with the notion of person, Christian democratic ideologues adopted a new core concept of “organic pluralism” from Jacques Maritain’s *Integral Humanism* (1936)²⁹³ and jettisoned the interwar integralist Catholic envision of the temporal order governed by the coalition of “throne and altar.” Organic pluralism and the related notion of “new humanism” was the Christian democratic strategy towards what they perceived as the current post-liberal era. They acknowledged the modern secular and plural conditions through organic pluralism, granting autonomy to the temporal-secular order and different spheres of human action, including politics. However, these distinct zones, Christian democratic ideologues argued, were held “organically” together by the natural order and law. The purpose of Christian politics was to renew the harmonious synergy and integrate the components within the temporal order to secure the “terrestrial common good.”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ The DS Lutheran leader subscribed to the policies regarding the expulsion of Germans and Hungarians based on collective guilt. He justified this through the security of Czechoslovak sovereignty as a necessary condition for future “European peace.” See Lettrich, J. (1945). Sme za poriadok na Slovensku, bezpečnosť osobnú i majetkovú. *Čas* 2, n. 36, 3. Lettrich, J. (1946). Návrat Slovákov z Maďarska. *Čas* 3, n. 71, 2.

²⁹² Cf. Felak (2009). *After Hitler*.

²⁹³ Maritain, J. (1968 [1936]). *Integral humanism*. New York: Scribner, 256.

²⁹⁴ Pěcháček (1946). *Co chce*, 11.

To translate organic pluralism into a more tangible political strategy, the ideologues devised an adjacent cluster of notions, including the rationality of the *Christian worldview* (*křesťanský světónázor*), and its legitimate place in politics, *moral crisis* wedded with the philosophy of history, *Catholicity*, (*agapeic*) *pluralism*, *anti-communism*, *anti-materialism*, and the project of the *interconfessional* catch-all political party.

Against secular rationalism, the local Christian democratic ideologues argued that the “rational” and “universally acceptable” Thomist metaphysics can and should represent the common political language.²⁹⁵ They consistently upheld the rationality and objectivity of Thomist philosophy to counter the claims of “scientific socialism,” which argued that the Christian “worldview” was irrational and, therefore, politically illegitimate.

Besides, the Third Republic unfolded a critical philosophical debate amongst the Dominican Thomists and Christian democratic ideologues over dialectical materialism. They departed from Vincent Ducatillon’s *Doctrine communiste et doctrine catholique* (translated in 1937) to recognize that dialectical materialism advances a justifiable critique of modern (idealistic) philosophy. However, Thomists posited that Marxism entails erroneous implications, for it merely substitutes Kantian “subjective reductionism” with “material reductionism.” In contrast, the Thomist approach heralds a demand for “full recognition of reality,” both idealist and materialist. Further, they recognized that Thomism and Marxism share the realist, epistemological premise of a recognizable world from which the first metaphysical principles can be inferred. However, the key issue was Marxist atheism. “Christian realism,” unlike dialectical materialism, “proceeds from a material, objective essence to a non-material, objective essence to arrive at the notion of God.”²⁹⁶ The “rational”

²⁹⁵ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 9.

²⁹⁶ Pavelka, A. (1946). Křesťanský realismus, přírodní věda a dialektický materialismus. In: *Otázky dneška: křesťanský realismus a dialektický materialismus*. Edited by Pecka, K., 46-83. Brno: Edice Akord, 60.

understanding of faith established the bedrock of the Christian democratic justification of a legitimate place of Christian norms and the interconfessional political parties in the postwar state reconstruction.²⁹⁷

In defining elements of organic pluralism, Christian democratic ideologues accepted secularization²⁹⁸ genealogically, recognizing the secular context of the modern world, but refused it normatively. They pondered that the recent Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and loss of state sovereignty had arisen from the widespread secularization and subsequent “spiritual,” not only material crisis. The ideologues held that Christian moral norms must orient the new postwar polity to avoid a new rise of the “de-Christianized” and “totalitarian” movements. Thus, the ideologues continued in the pre-war Catholic intransigence concerning the normative deficit of modern political regimes. Furthermore, as noted, Christian democrats demanded the priority of Christian ethics over politics, countering the Marxist materialist conception, which considered politics an aftereffect of relations of production.²⁹⁹

ČSL ideologues drew inspiration from Max Picard’s *Hitler in Us*. Following Picard’s perspective, they argued that the modern ethical decline, driven by secular ideologies, unleashed the animalistic aspects of human nature, thereby fueling contemporary social and political conflicts.³⁰⁰ Modern man “turned his back to the spiritual world, values, and goals, renounced spiritual freedom and became a slave of unleashed materiality, subjugated to instincts.”³⁰¹ Additionally, Christian democrats contested the utilitarian moral system that, in

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 90. See also Chudoba, B. (1945). Křesťanská orientace. *Obzory* 1, n. 17, 260.

²⁹⁸ Here, I follow the definition of secularization as a gradual emancipation of the political sphere (and other spheres of human action) from the overarching Christian system. See Luhmann, N. (1984). *Religious Dogmatics and the Evolution of Societies*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.

²⁹⁹ See Gordon (2013). Between Christian Democracy, 180.

³⁰⁰ Tigrid, P. (2000 [1946]). Mravní profil voleb. In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 211-2.

³⁰¹ Kolár, J. (2000 [1947]) Československá kultura, In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 341.

their account, led to the eclipse of the Christian “ethical brakes” that have protected modern democratic regimes from becoming “totalitarian.”³⁰²

In contrast, the Communist Party doubled down on immediate economic and ethnonational explanations to communicate the crisis. For Communists, the 1930s economic crisis, fascist dictatorships, and the “Munich betrayal” stood for the final stage of capitalism and bourgeois liberal democracy, defeated by the (Soviet) socialist forces. Communists constructed a stark discontinuity with the past, symbolized by the anti-Nazi 1944 Slovak National Insurgency and the 1945 Prague Uprising. To counter the discontinuity discourse, Christian democratic ideologues held that fascist legacies linger in the methods and ideology of the Communist Party.

To counter the dialectical materialism and its canon, Christian democrats attempted to privatize the legacy of the founding father of the interwar republic, Tomáš G. Masaryk. They interpreted Masaryk’s legacy in a Christian and liberal-democratic sense. They stressed that the re-injection of Masaryk’s legacy to the postwar conditions could guarantee the core principles the Czechoslovak state was initially built on: human rights, Christian faith, and the rule of law.³⁰³ They also used Masaryk’s legacy to expose the extent to which the Communist Party contradicted these principles.

The architects of Christian democratic ideology underpinned organic pluralism and the crisis discourse with a distinctive concept of philosophy of history. With reference to Maritain, they framed the Christian democratic movement as a “progressive movement,” where “progressive” stood for “a genuinely religious idea that presupposes the absolute goal and

³⁰² Tigríd (1946). *Mravní profil*.

³⁰³ Skácel (1946). *Demokracie*, 10. However, Masaryk’s legacy was hegemonized by Communists and Socialists who portrayed Masaryk as an advocate of the “Czechoslovak road to Socialism.”

meaning of human life and global history to rest in Salvation.”³⁰⁴ This conceptualization of modernity positioned Christian democracy as the sole solution to the malaise caused by modern ideologies. The ideologues presented the movement as transcending historical events, portraying it as an organic and enduring force that stands above the profane history of worldly affairs.

The ideologues decontested the concept of historical progress (widely used by communists and socialists of all stripes) through personalistic vocabulary and a plea against the “abstract,” deterministic historical laws and collectivist account of socialist revolutionary goals that “disregard” human dignity. Contrary to the socialist idea of a one-time political and social revolution that proposes to overcome evil through a “bloody coup,” the idea of personalist progress rested in a permanent but individual revolution toward “perfection” (*Imitatio Christi*): the “revolution of the spirit” precedes any other form of revolution.³⁰⁵

To align the role of the Church with the new postwar context, Christian democrats deployed a (Christocentric) ecclesiastical model rooted in the notions of catholicity, *agape* (spiritual love), and the concepts of *Incarnation* and *Salvation*.³⁰⁶ In particular, the *nouvelle théologie* ambassadors formulated the new function of the Catholic Church in relation to political *criticism* and *relativization* of the immanent order.³⁰⁷ Christians must pursue this mission according to the principle of *catholicity*: socio-political integration grounded in overcoming social, political, cultural, or national “particularities.” The Church must assume a

³⁰⁴ Chudoba, B. (1946). Humanismus a dějiny. In: *Otázky dneška: křesťanský realismus a dialektický materialismus*. Edited by Karel Pecka, 119-155. Brno: Edice Akord, 134

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 152.

³⁰⁶ By emphasizing the “logic of Incarnation,” these ideologues sought to “incarnate” Catholic moral absolutes into the secular public space and shape it. See Shortall (2022). *Soldiers of God*.

³⁰⁷ The strategy of Christian-based critique acquired an essential function in the Catholic and Protestant political theory during the late Socialist era.

new role in the contemporary “age of totalitarianism” than in the “era of liberal indifference”³⁰⁸ – it must facilitate reconciliation and oppose “material totality with the totality of spirit, prayer, and penance.”³⁰⁹ In line with Catholic Action,³¹⁰ the Church was conceptualized as “the mystical body of Christ”³¹¹ that must remain apolitical, deprived of any “party-political inclinations”³¹² and political authority, but cannot resign from the responsibility of the present moment to “re-Christianize” and re-integrate the “tragically broken” modern world.³¹³

Transcribing Maritain *Integral Humanism*, the ideologues pondered that Catholicism must create “the midpoint between extremes, a synthesis between the antinomies of being, join spirit and material in personal unity, connect nature with the Holy Spirit into the sacred cosmos, culture, and religion into the so-called Christian humanism.”³¹⁴ Although organic pluralism “integrates the natural elements into a great organic unity,” the ideologues argued, this unity cannot endanger the autonomy or development of any of its elements; it must “acknowledge the multiplicity, complexity, and differentiation of things.”³¹⁵

The ČSL ideologues went the furthest and pushed the meaning of pluralism close to the liberal notion of “value pluralism.” They did so through the theological concept of *agape* (the highest form of Christian spiritual love and goodness). They argued that *agape* possesses an

³⁰⁸ Hanus, L. (1947). Kresťan a dejiny. *Verbum*, 1947, n. 5, 207 – 217, 214.

³⁰⁹ Kajpr, A. (1946). Sisyfova práca? *Katolík* 9, n. 19, 2.

³¹⁰ Kajpr, A. (1946). “Katolík” zpytuje svedomie na konci roku. *Katolík* 9, n. 31, 1.

³¹¹ The ecclesiological understanding of the Church as the “mystical body of Christ” considered the Church not just as a visible institutional structure but foregrounded its eschatological role in the messianic time. The notion of the mystical body of Christ was reinvigorated in the interwar period through the interpretation of St. Paul’s epistles and instrumentalized by the Catholic Action which emphasized the role and responsibility of the laity for the re-Christianization of the modern world. See Shortall (2022). *Soldiers of God*.

³¹² Kajpr, A. (1946). Její kotva je na nebesích. *Katolík* 9, n. 17, 1.

³¹³ The Slovak personalists were particularly critical of two features of Slovak Catholicism: apologetics and the fortress mentality, that underplay the rich potential of Catholicism and fail to respond to the present moment. See Hanus (1947). Kresťan a dejiny, 210.

³¹⁴ Hanus, L. (1943). Ideové základy 19. a nášho storočia. *Slovenske Pohľady*, n. 8 – 9, 470.

³¹⁵ Hanus (1947). Kresťan a dejiny, 121.

integrative function; it transcends social and political divisions and advances political tolerance. In other words, *agape* organizes political space where different value systems can prosper alongside each other – however – still in the framework of “catholic cohesiveness.”³¹⁶

According to the ideologues, this “agapeic” pluralism respects and tolerates other value systems: “Its attitude stems from deeply experienced and understood faith that necessarily entails compassion for thinking of others, their hardship and prejudice and can overcome these positively.”³¹⁷ Christian democrats held that agapeic pluralism is the only sustainable logic for modern plural society as it can integrate “inhuman” (read Marxist) political ideologies because even the “person” who promotes such an ideology “cannot suppress the desire for goodwill.”³¹⁸ Goodwill was another Christian democratic secular translation of *agape* that, in their view, sets deeper social bonds than any secular ideology can.

In the context of theorizing social pluralism, Christian democratic morphology absorbed the peripheral concept of “civil society” framed as a “valuable [ideological] addition” that facilitates a set of conditions necessary for personal development (the idea of citizenship) and state decentralization (the principle of subsidiarity). The notion of civil society morphed into a core concept of Christian democratic ideology only in the post-communist era in the terminology of “parallel polis” and “non-political politics.”³¹⁹

Despite the self-professed political and social pluralism, Christian democrats, with varying intensity, anathematized Communism in theory and practice. Nearly all anti-communist books, articles, pamphlets, and brochures contesting Communism in the Third Republic came from Christian democratic ideologues who aligned with the global Catholic campaign set out (amongst others) by the 1937 papal encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, which

³¹⁶ Chudoba, B. (1945). Slovenský problém. *Obzory* 8, n. 1, 2.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Chudoba (1947). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 29.

³¹⁹ Skácel, M. (1948). Podstata a úkol státu. *Obzory* 4, n. 7, 106.

considered Communism the primary Catholic adversary.³²⁰ The adjacent notion of anti-communism combined with anti-totalitarianism was the primary Christian democratic polarization strategy,³²¹ augmenting features of vulgar Marxism while ignoring forms of democratic socialism.³²² This strategy was fuelled by the fact that the Social Democratic Party cooperated tightly and shared policy preferences with the Communist Party.³²³ The exclusionary anti-communist element clearly showed that “moderation” has not been the only Christian democratic political strategy in Czechoslovakia and beyond, as some scholars have argued.³²⁴

Christian democratic parties strove to emulate their Western European counterparts’ strategy and transform into a catch-all electoral party. They sought to recruit voters of the prohibited pre-war liberal, conservative, and confessional parties and harvest cross-class support based on universal religious commitments and democratic principles.³²⁵ While the Communist Party stressed unity through class appeal and ethnonationalist repertoires, Christian democrats decontested the metaphor of unity by adopting the notion of “popularism” employed first and foremost by the Italian Democrazia Cristiana. Popularism premised social reintegration based on religious affinities and relations of organic communities within the harmonious natural order.³²⁶

³²⁰ The 1930s Catholic international “crusade” against the Comintern, as Chamedes calls it, was conveyed by the Vatican through Catholic Action and other grassroots associations, political parties, and mass media. The Catholic transnational “anti-communist mobilization” was the largest before the onset of the Cold War. See Chamedes (2019). *The Twentieth Century Crusade*, 4.

³²¹ To distinguish philosophical and theological positions of Christian democracy from secular ideologies, the ideologues advanced a critique of *materialism* that recapitulated all modern vices: secularization, atheism, social inertia, and individualism.

³²² See Berman (2006). *The primacy of politics*.

³²³ Procházka, A. (1946). *Lidová strana v Národní frontě*. Prague: Universum., 6.

³²⁴ Cf. Müller (2011). *Contesting Democracy*.

³²⁵ Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 17.

³²⁶ See Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy*, 80-111.

The Christian democratic parties were forced to deemphasize the pre-war affiliation to the Catholic Church and announced the “interconfessional unification of Czechoslovakia.” However, the ČSL could not implement the cross-confessional strategy fully, given the resilient pro-Communist inclinations of the Czech Protestant churches. In contrast, the initially Lutheran DS successfully transferred the Catholic voters and neutralized the Communist efforts to establish an autonomous Catholic political party that would weaken the DS.³²⁷ This made the DS the first and, until 1989, the only interconfessional party in Czechoslovakia, preceding the German inter-confessional collaboration within CDU/CSU.

Christian Democracy

In the context of growing Communist power and pro-Communist non-state actors that gradually seized the government, state administration, unions, army, and state security, the central ideological concept in the self-presentation of the Christian democratic parties became a substantively defined notion of democracy as *Christian democracy* (*křesťanská demokracie*). To put it differently, the only strategy left for Christian democrats to retain their power positions was the discourse on protecting democratic institutions and the rule of law. Hence, the Christian democratic bet on the democratic form was largely circumstantial and provoked by the nascent Communist hegemony and autocratic hardening.³²⁸

The ideologues claimed constitutive tenets of political liberalism (individual freedom, autonomy, rights) and democracy (the rule of law, political equality, constitutionalism) and argued to have their pedigree in Christianity. Following Maritain, they framed democracy as

³²⁷ Syrný (2010). *Slovenská demokracie*, 226.

³²⁸ To be sure, the moderate ČSL considered party pluralism and democratic rule an acceptable form of political regime already in the First Republic. However, the democratic option gained new currency after the war experience and the adaptation of the French Christian democratic strategy.

an invention of Christianity that must be repurposed for modernity and protected against secular vices.³²⁹

The parties' ideological documents read as a paraphrase of Maritain's chapter on the "True Essence of Democracy" from his *Christianity and Democracy*. They repeated all of Maritain's core characteristics of democracy, including human dignity and rights protection, constitutionalism, democracy as a temporal manifestation inspired by the New Testament, Thomist accidentalism (the ability of the Church to adjust to any political circumstances), and "Christian humanism" as the only movement that can implement and protect democracy.³³⁰

In the following, I will demonstrate that the local Christian Democrats redefined democracy by connecting it to the concepts of equality (*rovnosť*) and the rule of law. They contended that any democratic system must be grounded in a "personalist" constitution that safeguards fundamental human rights against its opponents, and they advocated for legal measures similar to those found in German "militant democracy."

First, egalitarianism, formerly perceived as a liberal affliction contradicting the organic, hierarchically structured natural order, was newly framed as a long-lasting Christian legacy that originated in the "equality of all in Christ."³³¹ It assumed equality of personal dignity and capacities and represented an indispensable condition of any democratic regime and social justice based on solidarity with the least well-off. Nevertheless, anti-egalitarianism was still present in the Christian democratic ideology through the "organically" embedded "natural inequality" amongst the elements of the natural order, specifically in intra-familial relationships.³³²

³²⁹ Martian (1943). *Christianity and Democracy*.

³³⁰ See Maritain, J. (1944). *Christianity and Democracy*, 37.

³³¹ Hanus, L. (1941). Slovenská štátnosť. *KRA* 1, 11-17.

³³² Pimper (1946). *Křesťanský solidarismus*, 76.

As I showed, Christian democrats decontested the concept of popular sovereignty by rejecting the complete transfer of sovereign power to “historically contingent” political institutions determined solely by popular vote.³³³ The ideologues introduced features of militant democracy to confine popular sovereignty, arguing that the interwar Czechoslovak “impartiality” and “proceduralism”³³⁴ proved insufficient to secure political stability:³³⁵ “Political legitimacy based solely on popular sovereignty leads to an absolute negation of democracy witnessed by the Nazi or fascist dictatorships.”³³⁶ Hence, any democratic system must be limited by Christian *ius naturale* inscribed into the constitutional protection of human dignity and rights.³³⁷

Militant democracy was a crucial element in postwar European legal and political theory, in which human dignity and rights served not only as a tool to protect individuals from all-powerful states but also as a legitimate state weapon to curb the rights and freedoms of (internal and external) democratic foes and assure loyalty to the state. In this sense, the political parties in Czechoslovakia that collaborated with the Protectorate regime or Nazi Reich were outlawed after 1945 but paradoxically only braced the autocratic backslide.³³⁸

³³³ Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 45.

³³⁴ To counterbalance the critique of democratic proceduralism, some Christian democratic ideologues argued that democracy could not be grounded only in the protection of human rights principles but also in respect for democratic procedures. See Kolár, J. (1946). Československá demokracie v krizi? *Obzory* 2, n. 28, 440-442. Also the DS circle underlined the principles of popular sovereignty and protection of democratic procedures to reclaim the legitimate political power that resulted from the 1946 parliamentary election against Communist centralizing interventions.

³³⁵ Yet, despite the Christian democratic criticism of the interwar parliamentary democracy, Czechoslovakia used the strictest instruments of militant democracy among the European states. It enacted complex anti-extremist legislation. For instance, the 1933 law explicitly limited political pluralism, allowing, through governmental decrees, to dissolve political parties. Such a decision could be reviewed only by the judiciary. See Capoccia, G. (2002). Legislative responses against extremism. *East European Politics and Societies* 16, n. 3, 692-697.

³³⁶ Skácel (1946). *Demokracie a politické stranictví*, 6.

³³⁷ Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 8.

³³⁸ Greenberg, U. (2015). Militant Democracy and Human Rights. *New German Critique*, n. 126, 169-195.

During the constitution-making process, the ČSL and DS ideologues upheld the necessity of a competitive, plural party system and the constitutional protection of political parties against the Communist constitutional proposal that advanced a unified candidacy list of the National Front and the Assembly's mandate to decide upon the termination of political parties.

Furthermore, Christian democrats contested the Communist constitutional proposal to exclude the Constitutional Court and substitute it with the Board of the National Assembly (legislative chamber), framed by the Communists as the only "absolute sovereign." Christian democrats proposed re-institutionalizing the interwar autonomous status of the Constitutional Court, independent from the legislative power that would have the prerogative to abolish anti-system political parties based on a governmental proposition.³³⁹ Further, in the Constitutional proposal draft, the Christian democratic constitutional experts emphasized that the political party cannot have a military character, reacting to the quasi-military units established alongside the National Committees, primarily loyal to the Communist Party.³⁴⁰

According to the Christian democratic draft, the constitutional court should intervene and balance the situation if there is an extensive majority in the government or legislature. They promoted the system of division of power in which the executive power is controlled by parliament, while parliament is controlled by the Constitutional Court that reviews the potential violation of constitutional laws.³⁴¹

³³⁹ (1993 [1947]). Návrh expertů Pešky, Weyra, Kubeše, Hoetzela, na znění II. kapitoly In: *Příprava Ústavy ČSR v letech 1946-1948 Diskuse v Národní frontě a názory expertů*. Praha: ÚSTR. Edited by Kaplan, K. Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny, 237.

³⁴⁰ (1993b [1947]). Návrh expertů Weyra, Kubeše (za Bulka), Hoetzela a Meissnera ke kapitole II, § 28 nové ústavy ČSR (politické strany). Návrh dr. Weyra, Kubeše, Hoetzela, Buška, Meissnera k § 28, kapitoly II. In: *Příprava Ústavy ČSR*, 235.

³⁴¹ (1993 [1947]). Návrh dr. Meissnera ke kapitole VII (třmoc soudcovská) nové ústavy ČSR o ústavním soudu. Ke kapitole VII Dr. Meissner: Předloha o ústavním soudu. In: *Příprava Ústavy ČSR*, 73-4

Furthermore, the ČSL, DS, and National Democratic Party constitutional experts introduced the concept of the rule of law to the preamble of the Constitutional draft, representing an innovation compared to the 1920 *Constitution*. It was set to protect individuals from excessive state or administrative domination or intervention.³⁴²

Another issue hotly debated in the constitution-making process was the constitutional status of the communist-led Central Trade Union.³⁴³ The Communists tried to incorporate the Union into the National Front and legitimize its status constitutionally. The Christian democratic experts argued against constitutionalizing the Union, foregrounding its zero democratic legitimacy and the dangers of immense political and economic power exerted through strikes and demonstrations, serving only as a proxy for communist interests.

Nonetheless, the push of Christian democratic ideologues for democratization was disqualified by their participation in the National Front government, which prohibited core democratic rules: free party competition and institutional opposition. Another instance of the ČSL undemocratic practice was the practice of top-down mandated candidacy lists or the manipulated elections of the party leadership during the 1946 party convention. Furthermore, the Christian democratic plea for constitutional order and the rule of law was hampered by the ČSL and DS's active or passive support of governmental policies, including the deprivation of citizenship of the German and Hungarian minorities. This double-bind position incapacitated

³⁴² (1993 [1947]., Návrh expertů Pešky, Weyra, Hoetzela; Kizlinka, Kubeše, Buška, Meissnera a Dérera ke kapitole 1, hlavě 1 ústavy (úvodní a všeobecná ustanovení), 4. Červen. In: *Příprava Ústavy ČSR*, 224-226.

³⁴³ The National Front agreed to create an umbrella union organization and abandon the interwar model of partisan dependent unions. The Central Union had over two million members. ČSL and DS had weak influence in the Union but kept influence in the United Union of Czech Peasants, the Union of Czech Academics, and the United Union of Slovak Peasants.

the ČSL and DS from effectively promoting or implementing the tools of militant democracy against the autocratic Left.³⁴⁴

Patria and the West

The recent experience of the state sovereignty loss, occupation, and Nazi terror across Czechoslovakia, postwar populational transfers, territorial shifts, and the existence of the fascist Slovak State discredited any prospects of renewing the interwar Czechoslovak nation-building project.³⁴⁵ And the vacuum of the guiding state principle and uncertain social environment allowed the reconceptualization of Czech-Slovak national identity. In this context, the Communist Party became the most efficient in recreating itself as the most nationalist, escaping the narrow class-based identity and evolving into a dominant catch-all party. The anti-German essence of the communist national conception was justified by the war experience and the Communist Party's resistance reputation. It framed the twenty-five thousand killed Communist Party members as a justification for the expulsion of circa three million ethnic Germans. In the Communist narrative, the economic crisis of the 1930s justified a decisive turn

³⁴⁴ In general, the ideologues perceived the establishment of the National Front as legitimate, though an interim measure, resulting from the elite consensus that can facilitate the postwar democratic consolidation. See Skácel (1946). *Demokracie a politické stranictví*, 17.

³⁴⁵ Czechoslovakism originated in the 19th-century national revival movement, which emphasized Slavic unity, linguistic similarity, and resistance to Germanization and Magyarization. From the start, however, it faced challenges due to differing social and economic conditions among the nations involved, including variations in religious structure, modernization levels, and political contexts between Cisleithania and Transleithania. During World War I, Masaryk's diplomatic efforts helped transform Czechoslovakism into the foundational state doctrine of Czechoslovakia. This doctrine ultimately failed, as evidenced by the state's dissolution in 1938–1939 and again in 1992. Scholars attribute the failure to undemocratic central governance, weak diffusion of Czechoslovak identity, and unfavorable geographical and historical-international conditions. See Kopeček, M. (eds.). (2020) *Čechoslovakismus*. Praha: Academia, 15.

away from economic liberalism. At the same time, the Munich trauma symbolized the beginning of the end of Czech alignment with the West.

Hence, Communists were able to harness the anti-German revanchist wave, combining Czech ethnonationalism with anti-Westernism, pan-Slavism, pro-Sovietism, and an extensive program of economic nationalization. The Communist strategy was based on the idea that systemic economic change, including the confiscation of property from non-Czechoslovak ethnicities and former ruling classes, would transform the social fabric of Czechoslovak society and, in turn, its ideology.³⁴⁶ Also, the Communist Party messaged the economic transformation in nationalistic terms as the “Czechoslovak Road to Socialism” conveyed through parliamentary means.

The Communist Party offered a broad narrative of Czech national history, in which the working classes have been the historical carriers of authentic national and revolutionary traditions, highlighting the Protestant milestones, especially the fifteenth-century anti-Catholic Hussite tradition. The Christian democratic ideologues challenged the Communist self-descriptions through the emphasis on the incompatibility of Communism with the Czech and Slovak (Christian) legacies.³⁴⁷ They contested the ethno-nationalist discourse through the adjacent notion of Christian *patriotism* (*patriotismus*) that emphasized a civic form of nationalism,³⁴⁸ Western civilizational belonging, and supranational governance. While

³⁴⁶ Abrams (2004). *The Struggle for the Soul*, 95. This repertoire was seconded by the National Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party, which held that the postwar crisis dwells in the German element and social, class-based injustice. In addition, both socialist parties were staunchly pro-Soviet.

³⁴⁷ The Communist Party offered a broad narrative of Czech national history, in which the working classes have been the historical carriers of authentic national and revolutionary traditions, highlighting the Protestant milestones, especially the fifteenth-century anti-Catholic Hussite tradition.

³⁴⁸ The spectrum between ethno- and civic nationalism cannot be easily separated; they are glued together. In the Czechoslovak case, I localized the Christian democratic concept of nationhood on the civic side of the spectrum, while the communist on the ethnonationalist. See Mylonas, H., Turod, M. (2023). *Varieties of Nationalism: Communities, Narratives, Identities*. Cambridge: CUP.

Communist ideologues stressed the unity of the working class, unions, and nation, Catholics interpreted the idiom of national and international unity through *Christian humanism*. It was based on the reunification of Czechs and Slovaks, social reintegration centered on religious identities, and the postwar reconstruction of Europe through a new universalist human rights regime.

Christian democrats decoupled the conceptual meaning of nationhood from the ethnic, racial, and antisemitic content of the interwar Catholic integralism and current Communist usage, pondering *nationalism* (*nacionalismus*) to be “one of the most perilous heresies of the twentieth century.”³⁴⁹ Borrowing from Picard’s *Hitler in uns selbst* (1947) and Martin Niemöller’s *God is My Fuehrer* (1941), the ideologues asserted that nationalism is a “natural” human tendency to “worship the absolute.” In modernity, it serves as a surrogate for the lost religious faith and a “veil” for authoritarian regimes. Christian democrats held that the communist and socialist nationalist strategy became the unsavory “highest law,” meaning that “anything goes if it serves the homeland,” and revoked the “Nazi mentality” or “inert Nazism.”³⁵⁰

Nationalism follows from the fact that the “love for the homeland is not grounded in the proper foundations; it is an idol that constantly demands human sacrifice.”³⁵¹ It is driven by the delusion of individuals who lost rootedness, continuity, tradition, and relation to God and oneself due to modernization and industrialization.³⁵² Sponging Picard’s political thought, the ideologues rephrased the theory of the crowd and the “revolutionary psychosis” and

³⁴⁹ Kajpr, A. (1946). Modla nacionalismu. *Katolík* 9, n. 7, 1.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Jehlička, L. (1946). Zrození evropského ducha. *Nové prúdy*.

equalized it with the contemporary forms of ethnonationalism that lead to “totalitarian enslavement.”³⁵³

To offer an alternative to nationalism, Christian democrats devised the concept of *patria* (*vlast*), adopted from the papal encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei*.³⁵⁴ This voluminous concept comprised the highly valued Christian democratic principles: respect for human dignity and rights, responsibility and duties towards the community, subsidiarity, and social solidarity. *Patria* presupposed organic ties between a rooted localism and Christian universalism that fends off the particularity of ethnonationalism or “imperial internationalism.”³⁵⁵

During the constitution-making debates, Christian democratic experts advocated for the autonomy of the Czech and Slovak nations within the federative Czechoslovak state to counter the Communist-led efforts to weaken Slovak autonomy and diminish the influence of the DS.³⁵⁶ The DS particularly emphasized the continuity of Czechoslovakia, aiming to refute accusations of nationalistic and separatist tendencies while promoting greater Slovak political and administrative autonomy within the state. As I demonstrated in previous chapters, the postwar period saw various appropriations of Masaryk’s legacy: some used it to justify the path toward socialism, while others emphasized human rights and constitutionalism. At the foundational assembly of the Czechoslovak Society in 1946,³⁵⁷ the DS leader Josef Lettrich, who also chaired the society, introduced yet another interpretation of Masaryk’s legacy – his support for Slovak autonomy.³⁵⁸ He portrayed the DS mission as a continuation of this legacy, highlighting that the Slovak nation represented by the DS fought for Czechoslovakia and “suffered

³⁵³ Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 12.

³⁵⁴ Pius XI (1922). *Ubi Arcano Dei*, 25.

³⁵⁵ Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 11.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁵⁷ The Czechoslovak Society aimed at reinvigoration of the Czechoslovak idea as the guiding principle of the postwar state-building.

³⁵⁸ Lettrich, J. (1946). *Demokracia pravdy, slobody a spravedlnosti*. *Čas*, n. 57 (9.3.): 1.

physically and morally, prepared and organized armed resistance, and, despite Germany's overwhelming material and numerical superiority, demonstrated its unbreakable will to defeat fascism both at home and abroad.”³⁵⁹

The ideologues argued that the legitimacy of the Czechoslovak Republic could be sustained only through the “subsidiary” regional strategy. For instance, the DS experts urged a “symmetric federation” with a nationwide parliament and political parties during the constitution-making process, but to no avail.³⁶⁰ *Patria*, or *homeland*, was a Christian democratic key to postwar international reconstruction, where each homeland organically and voluntarily joined a global “federative system.”³⁶¹ Besides the Christian-colored patriotism, the ideologues replaced nationalism via the adjacent concept of Europe (*Evropa*), closely coupled with the idea of the *West* (*Západ*). However, this pro-Western stance cannot be taken at face value, considering the profound social and political distrust among the postwar Czechoslovak public towards Western powers, especially after the “Munich betrayal.” Initially, the official ČSL and DS programmatic documents and messaging were pro-Soviet, praising the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army. However, after the 1946 Paris Convention, the Czechoslovak rejection of the Marshall Plan, and UNRRA support, the Christian democratic parties enacted decisively pro-Western orientation, and their foreign policy experts prepared political-economic cooperation plans between Czechoslovakia, France, and the United Kingdom, but to no avail.

The commitment to Western civilizational belonging represented a key innovation in the Christian democratic state-building project that allowed the articulation of the intimate bond between Czechoslovakia, Christianity, and European civilization during the ensuing Cold

³⁵⁹ Lettrich, J. (1945). Slovenská Národná rada odčíňuje národný potupu zo 6. Októbra 1938 a 14. Marca 1939. *Čas*, n. 23, 1–3.

³⁶⁰ Lettrich, J. (1947). Idea Československého státu. *Čas*, n. 177, 2.

³⁶¹ Skácel (1946). *Člověk a společnost*, 11-12.

War. For the Czechoslovak Christian democrats, only supranational governance can secure the international order, provide collective security for the renewed Czechoslovak state, and break the “foolish idea of state sovereignty.”³⁶² Hence, the ideological program underlined elements of what Slobodian termed “militant globalism”: the need to constrain state and national sovereignty and to privilege the authority of international legal human rights norms over the domestic legal order.³⁶³

The German Christian democratic idea of *Abendland* constituted the post-war normative model of French and German reconciliation and assumed a pre-modern, idealized, religiously homogeneous Europe of pre-nation states.³⁶⁴ *Abendland* was a narrow category, implicitly excluding Central Eastern Europe beset by Soviet influence. The post-fascist CDU used it to corral divergent conservative and liberal forces and align with the U.S. requirements.³⁶⁵ In contrast to *Abendland*, Czechoslovaks employed comparatively a more liberal notion of the “West.” It included the French Catholic political theory, accentuating the postwar spiritual renewal, the transnational constitutional propositions of the Liberal International (Salvador de Madariaga), and the project of supranational federation delivered by Winston Churchill’s advisor Emery Reves. Still, the concept of *Abendland* proved instrumental for the local ambassadors to evoke fears of the “occidental collapse” and frame the nascent Cold War division as a clash of civilizations, as a conflict between Christianity and atheist materialism, democracy, and totalitarianism, or “culture and modern barbarism.”³⁶⁶ In this sense, although Christian democrats advocated civic nationalism, they pushed forward exclusionary anti-communist civilisationism.

³⁶² Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 37.

³⁶³ Slobodian (2019). *Globalists*, 15.

³⁶⁴ Forlenza (2017). *The Politics of the Abendland*, 263.

³⁶⁵ Chappel (2018). *The Catholic Modern*, 176.

³⁶⁶ Kolár, J. (2000 [1947]). Československá kultura, In: *Na ztracené vartě Západu*, 342.

The shift in Christian democratic economic thought from the interwar concepts of “Christian solidarism” and “distributivism” to a form of “social capitalism” developed during the Third Republic developed against the backdrop of significant economic transformation, particularly nationalization. The nationalization involved compensating property owners for the takeover of all banks, insurance companies, iron and steel works, mines, and large agricultural and industrial companies with more than five hundred employees. However, the property of Germans, “collaborators,” and other “enemies” of the new Republic was confiscated without compensation. In total, approximately two-thirds of industrial production was nationalized.

The ČSL and DS agreed with the Communist-proposed nationalization program as some elements of the nationalization were already done during the Protectorate.³⁶⁷ However, these parties (successfully) opposed the communist “large nationalization” proposal to expropriate mid-size companies and other economic sectors. Further, Christian democratic parties stood united, although unsuccessfully, against the Communist-proposed millionaire tax that was set to counter-balance the costs of Soviet loans in 1947.³⁶⁸

The ideologues assumed a position of a *third way* (*třetí cesta*) between the Communist command economy and free market liberal capitalist models, devising a cluster of adjacent concepts including democratic corporatism, solidarity, personalist notion of work, private ownership, and a (legally constrained) free market economy.

The postwar Christian democratic ambassadors re-articulated the corporativist principles inscribed in *Quadragesimo Anno* to reconstruct the economic structure of the post-

³⁶⁷ The only member of the government who did not vote for the nationalization plans was the ČSL leader Jan Šrámek. See Kaplan (1993). *Československo 1945-1948*, 22.

³⁶⁸ The Communist Party and Social Democratic Party eventually pushed this law through in October 1947, effectively pauperizing the middle class.

liberal society.³⁶⁹ Due to the strong pre-war links to influential Catholic unions, corporatist concepts were not new in the ideological morphology. What was new was the accent put on the autonomous status of democratically organized unions and their internal pluralism, combatting Communist-led “economic dictatorship,” i.e., centralization efforts towards establishing one umbrella union and legislating party-based appointments to the union boards.³⁷⁰

In 1947, Czechoslovakia was hit by the economic crisis following the turn to central planning, the so-called “Two-year Plan,”³⁷¹ marked by the scarcity of food supplies and housing due to the stoppage of UNRRA support, rejection of the Marshall Plan, and costly loans from the Soviet Union. The Christian democratic ideologues reacted to these negative consequences of economic centralization by conceptually replacing Catholic corporatism with the principles of the German ordoliberal model. Reverting the communist critique of interwar capitalist downfall that gave rise to the fascist movements across Europe, they used Röpke’s “efficiency thesis,” stating that the 1930s economic crisis did not emerge due to a lack of redistribution of capital, even if they recognized that this is an essential state function, but due to the limitation of the free-market competition and excessive state interventions. The

³⁶⁹ The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* warned against state socialism and unrestricted forms of market capitalism with the imperative that both principles of the economic organization must be mitigated by corporations (unions, worker’s councils) and state redistribution.

³⁷⁰ Initially, ČSL ideologues proposed an ideal-typical version of distributivism as an alternative to the failed market capitalism. The corporatist society would be created by private family companies with a limited number of employees. Larger companies would be managed as self-governing hierarchical sets of working communities. The production means would be in the hands of the workers divided into different autonomous sections. These sections would elect their representatives, who would then establish central economic committees on the national level and direct the national economy. Chudoba, B. (1946). *Majetek, práce a sociální úkoly*. Praha: Universum, 12-14.

³⁷¹ The Two-Year Plan was the first directive economic plan in the history of the Czechoslovak economy. It aimed at restoring the Czechoslovak economy, shutting down the rationing (system), and increasing industrial production by ten percent compared to 1938. Further emphasis was put on industrializing the least developed regions, particularly Slovakia.

ideologues newly established that “There is no more humane and cost-saving economy than a market economy.”³⁷²

Further, the ideologues newly adopted Röpke’s ordoliberal propositions and the economic perspective of the Mont Pèlerin Society. For instance, they claimed that Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom* (1944) is reconcilable with *Quadragesimo Anno*’s demand for “depolarisation of the proletariat.”³⁷³ The ideologues contested the economic planning and the command economy model. In line with ordoliberalism, the ambassadors promoted free market competition governed by legal constraints and agencies, corporatist mediation, economic redistribution, peak-level bargaining, and capital concentration mitigation. Yet, this ordoliberal modernization contradicted the Christian democratic ideological concept of anti-statism, considering the necessarily robust state capacity to direct and limit the economy and secure “fair competition.”³⁷⁴

Another fundamental conceptual shift involved the notion of work. The ideologues expanded personalism to the economic sphere to conceptualize work as “self-realization.” In traditional Catholic economic thought, work was understood as a punishment and toll, and Catholics were far from understanding work in terms of virtue. Newly, the uniqueness of every person dwelt in its “capacity to create.” Only in the free market economy can a person develop

³⁷² Skácel, M. (1947). *Hospodářství a politika*. Prague: Universum; Chudoba, B. (1947). Hospodářské ponikání. *Obzory* 3, n. 17, 222-223.

³⁷³ ČSL MP Vaclav Chytil wrote the first review of Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom*.

³⁷⁴ Krarup showed that the origins of German ordoliberalism did not dwell in the Catholic understanding of order but in the postwar political-economic conceptual invention that entangled Catholic and Lutheran thought. He underscores the importance of the semantical difference between the Catholic “ordo” – a divine, objective, and transhistorical order, unchangeable by human agency – and the ordoliberal “Ordnung” – a historically contingent, immanent order based on human agency and individual ethics. The latter notion of order prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s German Christian democratic political economy: the idea of economic order established by an anonymous and mechanistic logic of market competition. See Krarup, T. (2019). ‘Ordo’ versus ‘ordnung’: Catholic or Lutheran roots of German ordoliberal economic theory? *International Review of Economics* 66, n. 3, 308-309.

the full potential and experience freedom through private ownership and entrepreneurial freedom.

Christian democrats contested the Marxist functional-materialist interpretation of human beings (*homo oeconomicus*), arguing that a person is irreducible to an agent of production. Such a perspective would leave only an epiphenomenal status to political and ethical relationships. In contrast, Christian democratic ideologues proposed ethics as the fundament of socio-political integrity. They framed Christianity as the first historical movement attentive to the “dignity of work,” arguing that work and vocation play a key role in forming personal dignity. The work relates man to the world and the natural order. Man cultivates the world through his work and “puts down his roots.”³⁷⁵ However, with the modern capitalist work organization, a person needs freedom outside the working process to escape from a mechanical set of actions and realize his potential.³⁷⁶

To this end, a person needs freedom and necessary social conditions (private property and social security) to develop his economic capacities fully.³⁷⁷ At the same time, private property must be limited by two functions: sustainment and development of personal capacities and private property usage for the common good. The state should have the capacity to constrain the human right of private property and capital accumulation to redistribute it and thus contribute to the common good.³⁷⁸ Hence, although the ideologues contested the principles of a command economy from anti-statist positions, accentuating the “bureaucratic” nature of the state, they introduced a set of state duties.

³⁷⁵ Hanus, L. (1940). Labor improbus. *Slovenské pohľady*, n. 8 – 9, 495.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 499.

³⁷⁷ Pimper (1946). *Křesťanský solidarismus*, 68. As the ideologues repeatedly pointed out, “the most necessary life conditions” must be guaranteed by the state to safeguard personal independence and flourishing.

³⁷⁸ Pimper (1946). *Křesťanský solidarismu*, 128.

In parallel to their Western counterparts, Christian democrats advocated for social transfer in the context of the post-1945 growth of welfare states rooted in the memory of the 1930s economic crisis and the destructive war. In his seminal work, van Kersbergen defined a distinctive type of welfare regime, the so-called “social capitalism” implemented by Christian democratic parties in the European Catholic belt. Extending the ground-breaking work of Esping-Andersen,³⁷⁹ van Kersbergen showed that the Christian democratic welfare regime diverges from the social democratic one even if they record similar social spending. He portrayed the Christian democratic welfarism based on three intertwined elements: Thomist social ontology, the notion of social rights, and distributive justice.

First, unlike social democracy, social capitalism does not recognize the primacy of politics but ethics. It builds on organicist social ontology that implies a theory of inequality in which different strata of society are positioned in mutually dependent and harmonious relationships, not antagonistic. The social disparities based on natural talents and “property rights” should not and cannot be altered.³⁸⁰ This starkly contrasted with the social democratic strategy that sees property relations as a result of social development and the root cause of inequality, injustice, and class struggle that can be transformed through political interventions. Social capitalism strives to “re-integrate” through class compromise and convergence of the elements of the natural order: the market, the state, the organizations of capital and labor, and the family.³⁸¹

Second, social capitalism introduced a distinctive conceptualization of social rights. In line with Catholic social teachings since *Rerum Novarum*, the Christian democratic ideologues decontested private property as a natural and inviolable “human right” and “freedom.”³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

³⁸⁰ Kersbergen (1995). *Social Capitalism*, 189

³⁸¹ Ibid., 186.

³⁸² Chudoba (1946). *Co je křesťanská politika*, 11.

Private property became the kernel of economic relations and, as one of the local ambassadors put it, it “enables man to decide autonomously, and particularly it enables him to develop personal capabilities, that dependence on others would constrain and repress.”³⁸³ Christian democratic economic personalism was concerned only with *pater familiae*, who was entitled to private property to secure the well-being of his family. In contrast, women’s tasks were private and concerned with housekeeping and childrearing. Social capitalism effectively discouraged women from participating in the labor market.

Van Kersbergen pointed out that historically, the Catholic theory saw the pressing social issues as a direct consequence of secularization, i.e., moral downgrade and breakdown of religious institutions due to new secular regimes that produced crowds of the poor. The Catholic social teachings guided the church and lay organizations to remedy this by delivering “relief” through the framework of the moral obligation (*agape*) to give “charity” to re-Christianize the fallen society.

This charity discourse was overhauled only in the 1930s when Catholic social theory pinned down market capitalism as the source of social malaises and moral decadence. Newly, capitalist economic order became for Catholics normatively tenable only if social policies were in place.³⁸⁴ Hence, social policies replaced the role of charity that denied social rights. The Catholic obligation to give without any entitlement to receive contrasted sharply with theories of justice, fundamentally based on the concept of rights. However, the new social capitalist

³⁸³ Chudoba (1946). *Majetek, práce a sociální úkoly*, 11.

³⁸⁴ ČSL ideologues used Werner Sombart’s analysis of the emergence of modern capitalism to explain how modern ideologies and secularization processes dismantled the “harmonious society” and established the “inhuman” capitalist system that led to the destruction of the interwar order. In their narrative, in the pre-modern era, social justice was secured by the “corporatist design.” But the modern capitalist system aimed only at profit maximization, launching the exploitation between men and destroying the pre-modern “society of owners.” Christianity has fought against capitalism and continues to do so during the postwar reconstruction against the last offspring of capitalism: dialectical materialism. Ghelfand, S. (1946). *Marxismus a křesťanský sociální reformismus*. Prague: Universum, 7.

welfarism assumed a state duty to grant social rights.³⁸⁵ This conceptual shift laid down the new Catholic theory of distributive justice and a rightful claim of assistance.³⁸⁶ The Czechoslovak ideologues pressed for the institutionalization of fundamental human rights, as well as social rights, to make fundamental rights work. These included free trade unionism, the right to work, the right to public assistance, and the right to a just wage and family wage.³⁸⁷

Third, social capitalism accentuated “distributional” rather than “social justice.” It privileges providing family allowances, providing income rather than services, and ensuring family responsibility and independence. The state can only have an “assistant role” for the self-management and self-assistance of the lower units, implied by the principles of responsibility and subsidiarity. The ideologues asserted the conceptual bond between private property and individual responsibility to oppose the socialist strategy that aims to collectivize and administer the property by “irresponsible” bureaucrats.³⁸⁸ Raising fears of the nascent socialist state, the ideologues used Hilaire Belloc’s *Servile State* (1912). They argued that “humanistic collectivism” uses “noble motives to brace human society on the road towards the collectivist dictatorship or the slave state.” This path deepens social polarization and state centralization and destroys the middle classes, the “safeguard for social peace.” The economic freedom of “humanistic collectivism” is, in fact, an “organized poverty” that constrains human rights and that “exculpates every enslavement of man by downgrading him to the object of state care.”

For this reason, Christian democrats opposed the Beveridge pension model (1942), which advocated universal flat-rate benefits at a certain minimum level. They held that state-subsidized “existential minimum will cause more people to lose autonomous existence,

³⁸⁵ Kersbergen (1997). *Social Capitalism*, 188.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 196.

³⁸⁷ Kajpr, A. (1947). Ještě o sociální otázce. *Katolík* 10, 3. Kajpr, A. (1947). Obrana lidství. *Katolík* 10, n. 14, 4.

³⁸⁸ Skácel, M. (1947). Co je to socialismus. *Obzory* 5, 72-3.

freedom to choose a vocation and political freedom,” and “represents a road to serfdom.”³⁸⁹ Only subsidiarity can deliver economic decentralization and social depolarization. The ideologues underlined the “spontaneous” and “unconstrained” activity of individuals framed by “the truly liberal principle of subsidiarity” encased in “Christian social teachings.”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Skácel, M. (1947). Rozprava o socialismu pokračuje. *Obzory* 3, n. 8, 122-123.

Table 3: Third Republic Ideological Morphology (*signalizes a conceptual innovation)

Core	Adjacent	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral
*Person	*Individual and universal human dignity and human rights, responsibility, *anti-totalitarianism, *subsidiarity	Collective dignity: family, Church	*Constitutional human rights	*Fundamental human rights violation	x
*Organic Pluralism	Natural order, Catholicity, rational religious worldview, *agapeic pluralism	Moral crisis	*Inter-confessional party	*Critique	x
Christian Democracy	*Political egalitarianism, tools of militant democracy: constrained popular sovereignty, constitutional human rights, the constitutional court	*National Front	x	x	x
Patriotism	Patria, *West, Europe, Christendom, *Czechoslovak federation	*Human rights international order	*Global confederation	*European integration	Slovak autonomy and self-determination
Solidarity	Private property, solidarity, *social rights, *distributive justice, *ordoliberalism, *democratic corporativism	*Limited nationalization, *assistant state	Just wage, family wage, *social security	*Entrepreneurial freedom	*Work as self-realization

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have, for the first time, brought together Christian democratic activists in postwar Czechoslovakia to reconstruct the local ideological tradition. I explored how this ideology was adapted and localized, highlighting its reformulation and integration into party programs, messaging, and issue positions. These findings indicate the need to reconsider the boundaries of the Christian democratic ideological family in Eastern Europe, as local parties developed ideological concepts and programmatic strategies that paralleled those of their Western counterparts.

In the liminal moment of Czechoslovak history, marked by intense political conflict, the local Christian democrats integrated the core principles of political Catholicism with liberal democratic scripts such as individual freedom and rights, political egalitarianism, social and political pluralism, constitutionalism, the rule of law, and civic nationalism. However, they nominally, and in some cases substantially, rejected liberalism, notably by upholding the legitimacy of religious intervention in the political sphere.

The postwar Czechoslovak Christian democratic movement was a central forum for overhauling the authoritarian forms of Catholicism. Christian democratic ideology represented a comprehensive and sophisticated ideology, unlike the communist discourse that remained underdeveloped due to a shortage of trained Marxist philosophers.³⁹¹ The Czechoslovak framing of Christian democracy was also distinctive on the regional level, as no parallel discourse could be recorded in Poland or Hungary.³⁹²

From today's perspective, when Eastern European Catholic political forces are associated with autocratic and illiberal parties,³⁹³ I chronicled a historical episode in which

³⁹¹ Abrams (2004). *Struggle for the Soul*, 199-234.

³⁹² Kosicki (2018). *Catholics on the Barricades*.

³⁹³ Brubaker, R. (2017). Between Nationalism and Civilisationism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, n. 8, 1191-1226.

major self-identified Christian political parties absorbed the liberal democratic language and framed it as a Christian legacy to confront and resist an authoritarian drift, aligning with the nascent Catholic school of Cold War liberalism.³⁹⁴ Another key takeaway of this chapter is that the Christian democratic discourse revealed the conceptual origins of the constitutive elements of mainstream political idioms used by the late Socialist counter-elite.

³⁹⁴ Chappel, J. (2020). The God That Won: Eugen Kogon and the Origins of Cold War Liberalism. *Journal of Contemporary History* 55, n. 2, 339–63.

The Early Cold War Exile (1948-1956)

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how Czechoslovak Christian democrats repurposed the ideological principles during the early Cold War. I examine the institutional continuities that ensured the persistence of Christian democracy and highlight the canonical and conceptual innovations that emerged in response to the Stalinist crackdown on Christian democratic parties and the Christian democratic exile.

Most Christian democratic ideologues escaped Czechoslovakia in 1948 and regrouped in Western Europe and the U.S., establishing exile party structures and entering the Christian democratic internationals. Although some Christian democratic ambassadors remained active in domestic clandestine circles, such as the underground Catholic Action and Christian democratic parties, the development of Christian democratic ideology can be evidenced only through the activities of the Czechoslovak exile. Thus, in this chapter, I tell the story of the exile afterlife of the Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL) and the Democratic Party (DS) and their effort to respond to the Cold War. I contend that this Christian democratic re-launch introduced only a little conceptual novelty. There were only a few exiled Christian democrats with little maneuvering space to influence international politics. To evidence this, I devote more space in the chapter to the institutional explanations, and unlike in the previous chapter, I refer to concrete historical figures when discussing ideological articulations.

From the global Cold War perspective, the Czech and Slovak exile platforms were transient,³⁹⁵ and the activities of these exile political movements winded down around 1956. This decline was primarily due to a shortage of financial resources, the aging of the personnel,

³⁹⁵ Goddeeris, I. (2004). Exiles' strategies for lobbying in international organizations. *European Review of History* 11, no. 3 (2004): 383-400.

changes in the geopolitical landscape following the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Poland, and the détente strategy. However, from the perspective of this dissertation, it is key to trace how Christian democrats managed to adapt to these challenges by relocating from the U.S. to Rome in the 1960s, where they established extensive cooperation with the exiled Czechoslovak Catholic Action. After 1968, the Christian democratic exile platforms provided a refuge for the second wave of exiles after the collapse of the Prague Spring. They remained instrumental in the domestic democratic opposition during late Socialism. They did so by internationalizing the native human rights agenda and transmitting new ideological scripts to Czechoslovakia.

I organize the chapter as follows. First, I trace the Stalinist subjugation of the Christian democratic parties and the set of communist atheization policies. Second, I reconstruct the exiled Christian democratic networks related to the ČSL, DS, and Catholic Action. Third, I zoom in on the ideological re-articulation.

Historical Context

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia is regarded as one of the most oppressive among the Soviet satellites, rivaled only by East Germany.³⁹⁶ In the early years of communist rule, Czechoslovakia underwent a “crash course in Stalinization”³⁹⁷ that replaced the initial national paths to socialism and determined the next four decades of political, economic, and social life. Between 1948 and 1953, Czechoslovakia endured all Soviet inventions: purges, the cult of personality, show trials, suppression of the non-Communist parties and press, shut down of civil society associations, and publishing industry, “Russification,” nationalization, five-years-

³⁹⁶ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 166

³⁹⁷ Rupnik, J. (1988). *The Other Europe*. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 110.

planning, enforced collectivization of the village, and foreign trade orientation to the Soviet Union.

The regime was stabilized by the 1950s domestic economic growth and successful depoliticization of the society. After Stalin's death in 1953, the Czechoslovak Communist Party continued to dogmatically emulate the Soviet model without revising the Stalinist terror.³⁹⁸ Unlike Poland or Hungary, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia did not face civil disobedience except for a few local workers and religious protests. In the late 1950s, the Central Committee of the Communist Party concluded that Czechoslovakia, as the first satellite state, reached a higher form of Socialism, transiting from the "intermediary stage" of the "people's democracy" to "socialism." This success was codified by the new 1960 Czechoslovak Socialist Constitution, which copied the Soviet one.³⁹⁹

In what follows, I describe the ČSL's post-1948 position within the National Front, which will be crucial for understanding its 1968 and 1988 revivals and re-launches of Christian democratic discourse. On the day of the communist-led state coup, the ČSL leadership dissolved the party. In turn, the party leader and the vice-chair attempted an unsuccessful escape from Czechoslovakia, co-organized by the French Mouvement Républicain Populaire. Soon after this event, the pro-Communist cells within the party established Action Committees,⁴⁰⁰ renewed the party, and took over the leadership. Alois Petr (1889-1951), the former chair of Catholic unions, was appointed the new leader. The party redefined the ideological identity from the Third Republic, "Christian democracy," to "Christian socialism," set to combat "liberal individualism" and "capitalism" to emancipate the "working classes."⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ McDermott, K. (2015). *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945-89: A Political and Social History*. N.Y.: Globe Press, 58-73.

³⁹⁹ Rothschild. *Return to Diversity*, 126-127, 167.

⁴⁰⁰ The Action Committees were activist groups established after the Communist takeover to serve as a control and cleansing mechanism in public life. Vaško (2004). *Dům na skále*, 70

⁴⁰¹ See Balík, S., Hanus, J. (2013). *Katolická církev v Československu 1945–1989*. Brno: CDK, 224.

Alongside the ČSL Bolshevization, the early years of the Communist rule also registered local forms of resistance against the one-party state amongst the party members. The ex-MPs formed underground ČSL organizations with the agenda of distributing illegal outlets and smuggling emigrants out of Czechoslovakia. Nonetheless, most of these underground Christian democratic activities were soon revealed and punished.⁴⁰² Moreover, these activities resulted in party screenings and purges. All the party functionaries had to re-submit applications and were inspected by the Action Committees. This measure caused a mass exodus from the party: the membership shrunk from almost half a million members to twenty thousand members in a few years, which then served as an unofficial *numerus clausus* for the ČSL membership until 1968. The ČSL was turned into a satellite party of the National Front, unlike the DS, which was dissolved right after the Communist coup.

After Petr's passing in 1951, Father Josef Plojhar (1902-1981), a symbol of the ČSL collaboration, was appointed the new party chairman and acted as a longstanding minister. In 1951, the ČSL organized a first party convention since 1946. It manifested loyalty to the new regime and reduced the party profile to "Christian Socialism" framed as a legacy of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰³

The Communist Party instrumentalized the ČSL institutional infrastructure to bridge the gap between the Catholic communities and the Stalinist regime. The ČSL functionaries were instructed to persuade peasants and farmers to accept the collectivization of the village and enter the newly established United Agricultural Cooperatives. Furthermore, the state administration installed to the party the Marx-Leninist instruction school to ensure the

⁴⁰² The persecution of Christian democrats continued well into the 1960s. See Cuhra, J. (1997). *Proces s ilegální "křesťanskodemokratickou stranou" v roce 1961*. Prague: AV ČR.

⁴⁰³ Lukeš, B. (2005). Československá strana lidová. In: *Politické strany*. Edited by Malíř, J., Marek, P. Brno: Doplněk, 336.

ideological affinity of the new generation of the ČSL cadres with the guiding principles of state socialism. Ironically, in the late 1980s, the party instruction school became a hotbed of the ČSL anti-Communist “Renewal Stream.”

Despite the party elite collaboration with the new regime for rank-and-file members, the ČSL remained the only platform to associate with like-minded Catholics as it still officially professed the commitment to “Christian morality and social principles.” Functionaries of the mid-party hierarchy in the predominantly Catholic regions facilitated that the ČSL functioned as a subcultural organization,⁴⁰⁴ carrying out some pre-communist activities, such as charitable and voluntary works or pilgrimages. The mid-level functionaries who organized these activities later participated in the party’s renewals in 1968 and the 1980s.⁴⁰⁵

Alongside the obliteration of Christian democratic parties, the Stalinist era was marked by a profound transformation of the state-church relationship that determined Christian democratic activism throughout the Communist and post-communist eras.⁴⁰⁶ The Roman Catholic Church became the most potent adversary of the consolidating Communist power. Consequently, the one-party state enacted the harshest atheization policies amongst the Soviet satellites (except for Albania and the USSR). It was also more successful in limiting the Church’s institutional power.⁴⁰⁷ The Bucharest meeting of the Cominform in June 1948 mandated the Czechoslovak Communist Party to take control over the Church through a fivefold strategy.

First, the state began dismantling the episcopacy and stripping it of its institutional autonomy. Unlike in Hungary or Poland, no Czechoslovak bishops openly collaborated with

⁴⁰⁴ See Enyedi (1996). *Organizing a Subcultural Party*.

⁴⁰⁵ See Mihola, J. Pehr, M. *Lidově, národně, křesťansky*. Prague: Filip Tomáš/Akropolis, 2019.

⁴⁰⁶ A standard reference for an overview of the state-church relationship in the Eastern Bloc is Ramet, S. (1987). *Cross and Commissar*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁴⁰⁷ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 96.

the regime.⁴⁰⁸ The newly established “church commissions” deployed on the district, regional, and national committees had to contra-sign every decision of bishops’ consistories. Another critical milestone following these Stalinist reforms was the monetary reform in 1953 that effectively robbed the Church of its financial reserves, as about ninety percent of the financial assets of churches and orders were lost. This rendered the Church even more dependent on state subsidies.⁴⁰⁹

In 1950, the state administration revoked the 1928 concordat, which ended the diplomatic relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See.⁴¹⁰ In reaction, the Holy See created a parallel structure to the official episcopacy through secret ordains – the so-called Mexican faculties⁴¹¹ – that enabled the local Church to ordain bishops and priests without the state or the Vatican’s approval. Importantly, Mexican faculties sustained the continuous legality of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia until 1989 and paved the ground for the emergence of the underground Church and the democratic oppositional forces in the late Socialist era.

Second, the state began controlling the clergy through state salary and permission. The state decided upon the priests’ placement and created a loyal priest association. Besides, as a deterrence, it launched show trials that resulted in several death sentences and hundreds of imprisonments of the clergy.⁴¹²

Third, the atheization policies cracked down on lay Catholic grassroots movements and centralized Catholic associations. After the coup, the state perceived the Catholic Action as one of the main political threats because of its non-institutional organization. Catholic Action was

⁴⁰⁸ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 86.

⁴⁰⁹ Morée, P., Piškula, J. (2015). *Nejpokrokovější církevní pracovník*. Benešov: Eman, 159.

⁴¹⁰ In Poland the concordats were terminated already in 1945, in Romania in 1948, and in Yugoslavia 1952.

⁴¹¹ The name “Mexican faculties” comes from the policy of Pius XII, who sought to keep the legal continuation of the Church in revolutionary Mexico, which cut off communication channels between the Mexican episcopacy and the Vatican. See Balík, Hanuš (2004). *Katolická církev*, 67.

⁴¹² Ibid., 117.

framed as an “imperial” and “capitalist” intervention of the Vatican. In the bogus group trials and individual processes that began in the 1950s, dozens of Catholic Action leaders were sentenced for state treason and espionage, including Christian democratic ideologues.

The fourth strategy restrained religious instructions and seminaries. In April 1948, the Communist government passed the “Law on Unified School,” which effectively deprived the Church of any influence in the schooling system. All confessional and private schools were nationalized also in terms of property. The termination of mandatory religious instructions followed soon after. Beginning in 1950 and continuing to 1967, religious instructions were only available in state schools.

Fifth, the state shut down all monastic orders. The male orders, such as the Dominicans and Jesuits, were key economic, cultural, and intellectual centers crucial in transferring Thomist knowledge. The female orders were indispensable in social and health services and schooling. After the property transfers that followed the German expulsion, nationalization of industry, millionaire tax, and collectivization of the village, the closure of the religious orders stood for the most extensive property transfer in the history of Czechoslovakia.⁴¹³ The continuity of orders in the communist era was retained through priests-monks' activities and various housing estates.⁴¹⁴

All these atheization policies culminated in 1959 when the Communist Party established atheism as the state’s official ideology. This was further enshrined in the 1960 Constitution, which removed protections for institutionalized religion and guaranteed only the freedom to practice individual religious faith.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 161.

⁴¹⁴ In the 1970s, the religious orders (in particular, Dominicans and Franciscans) became crucial for transmitting the Second Vatican Council doctrine and religious literature through samizdat.

Protagonists and Canon Re-Articulation

In this chapter, I survey the Christian democratic survival strategy in emigration and ideological recanonization. Most of the Christian democratic ideologues prominent in the Third Republic were either imprisoned or escaped to exile.⁴¹⁵ Initially, the exiled ČSL activists were paralyzed by a struggle over the legitimate succession of Jan Šrámek's leadership, which resulted in the party's branching. The major current was established in Paris in 1948, mandated by the ČSL refugees to re-create the party and assume positions in the exiled Czechoslovak governmental structures (the Council of Free Czechoslovakia)⁴¹⁶ and the Christian Democratic international networks. The French incumbent Mouvement Républicain Populaire supported the ČSL, but the ČSL's position weakened after the formation of the new French socialist-led cabinet in July 1948 that prioritized cooperation with the exiled Czechoslovak National Socialist Party.

Programmatically, the exiled ČSL retained anti-Communist positions, supported cooperation with the National Front socialist parties, and tried to imitate the successful European Christian democratic parties. However, some party activists opposed the continuation of the National Front format, which, in their view, caused the Communist takeover in 1948. This rift resulted in the formation of a competing Christian Democratic Movement (*Křesťansko-demokratické hnutí*, KDH) in Belgium in 1951.⁴¹⁷

The KDH detached itself from the continuity and legitimacy claims of the exiled ČSL and assumed uncompromising anti-communist and anti-socialist positions. It published the journal *Rozpravy* as the central party platform funded by the Belgian Parti Social-Chrétien. KDH had around three hundred members dispersed globally (particularly in the U. S.) and

⁴¹⁵ See Suchánek, D. (2007). Počátky exilové politiky Československé strany lidové. *Soudobé dějiny* 14, n. 4, 655.

⁴¹⁶ The Council of Free Czechoslovakia, established in 1949 in Washington, represented the leading platform of the Czechoslovak exile political representation. It was sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe.

⁴¹⁷ Suchánek. (2007). *Počátky exilové politiky*, 663-664

established connections with the German Christian Democratic Union. *Rozpravy* was often quoted and referenced by the German media due to the movement's rejection of the Czechoslovak Third Republic's anti-German legislature and support of the future return of Sudeten Germans to Czechoslovakia. However, after several internal conflicts, KDH dissolved in the early 1960s and had limited influence on exile or domestic Christian democratic anti-communist activities.⁴¹⁸

The ČSL sought to channel political influence in the Cold War era through the international organization called the Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe (CDUCE), which endured until the beginning of the 1990s. CDUCE was among many other internationals in the early Cold War era that aggregated exile political parties of Soviet satellite states. Most of these internationals relocated at the end of the 1940s from Western Europe to the United States because of financial resources offered by the U.S. National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), later renamed Free Europe Committee (FEC), financed by the CIA. FEC supported the activities of Eastern European political elites through Radio Free Europe, the exile Assembly of Captive European Nations, or the Crusade for Freedom and employed these elite refugees in foreign policy analysis, intelligence, or propaganda.⁴¹⁹

The origins of CDUCE can be traced back to the interwar era when the Partito Popolare Italiano initiated the pan-European association of Catholic parties and, in 1926, formed the Secrétariat International des Partis Démocratiques d'Inspiration Chrétienne. It was a loose platform with irregular meetings, promoting the social teachings of the Church and conservative positions. During the war, a small International Christian Democratic Union was established in London and figured the most prominent postwar Western European political

⁴¹⁸ Cholínský, J. (2002). *Poutník Josef Kalvoda – život a dílo historika a ideologa protikomunistického odboje v exilu*. Beroun: Dílo, 116, 154, 205, 213.

⁴¹⁹ See Mazurkiewicz, A. (2009). The Voice of the Silenced People. In: Zake, I. (eds.). *Anti-Communist Minorities in the U.S.* N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 167–185.

elite, including the Czechoslovaks; for instance, the ČSL leader served as ICDU's vice-chairman.⁴²⁰

In 1946, ICDU transformed into New International Teams (Nouvelles Équipes Internationales, NEI), in which ČSL's MP Ivo Ducháček became the vice-president.⁴²¹ The NEI associated actors of Christian democratic and anti-communist orientation who shared good practices from different political and cultural settings.⁴²² As NEI gradually displayed little interest in the Soviet satellites, the exiled Eastern European Christian democrats decided to create an independent structure sponsored by the U.S.

CDUCE was officially established in NYC in 1950 and was comprised of six exile groups: Czechoslovaks, Poles, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Latvians, and Lithuanians.⁴²³ Among the four vice-chairmen was the former ČSL minister Adolf Procházka, who was later appointed the chair of the Executive Committee. Notably, Procházka blocked the application of KDĽH⁴²⁴ and the Slovak neo-popularists (see below) for membership in the CDUCE. The NEI accepted CDUCE as a sister organization.⁴²⁵ Self-described CDUCE's mission was to inform and advise about the fate of the Soviet satellites and prompt the Western states to assume an active role in the "liberation" of Eastern European captive nations.

⁴²⁰ Wolfram, K. (2000). Co-Operation of European Catholic Politicians in Exile, in Britain and the USA during the Second World War. *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, n. 3: 460-463.

⁴²¹ See Nekola, M. (2013). CDUCE Exilová křesťansko-demokratická internacionála ve studené válce. *Securitas imperii*, n. 22, 78-97.

⁴²² In 1965, NEI transformed into the European Union of Christian Democrats (EUCD). Another milestone was the 1967 formation of the European People's Party (EPP). See Cellini, J. (2018). The idea of Europe at the origins of the European People's Party. *JEIH Journal of European Integration History*, 24, n. 1: 79-94.

⁴²³ The executive committee governed the political agenda, administration, and regional branches and commissions.

⁴²⁴ Nekola (2013). *CDUCE*, 83.

⁴²⁵ Közi-Horváth, J. (1952). *Christian Democracy in Central Europe: Achievements and Aspirations of the Christian Democratic Movement*. New York: CDUCE, 6; Gebhardt, S. (2018). The Christian Democratic Union of Central Europe. In: *Christian Democracy Across the Iron Curtain*. Kosicki, P., Łukasiewicz, S. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

The result of the first CDUCE convention in 1953 was the document *The Union's Political and Ideological Platform*. It aimed to unify the participating parties' political programs to establish the Central European Federation after the fall of communism. The convention also commenced the plan to develop the CDUCE office in Ibero-America, with a vision of global Christian Democratic International⁴²⁶ to cement a global anti-Soviet coalition and actively combat communism. The cooperation was based on programmatic support and the Eastern European exile's first-hand experience with the Communist strategy and tactic.⁴²⁷

Notwithstanding, Dwight D. Eisenhower's containment strategy⁴²⁸ and the suppressed 1956 uprisings in Hungary and Poland hampered the aspirations of CDUCE. Besides, in the 1960s, the funds for CDUCE were decreased by the State Department and the CIA, given the new funding priorities in the U.S. foreign strategy. That is why CDUCE activists relocated to Europe and renewed their cooperation with their Western European counterparts and the Vatican. In 1962, CDUCE leaders Konrad Sieniewicz and Bohumír Bunža, in partnership with NEI and Italian Democrazia Cristiana, established the Christian Democratic Institute of Studies and Documentation in Rome, where the analytical and publishing activities of the Union took place together with publishing the monthly *Christian Democratic Review* and a range of political tracts and manifestos.⁴²⁹ In 1964, the CDUCE headquarters was ultimately relocated

⁴²⁶ For instance, Procházka published a book entitled *South America for the Liberation of Central Europe* in 1956.

⁴²⁷ CDUCE published between 1953 and 1964 the Spanish language journal *Información democrática cristiana* (later *Mensaje democrata Cristiano*). Kosicki, P. (2018). Christian Democracy's Global Cold War. In Kosicki, and S. Łukasiewicz. *Christian Democracy Across*, 221-257. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 226.

⁴²⁸ Nekola, *CDUCE*, 88.

⁴²⁹ Gebhardt, *The Christian Democratic Union*, 421-323. Based on my numerous inquiries with Italian archivists, it is probable, that the materials of the Christian Democratic Institute of Studies and Documentation in Rome were lost due to a fire.

to Rome, which proved instrumental in developing and cultivating the publishing activities of the exiled Czech Catholic Action in Rome.⁴³⁰

In parallel with the Christian democratic networks, the Catholic emigres established numerous branches of Catholic Action. In 1950, Czechs founded the Cyril-Methodius Academic League London and a monthly journal, *Nový život*, published between 1949 and 1958. These activities were supported by Pius XII's apostolic constitution, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (1952),⁴³¹ which suggested the strategy of the spiritual administration of displaced faithful and incentivized Catholic clergy and religious orders to establish missions across the world. The *League* organized exiled Catholics and helped the Church in Czechoslovakia financially and materially. Later, it relocated to Rome and was renamed the Czechoslovak Christian Academy, sharing premises with the Czech theological seminary Nepomuceno College, which provided financial and institutional resources and personnel.⁴³² The central activities included publishing religious literature, the journal *Studie*, administering pastoral care for Czechoslovak emigres, providing refugee relief, and smuggling books to Czechoslovakia.

The crucial Catholic Action platform for Slovak exiles became the Centrum Catholicorum Slovorum, established in 1951. It created a publishing house (1955) and a seminary (1959). In 1961, the Centrum was transformed into the Institut Cyrila a Metoda in Rome. It published thousands of copies of religious literature, smuggled them to Czechoslovakia,⁴³³ and published the journal *Slovak Studies*. However, *Slovak Studies* did not articulate a Christian democratic discourse.

⁴³⁰ In 1989, the attempt to transfer the framework of CDUCE to the post-communist reality failed. In 1990, the CDUCE at the Budapest congress elected new non-exile leadership. In the 1992 congress in Bratislava, the CDUCE was dissolved.

⁴³¹ See Nová apoštolská konstituce Exulantská rodina. *Nový život* 2, n. 8-9, 2.

⁴³² Pecháček, J (1957). Křesťanská demokracie, *Nový život* 9, n. 9-10, 195–198.

⁴³³ The religious topics were broadcasted to the Czech and Slovak audiences also through the Radio Vatican.

The Lutheran leadership of the Slovak DS managed to flee Czechoslovakia in 1948, participated in creating the Free Czechoslovak Council, and joined the International Agrarian Bureau. The DS upheld Masaryk's liberal democratic legacy and supported the continuation of a federal Czechoslovak state. The exile DS resumed publishing the journal *Čas* between 1949 and 1959, with headquarters in Washington D. C. Eventually, the DS conflicted with the dominantly Czech Council on the issues of the parity and independent representation of Czechs and Slovaks.⁴³⁴ Based on my textual analysis of *Čas*, I decided to leave out the DS from this chapter as it did not express features of the Christian democratic discourse.

Protagonists Line-up

I include in the Christian democratic canon the early Cold War ideologues who were members of the ČSL, KDH, or Catholic Action and sustained these movements in Western Europe and the U.S. The key journals for articulating Christian democratic ideology were *Christian Democratic Review*, *Rozpravy*, and *Nový život*. Importantly, through CDUCE's bi-weekly *Christian Democratic Bulletin*, with a circulation of fifteen hundred copies, the Czech Christian democrats came to publish their reflections in English. The *Review* informed on the situation in Central Europe, published analyses, memoranda, essays, and edited volumes on Eastern European Christian democratic tradition and contemporary history.⁴³⁵ It was edited by the former ČSL MP Bohumír Bunža.

In the early Cold War, the exiled activists routinized the fundamental ideological concepts established during the Third Republic and expanded them through the Cold War liberal political theory. Alongside authors who were already part of the pre-communist canon

⁴³⁴ Syrný, M. (2021). *Politický exil zo Slovenska po februári 1948 v československom a východoeurópskom kontexte Studenej vojny*. Bratislava: Tlačiareň P+M, 49.

⁴³⁵ Gebhardt (2018). *The Christian Democratic Union*, 79.

(Jacques Maritain),⁴³⁶ the corpus was expanded through Cold War liberals, predominantly Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aaron, Milovan Djilas, and political scientists and historians including Hans Kelsen,⁴³⁷ Maurice Duverger,⁴³⁸ or Arnold J. Toynbee.⁴³⁹

ČSL Circle

Adolf Procházka became a key persona of the exiled ČSL. He assumed a position in CDUCE leadership and contributed widely to its activities, mainly in Latin America. He was widely published in the *Christian Democratic Review*.

Ivo Ducháček relocated in 1948 to New York, where he was appointed a professor of Political Science at CUNY while still serving as the vice-chairman of NEI. He published several monographs on international relations and human rights. From 1949 to his death in 1988, he contributed periodically to the *Voice of America*.

Pavel Tigrid worked at Munich-based Radio Free Europe after emigration and later studied political science at Columbia University. He also contributed to exile Christian democratic journals. In 1954, he became international secretary of the PEN

Centre for Writers in Exile (an umbrella organization for PEN clubs of exiled literates of East-Central Europe). In 1956, Tigrid established the most influential journal of Czechoslovak exile, *Svědectví*, an ecumenical platform for political and philosophical exchange (although initially mostly Catholic), with headquarters in RFE New York. In the 1960s, Tigrid and *Svědectví* relocated to Paris.

Bohumír Bunža (1908-1990), a Third Republic ČSL MP and lawyer fighting for the revision of crimes against ethnic Germans, was active in CDUCE and the Captive Nations. He was an editor-in-chief of the *Christian Democratic Review* and later a member of the *Centre International Démocrate-Chrétien d'Études de Documentation* in Rome. After relocating to Rome in the 1960s, he cooperated tightly with the Christian Academy and became an editor of *Studie*.

⁴³⁶ Želivan, P. (1956). Maritainova cesta ke křesťanství. *Nový život* 8, n. 10, 198-201.

⁴³⁷ Kelsen, H. (1948). *The Political Theory of Bolshevism*. Los Angeles.

⁴³⁸ Duverger, M. (1950). *L'influence des systèmes électoraux sur la vie politique*. Paris: Année.

⁴³⁹ Toynbee, A., J. (1939). *A Study of History, Vol. IV: The Breakdowns of Civilizations*. Oxford: OUP.

KDH Circle

Bohdan Chudoba escaped from Czechoslovakia to France in 1948, where he was employed by the French Ministry of Defence as a translator. In Paris, he established, together with Ivo Ducháček and Adolf Procházka, the exiled ČSL organization. In 1949, thanks to Graham Green, Chudoba joined Iona University in New York and served as a history and political science professor until 1978. In 1953, he became chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), leaving it a year later. Between 1955 and 1965, he wrote hundreds of commentaries and essays for the Czech broadcasting of Radio Nacional de España, established by Franco's government. He received a medal from Pope Pius XII for fighting communism. After the Second Vatican, Chudoba grew into a fierce critique of the Church's modernization. In the 1980s, he cooperated with the conservative journal *Nové Obzory*, edited by exiled Christian

democrats. Chudoba died in 1982 in Spanish Escorial.

Simeon Ghelfand became the exile ČSL general secretary and later a general secretary of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), making a living as a translator and journalist. Ghelfand remained editor-in-chief of *Rozpravy* and the KDH secretary until 1963.

Josef Kalvoda was a member of the ČSL Youth in the Third Republic. In his U.S. exile, he chaired the local KDH branch and later the global KDH network and published the journal *Christian Democracy in Exile*. He studied at Columbia University and then worked and lectured in San Diego. Kalvoda established contacts with the GOP and worked externally for the U.S. Department of State as an instructor for American diplomats to be dislocated in Eastern Europe. He applied several times for the KDH membership in the CDUCE but to no avail.

Table 4: Early Cold War Christian Democratic Ideologues

Name	Position and Affiliation	Resources	Transmission
Bohdan Chudoba (1909-1982) historian	KDH, Chairman	Articles in <i>Rozpravy</i> , <i>Nový život</i> , <i>Meaning of Civilization</i> (1955)	Jacques Maritain, Catholic official social doctrine, Peter Wust
Pavel Tigrid (1917-2003) journalist	ČSL, CDUCE, editor-in-chief <i>Svědectví</i>	Editorials and articles in <i>Christian Democratic</i> <i>Review</i> and <i>Svědectví</i>	Arnold Toynbee, Milovan Djilas, journal <i>Kultura</i>
Adolf Procházka (1900-1970) lawyer	ČSL Chairman, CDUCE Executive Committee Chairman	<i>Christian Democratic</i> <i>Review</i> , CDUCE programmatic materials	Tomáš G. Masaryk, Milan Hodža, Maurice Duverger, Western European Christian democratic programs
Ivo Ducháček (1913-1988) journalist	ČSL, CDUCE, vice- president NEI	Articles in <i>Christian</i> <i>Democratic Review</i> , <i>Voice of America</i>	Milovan Djilas, Hannah Arendt
Bohumír Bunža (1908-1990) lawyer	ČSL, CDUCE, Christian Academy Rome, Editor <i>Studie</i>	Articles and editorials in the <i>Christian Democratic</i> <i>Review</i>	Western European Christian democratic programs
Simeon Ghelfand 1895-1964 economist	KDH, general secretary	Articles in <i>Rozpravy</i> , <i>V předvečer druhého dne</i> (1954)	Papal anti-communist encyclicals, CDU/CSU model
Josef Kalvoda 1923-1999 political scientist	KDH chairman	Articles in <i>Rozpravy</i> , <i>Křesťanská Demokracie</i> , <i>Studie</i> <i>Titoism and Masters of</i> <i>Imposture</i> (1958)	Eric Voegelin

Ideological Morphology

The ideologues continued to cherish the core principle of the person and the related notions of human dignity and rights, which became a pivotal proxy to relate and cooperate with their Western Christian democratic counterparts. The democratic and totalitarian theory became central in the ideological composition, overshadowing the accent on organic pluralism of the Third Republic era. The ČSL and KDH projects were newly self-styled exclusively through the “Christian democratic” label. The Christian democratic inter-ideological struggle concerned the intensity of anti-communism, as the ideologues in the KDH orbit rejected any form of cooperation or reconciliation with the exiled socialist parties. Still, the ČSL and KDH circles refuted “gradualism” and “co-existentialism” as a solution to the Cold War conflict. They devised the doctrine of Soviet satellites’ liberation and civilizational discourses that underscored “Western Christendom” and centered on extolling the United States’ role in emancipating Central Europe.

Besides the programmatic documents, the genres of the Christian democratic corpus dominantly centered on reports and analyses of the Czechoslovak Communist regime. In particular, Christian democrats detailed the local institutional and constitutional changes, repression, and trials against the “class enemies” and injustice towards religious institutions and the faithful. The manifold historical studies constructed an alternative historical narrative to the official communist story. The exiled Christian democrats focused on tracing the factors that led to the Communist takeover with the intent to sustain the historical memory of “what really happened” to combat the Communist propaganda and historical “falsification.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴⁴⁰ Falšovanie historie. *Čas* 1, n. 5., 3.

The emphasis on the Thomist conception of human dignity and fundamental human rights remained central to the ideology. Ideologues dedicated significant attention to discussions on human rights and frequently reprinted international human rights legislation. The language of human rights served as a crucial tool for engaging with Western counterparts and aligning with the Cold War anti-totalitarian discourse that opposed the Soviet Union. For instance, the anti-communist warrior Simeon Ghelfand portrayed socialist regimes as destructive to the “natural, sacred, and untouchable rights of man,” accusing them of “spitting on human dignity and defaming the image of God in man’s immortal soul.”⁴⁴¹ In Ghelfand’s view, human dignity and rights could be implemented only in democratic regimes framed by an often-referred motto, “democracy is personalism.”⁴⁴²

In the tradition of the Third Republic’s anti-communist and civilization anti-totalitarian theory, Ghelfand reiterated the kinship between fascism and communism⁴⁴³ and accentuated the features of one-party rule and state terror. Furthermore, the ideologues claimed the danger of communism was more significant than the one resulting from fascism because fascist totalitarianism “depletes the ideology” in a limited territorial space, unlike communism, which has global ambitions.⁴⁴⁴

Another new Cold War era component of the Catholic totalitarian theory was the contestation of the left “roast beef Catholicism” – “black on the surface but red inside.”⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ Ghelfand, S. (1954). *V předvečer druhého dne*. Brussels, 163.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 162.

⁴⁴³ Ghelfand, S. (1957). *Sny a skutečnost*. *Rozpravy* 5, n. 1. See also Ducháček, I. (1958). Declaration of Human Rights, Ten Years After. Sunday notebook for RFE. *Hoover Archive*, Ducháček Papers, Box 11.

⁴⁴⁴ Ehler, Z. (1954). *Církev a Stát v dnešním světě*, *Nový život* 6, n. 1, 3-4.

⁴⁴⁵ Ghelfand, S. (1953). *Humanitní socialismus*. *Rozpravy* 2, n. 5; Ghelfand, S. (1958). *Ne nazpět, nýbrž vpřed*, *Rozpravy* 5, n. 2, 393; Ghelfand, S. (1958). *Koexistencialisté*. *Rozpravy* 5, n. 2.

Ghelfand specifically rejected any attempt to equate the U.S. with the Soviet Union, as this would downplay the severity of the Eastern European “slave system.”⁴⁴⁶

To rearticulate anti-totalitarian principles, Bohumír Bunža drew on the theories of prominent German Catholic intellectual Waldemar Gurian. Gurian argued that the rise of totalitarian regimes was a “punishment” for modern atheism, which had disrupted the “natural order” and led to the creation of “a new form of society ruled by a totalitarian political and social ideology in which the state, rather than the individual, is regarded as the highest value.”⁴⁴⁷

Borrowing from Hannah Arendt’s *Human Condition* (1958), Ivo Ducháček repeatedly ideologues reported the Communist Party’s “totalitarian attack” in Czechoslovakia on the private (families, Church, and associations) and public domains (prohibition of “free and individual participation in political life”).⁴⁴⁸ The Christian democrats in exile also commenced the discourse that became prevalent in late Socialism and early post-communism, the victimization of Christians and the Catholic Church that suffered the most under the Communist regime.⁴⁴⁹

The personalist perspective remained a vital element of the Christian democratic philosophy of history to oppose the Marxist historiography. For instance, Bohdan Chudoba emphasized ethical personal progress and extra-terrestrial Salvation against “objective” norms of dialectical materialism.⁴⁵⁰ Other activists newly articulated “anti-materialism” through the critique of “mechanization,” “automatization,” and “technologization” that, in modernity, ruled out the Christian moral order. Relying on Romano Guardini’s thesis on the “atomic age” from

⁴⁴⁶ Ghelfand, S. (1958). Hoře z rozumu, *Rozpravy* 5, n. 2.

⁴⁴⁷ Bunža, B. (1957). The Long Way Toward United Europe. *Christian Democratic Review* 7 n. 35, 14. See Gurian, W. (1952). *Bolshevism: An Introduction to Soviet Communism*. University of Notre Dame Press.

⁴⁴⁸ Ducháček, I. (1960). Sunday Notebook, 494/360 from 20. 9.1960, Ducháček Papers. *Hoover Archive*, Box 11.

⁴⁴⁹ Lettrich, J. (1949). O Situacii. *Čas* 1, n 11.

⁴⁵⁰ See Chudoba, B. (1951). Úryvek z knihy “The Meaning of Civilization.” *Nový život* 3, n. 10, p. 2-5.

Das Ende der Neuzeit (1950), they argued that although man has acquired (instrumental) power over things, he lost control over his own power due to the breakdown of the ethical system. This “crippled humanity” set a path towards the current moral crisis, moral indifferentism, and “aggressive atheism” that tore apart religious traditions and “the spiritual development of the nations.”⁴⁵¹ The “Christocentric humanism,” the ideologues argued, was replaced by the new “scientific humanism.” Modern science’s “confined” and “utilitarian” horizons reduced a person to an objectified phenomenon to be studied and controlled.

Christian democrats deconstructed the Communist historical narrative that “falsified the past.” They held that the fabrication of the past amounted to a “destruction of our roots, theft of our independence, and proletarianization not only of the individual but the nation as such.” A “proletarian” epitomized for Christian democrats the incremental decadence of Czechoslovak society and politics. A proletarian was defined as an “uprooted individual, not devoted to anyone or anything, who only knows a devotion to those who feed him. Devotion to the communist state.”⁴⁵²

In constructing the twentieth-century alternative Christian democratic grand narrative, Arnold Toynbee’s *Study of History* was a new addition to the canon, particularly the fourth volume and the idea that the Western world can persist only through a “religious renaissance.” The ideologues deployed the “renaissance” only in the narrow Christian sense, not as the synthesis of the four global religious systems, as Toynbee portrayed. The ideologues weaponized Christianity, claiming that only Christian forces could destroy the Communist bloc⁴⁵³ and that Europe could be re-unified by returning to Christian faith and norms.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Rozehnal, A. (1958). Svědomí národa. *Nový život* 10, n. 10-11, 201-5.

⁴⁵² Den, P. (1958). O kořenech svobody národa. *Nový život*, 10, n. 7-8, 152-3

⁴⁵³ Kolár, J. (1955). A voice from Africa. *Christian Democratic Review* 5, n. 17, 20.

⁴⁵⁴ Brušák, K. (1951). Ani sovětismus ani západnictví. *Nový život*, 3, n. 7, 5-7. Tigrid, P. (1955). Toynbee and East-West Struggle. *Christian Democratic Review* 5, n. 10, 6-7. Concurrently, Christian democrats rebuffed Toynbee’s account of “coexistence” between the two ideal “universal states” sponsored by the U.S. and the USSR.

The Christian democratic ideologues repeated their pre-1948 fear of “proceduralist democracy” that relies only upon popular sovereignty. Instead, they promoted a substantive conception of “Christian democracy.” For them, “real democracy” was rooted in the protection of personalist principles, such as human dignity and rights. They opposed the modern ideologies that sought to relativize “eternal norms” and replace them with “a single social dimension”—whether profit, race, or class struggle—“elevated to the status of a universal principle.”⁴⁵⁵ Despite the fears of state centralism concerning violations of personalist principles, the ideologues underlined the concept of “state capacity” so the state can secure social and political order against “anarchy.”⁴⁵⁶

The innovation in the Christian democratic pluralist talk was the commitment that Christian norms can no longer be conceived as the single value system in modern politics: “Christian Democrats implement their program and ideology only by the persuasion of their co-citizens.”⁴⁵⁷ The ideologues upheld the principles of religious norms’ interference in public space but recognized the necessity of the state-church split.

The ČSL chairman Procházka wrote extensively on the Thomist conception of natural order, the principle of subsidiarity, and the autonomous status of social intermediaries. He argued that these principles were essential for the resilience and continuity of democratic regimes. Procházka emphasized subsidiarity’s “decentralizing” effect, which fosters “responsible citizens” and, in turn, enhances “the democratic quality of the State.”⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁵⁶ Procházka, A. (1954). The Meaning of Democracy. *Christian Democratic Review* 4, n. 3., 5, 10.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Procházka, A. (1958). United Central Europe. *Christian Democratic Review* 8. n. 44, 3-8.

Procházka and other ideologues continued to contest – in the reports on the communist cultural policies in Czechoslovakia – the destruction of intermediaries and creation of an all-powerful “One-Party State.”⁴⁵⁹ He emphasized the role of parties as intermediary institutions and borrowed from Maurice Duverger’s study of party systems to contrast the “totalitarian party” with the “normal” “Christian Democratic party.” The latter stood for “democracy, tolerance, and plurality in politics,” while the former is a negation of the “intermediary” principle.⁴⁶⁰ Further, they called for de-confessionalization and strong cross-confessional collaboration of Christian democratic parties, considering the German CDU as a model.⁴⁶¹

As I already noted, the “Christian democratic” self-stylization allowed the émigrés to signalize their identity and align with their eponymous Western counterparts. Second, it enabled the ideologues to firmly stand on the Western side of the Cold War divide and “resist the lethal danger: global communism.”⁴⁶² The Christian democratic project, as the ideologues saw it, dwelt in the integration of all “humanistic forces through the task to defend European civilization.” Besides, KDH programmatic documents accentuated that the “Christian Democratic” label was an effort to break from the “People’s Party” legacy. For instance, Ghelfand claimed in his *Catechism of KDH* and elsewhere that “We are not popularists but Christian democrats,”⁴⁶³ as the People’s Party, in his view, was accountable for the post-1945 authoritarian turn and Sovietization of Czechoslovakia. The rejection of the popularist legacy was also an attempt to undermine the widely accepted thesis that the ČSL is the only legal fundament for the exiled Christian political platforms.

⁴⁵⁹ Procházka, A. (1958). Christian Democracy and Political Action. *Christian Democratic Review* 8, n. 43, 6-9, 7.

⁴⁶⁰ Pecháček (1957) *Křesťanská Demokracie*, 195-198.

⁴⁶¹ Ghelfand, S. (1953). Ponaučení z německých voleb. *Rozpravy* 4, n. 11-12, 106.

⁴⁶² Pecháček, (1957). *Křesťanská demokracie*, 195-198.

⁴⁶³ See for instance, Ghelfand (1954). *V předvečer*, 80, 154.

In the following, I demonstrate that the Christian democratic ideologues continued to promote the concept of *patria* and a civic form of nationhood but mixed it with a novel civilizational project. The Christian democratic discourse in the Third Republic on the irreconcilability of communism with the Czech national legacy endured in the early Cold War era. For instance, Ducháček argued that Communism “fundamentally represents totality and uniformity,” which directly contradicts nationhood, which stands for “diversity and plurality.”⁴⁶⁴

Furthermore, the ideologues sharpened their positions towards Slovak autonomy and the transfer of ethnic Germans. In the programmatic thesis entitled *Catechism of Christian Democratic Movement*, the KDH program asserted the imperative of Slovak self-determination and departure from the Czechoslovak state-building project: “As Christians, we are against the violent [postwar] reconstruction of Czechoslovakia, and we recognize that Slovaks have the right to an autonomous state.” The program referred to collective human dignity, stating that the “Slovak nation’s natural rights of stateness” stemmed from their “national personality.” Only recognizing national dignity and rights can lead to a genuine reconciliation between Czechs and Slovaks.⁴⁶⁵

KDH circle reasserted the impermissibility of German collective guilt when debating the activities of the expelled association of Czechoslovak ethnic Germans League of Expellees and Deprived of Rights: “We fight against the Munich Agreement, against Beneš’s politics, and we advocate for the right of ousted German countrymen to return to our common home ... because the right to home and homeland stands for a natural human right.”⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ Ducháček, I. (1962). Sunday Notebook n. 626 from 4. 1. 1962, Voice of America. Ducháček Papers. *Hoover Archive*, Box 13.

⁴⁶⁵ Ghelfand, S. (1953) Katechismus KDH. *Rozpravy* 2, 1953; Lettrich, J. (1949). Pomer Čechov a slovakov. *Čas* 1, n. 5., p.1.

⁴⁶⁶ Ghelfand, S. (1957). Lumpárna zdrojem práva. *Rozpravy* 5, n.1, 9.

The trope of federalized “Central Europe,” fringe in the ideological morphology of the Third Republic, assumed a prominent position in the Christian democratic ideology. Procházka reinvigorated Masaryk’s *The Making of a State*⁴⁶⁷ and Hodža’s *Federation of Central Europe*⁴⁶⁸ to restate the transnational political and economic cooperation that would oppose “emotional nationalism” or, in the case of the Communist satellites, “totalitarian internationalism.”⁴⁶⁹

In the early Cold War era, Christian democrats began to appreciate the “Central European” legacy of the Habsburg Empire. In their historical storyline, the Second World War was a result of the inability of the interwar Central European states to forge a unification project after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and the power vacuum it created.⁴⁷⁰ Procházka contended that the “Soviet domination” did not decrease ethnonationalism in the region but figured as its “reinvigorating shot.” The Soviet supremacy, as the case of the 1956 Polish and Hungarian revolts indicated, “fueled national emotionalism to new heights.”⁴⁷¹

Christian democrats called for the establishment of federative and supranational institutional framework.⁴⁷² They reiterated that Czechoslovakia belonged to the “West” despite the local Communist propaganda “aimed at corrupting the spirit of people and swerving their affection from West to East.”⁴⁷³ They employed the term “slave states” of Central Europe and emphasized that Central Europeans would never voluntarily become part of the “Red reign of

⁴⁶⁷ Masaryk, T.G. *The Making of a State*. London, George Allen and Urwin.

⁴⁶⁸ Procházka (1958). *United Central Europe*, 3-8. See also Lettrich, J. (1949). “Střední Evropu!” *Čas* 1, n. 8, 1.

⁴⁶⁹ Ducháček, I. (1957). Nationalism in the Era of Interdependence, *Christian Democratic Review* 7, n. 38, 3.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷² Ghelfand (1954). *V předvečer*, 163. For instance, *Rozpravy*, from 1954 onwards, supported the establishment of the European Court of Justice or the European International Army. These institutions were framed as instruments of international militant democracy with the capacity to intervene in order to secure democracy and human rights. See. Ehler, Z. (1957) *Člověk a Evropa*, *Nový život* 9, n. 7, 155-7.

⁴⁷³ Bunža, B. (1956). From the Heart of Prague. *Christian Democratic Review* 4, n. 8-9, 3-4.

terror.”⁴⁷⁴ The ideologues underlined the uninterrupted pro-Western orientation of the local population and its Christian orientation.⁴⁷⁵

The notion of “Europe” remained a firm part of the ideological morphology and newly underlined the concept of confederative “integration.” United Europe would represent the “end of conflicts among nations, the end of poverty in peripheral regions, uplift of life standards, in other words, termination of everything on which communism capitalized in the past.”⁴⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the ideologues contended that no political power could unite Europe, exemplified by the “incapability to destroy the Iron Curtain.” Therefore, Europe should serve as a regulative idea, a “program of spiritual renewal” anchored in the core European principle of “freedom,” which animates the “European spirit” from Antiquity through Christianity to modernity.⁴⁷⁷

Continuing the pre-communist era legacy of exclusionary anti-communism, the Christian democrats, particularly the KDH circle, articulated the need for a “total ideological war” between the Christian West and secular Communist East, the impossibility of “co-existence” or “convergence” between these two blocs, and advocated for a sharper ideological attitude of the U.S. toward the Soviet Union.⁴⁷⁸ For instance, the KDH chairman Kalvoda contended that Communism cannot be defeated by armies but by a Christian worldview. Hence, the Cold War conflict must be re-interpreted as a “moral problem.” The insufficient appreciation of Christian faith, Kalvoda held, reflected the weaknesses of “Western propaganda aimed at nations beyond the Iron Curtain.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴ Rozehnal, A. (1957). Unfulfilled Promises. *Christian Democratic Review* 7, n. 37, 7-11.

⁴⁷⁵ Tigríd, P. (1957). An Asian Trip. *Christian Democratic Review*, 7, n. 38, 14-15.

⁴⁷⁶ Pecháček, J. (1957). Na cestě k evropské jednotě. *Nový život*, 9, n. 7, 150.

⁴⁷⁷ Želivan, P. (1959) Evropská konfederace a náboženská Svoboda. *Studie* 2, n. 2. 47-52.

⁴⁷⁸ Ještědský, J. (1958). Zahozená léta? *Nový život* 10, n. 4, 66-8.

⁴⁷⁹ Kalvoda, J. (1965). Psychologická válka, *Studie* 8, 74.

In practical terms, the Christian democratic “Doctrine of Liberation”⁴⁸⁰ underlined the appeal to neutralize the Central European states in the footsteps of the Finnish or Austrian cases. The ideologues employed the concepts of “responsibility,” “solidarity,” and “moral obligation” of Western Europe towards Eastern Europe, or “captive nations,” to recreate the “organic European community.” The liberation strategy proposed an open conflict with the Communist power, in which the Christian democrats could aid the West with their first-hand experience with the “communist terror.” The ideologues also referred to the trope of “witnessing” and the global “indivisibility of freedom” facing the division between the “free West” and “oppressed East.”⁴⁸¹

Referring to Eric Voegelin’s concept of “Gnosticism” from his seminal 1952 work *New Science of Politics*, Kalvoda noted, “We must reject the false prophets of coexistence with evil and their policy of surrender. God’s love and love for our neighbor must prompt us to realize the ideal of Christian justice and Christian order in the world and, to this end, wage a psychological warfare.”⁴⁸² Furthermore, Kalvoda introduced a plan of “inner revolutions” in the Soviet satellite states “contingent upon American (Western) help to nations that would decide to revolt against its oppressors.”⁴⁸³ Kalvoda established links to the GOP and, in 1954, submitted a memorandum through the Congress and Senate that consisted of a propaganda plan to incite a general strike and a psychological war in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸⁴ Concurrently, KDH leadership framed the Czechoslovak Council’s soft liberalization strategies (e.g., demands for

⁴⁸⁰ Ducháček, I. (1955). The Crisis Behind the Iron Curtain. *Christian Democratic Review* 5, n. 12-13. Procházka, A. (1956). East-West relations. Speech by prof. Procházka to NEI in Berlin. *Christian Democratic Review* 6, n. 24, 84, 10-11.

⁴⁸¹ Bunža, B. (1953). The Long Way Toward United Europe. *Christian Democratic Review* 7, n. 35, 14.

⁴⁸² Kalvoda, J. (1965). Psychologická válka, *Studie*, n. 10, 74-75.

⁴⁸³ See. Kalvoda, J. (1958). *Titoism*. New York, Vantage Press.

⁴⁸⁴ Josef Kalvoda, the leader of the U.S. KDH branch pushed the agenda through congressman Thomas J. Dodd.

free democratic election under international monitoring) as a Moscow clandestine scheme of Central European “Titoization” conveyed by the socialist majority in the Council.

In general, all Christian democratic ideologues underlined the naivety of the Western governments and the lack of expertise concerning the Soviet Union.⁴⁸⁵ They claimed that the advisors of the U.S. foreign office were “Marxists and socialists” who made the U.S. administration believe that if it confronted the Soviet Union, the Soviets would commence a war against the West. Christian democrats particularly criticized the U.S. foreign policy for legitimizing the Warsaw Pact's entitlement to “militarily intervene against revolutionaries” and for the passivity in the 1956 Warsaw Pact's interventions in Poland and Hungary.⁴⁸⁶

After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, Procházka and others questioned the new Soviet “democratic” and “anti-colonial” course. They opposed the idea of co-existentialism and gradual cooperation between the Western and Eastern blocs as the Soviet Union continued to exploit and “pauperize the population” of Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁸⁷ Citing Milovan Djilas's *Conversation with Stalin* (1961) as a standard reference, Ivo Ducháček downplayed the significance of Soviet reforms, asserting that “Stalin still lives in the social and spiritual foundations of Soviet society.”⁴⁸⁸ In the context of Global South decolonization, Ducháček invoked the concept of national emancipation to advocate for the liberation of Soviet satellites, challenging Moscow's efforts to suppress “democratic nationalism,” as demonstrated by the 1956 crackdowns in Poland and Hungary. In other words, the ideologues contended that there could not be genuine and durable co-existence between East and West as long as the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Europe.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ Ghelfand, S. V úloze kasandry. *Rozpravy*.

⁴⁸⁶ Kalvoda, J. (1957). Běh k propasti. *Křesťanská demokracie*, 318-320.

⁴⁸⁷ Procházka, A. (1956). East-West relations. *Christian Democratic Review* 6, n. 24, 84, 10-11.

⁴⁸⁸ Ducháček I. (1964). Sunday Notebook 636. Ducháček Papers, *Hoover Archive*, Box. 13,

⁴⁸⁹ Burda, P. (1958). A Warning Lesson. *Christian Democratic Review* 8, n. 39, 15.

However, there were also dissenters amongst the émigré Czechoslovak Christian democratic Cold War warriors who incrementally appreciated elements of the convergence strategy. For instance, Pavel Tigrid, the prominent Christian democratic journalist of the pre-Communist era and the central figure of the exile from the 1960s onwards as the editor-in-chief of the exile outlet *Svědectví*, even before 1956, relativized the dogmatic Cold War framing, stating that “during all these years of the Cold War, we in the West have made quite an art of picturing our world as totally good and the Communist as totally evil. But, our picture of the free world was not only incomplete but rather naïve and, to a searching mind, untrue.”⁴⁹⁰

Tigrid accentuated the necessity of dialogue with the pro-democratic oriented Communist currents, stating that “the doctrine of liberation by force is misguided.” In his view, only negotiations and incremental internal change within the Communist zone of power can alter the situation in Central Europe and cause the collapse of communist regimes.⁴⁹¹ Around 1958, Tigrid started to promote, alongside other authors from the Eastern Block, the idea of “gradualism,” deconstructing hard-core binaries of the Cold War.⁴⁹² In turn, various Christian democratic streams opposed Tigrid for an “appeasement” approach.

Social Market Economy

The core concepts of a free market, private property, and social solidarity remained central but were not redefined.⁴⁹³ The ideologues focused on criticizing the “dismal” Soviet-style command economy, highlighting the dysfunctions of the Communist welfare system,

⁴⁹⁰ Tigrid, P. (1954). Challenge to the West. *Christian Democratic Review* 4, n. 7, 3-4.

⁴⁹¹ Tigrid, P. (1955). A time for action. *Christian Democratic Review* 5, n. 14, 24.

⁴⁹² Tigrid views were very close to *Kultura*’s editor in chief Juliusz Mieroszewski. See Kosatík, P. (2013). *Tigrid, poprvé*. Praha: MF, 110, 185

⁴⁹³ Ghelfand (1954). *V předvečer*, 166-173.

particularly its exclusionary social insurance. They contrasted this with the success of the "social market model" in the West, praising the economic "miracle" in West Germany.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Ghelfand, S. (1957). 40 let socializmu. *Rozpravy* 5, n. 3, 2.

Table 5: Early Cold War Ideological Morphology (*signalizes a conceptual innovation)

Core	Adjacent	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral
Person	Human dignity, human rights, responsibility, anti-totalitarianism, anti- communism and anti-socialism	*Consumerism, *Mechanization	Memory Politics: *February 1948 as a “ <i>coup d’état</i> ” *Proletarian *Church and faithful as victims	x	x
Christian Democracy	Political egalitarianism, tools of militant democracy: human rights constitutionalism, the rule of law, state capacity *international right of intervention	Legitimacy of religious worldview	*Communist atheization and cultural policies	Natural order, agape, organic communities	x
Patriotism and Supranationalism	Patria, West, Europe, Christendom, *Central Europe	Global human rights regime, European integration	*Liberation strategy (psychological warfare), *Eye-witnessing	Slovak autonomy *Return of ethnic Germans to Czechoslovakia	*Rejection of gradualism and co-existence
*Social market economy	Private property, free-market economy, solidarity	*German economic miracle	x	x	x

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the persistence and transformation of Czechoslovak Christian democratic ideology during the early Cold War era. I traced the afterlife of displaced postwar Christian democratic ideologues in the exiled Christian democratic political parties' internationals and Catholic Action. By detailing the institutional continuities and innovations that arose in response to the Communist ascendance to power and the Cold War, I underscored the resilience and adaptability of the Christian democratic movement.

The ideologues expanded their intellectual framework by incorporating the political theories of Waldemar Gurian, Hannah Arendt, and Eric Voegelin. They infused Christian democratic ideology with early Cold War anti-totalitarian and civilizational themes, crafting a “liberation strategy” for Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe. This approach sparked an internal ideological struggle centered on whether to adopt an exclusionary or moderate form of anti-communism, which in turn either rejected or endorsed the idea of convergence. This period also marked the beginning of an alternative Catholic national history writing, focused on preserving an “authentic” memory and constructing “Central Europe.” The content of this historical narrative became crucial during the late Socialist period and the early post-communist era.

Appendix: Slovak Neo-Popularist Exile

To contrast the development of the Czech Christian democrats, in this chapter, I trace the Slovak 1944 exile composed of the Slovak State high-ranking officials – the so-called “neo-popularists.”⁴⁹⁵ The neo-popularists re-articulated Slovak secessionist demands through newly

⁴⁹⁵ The interwar, “old-popularist” generation advocated Slovak autonomy within the Czechoslovak Republic, while the young radicals, the “neo-popularist,” advocated “separatism” and “political totality” in the 1930s and 1940s and orientation towards the Third Reich. Badinská, M. (2021). *Politický exil zo Slovenska po februári 1948*

established international networks, sustaining the ethnonationalist discourse but enclosed in the “Christian democratic” label.

In exile, the neo-popularist networks swiftly fragmented. They established the Slovak Action Committee in Rome in 1944, in 1949, renamed the Slovak Liberation Committee, figuring Ferdinand Durčanský (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), Štefan Polakovič (former chief ideologue of Tiso Youth Organization), or Jozef Kirshbaum (former general secretary of HSLŠ). The Committee held a radical theory of legal continuity of the Slovak State. For these ideologues, March 14, 1939, marked a legal creation of the “Slovak Republic,” legitimized by over thirty countries. The Committee held that the 1945 renewal of Czechoslovakia went against the will of the Slovak nation. This exiled circle was forced to escape Rome and relocate to Argentina as Czechoslovak officials pushed for extradition.

Neo-popularists, until 1944, self-defined national socialists began to message the ethnonationalist discourse by appealing to the European “Christian democratic” tradition.⁴⁹⁶ The Slovak State autonomy, previously secured by the Nazi project of “New Europe,”⁴⁹⁷ should be newly protected by the European Communities. Neo-popularists, self-described as the only carriers of Slovak Catholicism and the Slovak State legacy, actively undermined the postwar Czechoslovak state’s legitimacy and legality – for instance, in a memorandum sent to the 1946 Paris Peace Conference. The 1947 execution of the former President of the Slovak State, Jozef Tiso, was framed as Czech revenge for the Slovak autonomous state.⁴⁹⁸ In the late 1950s, neo-popularists updated the ethnonationalist rights talk with the popular “decolonization” discourse

v československom a východoeurópskom kontexte Studenej vojny. Bratislava: Tlačiareň P+M, 95; see also Rychlík, J. (2012). *Češi a Slováci*, Prague: Vyšehrad, 348.

⁴⁹⁶ For instance, Polakovič advocated that popularism be remoulded into the Western European Christian democratic model. See Polakovič, Š. (1952). *Na prelome dvoch období*, Buenos Aires, 71-2.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid. 94.

⁴⁹⁸ See for instance apologetics on Tiso by Čulen, K. (1947). *Po Svätoplukovi naša druhá hlava*. Prvá katolícka slovenská jednota.

and “liberalization” from the “Czech-Communist” imperialism, predicting a Third World War that should destroy Czechoslovakia.

Besides, neo-popularists forged an alternative narrative of Slovak history to restate the right to self-determination and blur the fascist past. For instance, the Committee leader Durčanský, in his 1954 *White Book*, published in Buenos Aires, emphasized that the popularist legacy had nothing to do with fascism and Nazism and referred to the Slovak State as a “Second Slovak Republic” that should become a firm part of the European Communities. Durčanský offered an alternative tale to the generally accepted historical framework, arguing that the Slovak State was created and governed by Slovaks, not by Nazi Germany. Yet, Durčanský claimed that Nazis were somehow able to force the Slovak government to transfer tens of thousands of Jews to extermination camps.

Furthermore, neo-popularist historiography contested Czech centralism, Czechoslovak “undemocratic” rule, and “colonial exploitation of Slovakia.” It posited that the 1944 Slovak National Uprising was, in fact, a Red Army clandestine operation. The postwar Czechoslovak system of the National Front stood for “totalitarian dictatorship” and bore responsibility for the Moscow-orchestrated takeover in 1948. Hence, the existence of the Czechoslovak state represented a barrier to cooperation in (Central) Europe as German, Slovak, and Hungarian minorities were either suppressed by the state or forcefully displaced.⁴⁹⁹

Another key neo-Popularist ideologue, Štefan Polakovič, combined the Third World postcolonial justice discourse with the notion of “national ontology.”⁵⁰⁰ Polakovič accentuated only the “natural” and “group” aspects of Christian personalism through the idea of the “national personality” of Slovaks. Unlike the Czech Christian democratic “Liberation doctrine”

⁴⁹⁹ Durčanský, F. *The national question in Communist theory and practice*.

⁵⁰⁰ Polakovič, Š. (1960). Presun záujmu: od národa k osobe, *Most*, n. 1, 52–56, 56.

that targeted the oppressive logic of the Soviet hegemony, the Slovak strategy combatted the Czechoslovak state and “Czech-Bolshevik agents” in the exile Czechoslovak Council.⁵⁰¹

The second notable neo-popularist branch was instituted in Rome as the Slovak Foreign National Council, chaired by the former Slovak State’s Vatican ambassador, Karol Sidor. The Council later moved to London⁵⁰² and then Montreal, where Sidor founded a short-lived and only-on-paper Slovak Christian Democratic Party and closely cooperated with the Slovak League in America (the largest platform of the Slovak diaspora in the U.S.).⁵⁰³ The party aimed at autonomous Slovakia in federalized Central Europe.⁵⁰⁴

The Slovak neo-popularist exile of the 1940s represents a case of a frozen, ethnonationalist ideology. Until the 1960s, the neo-popularist emigration styled itself at the forefront of anti-Communist and anti-Czechoslovak resistance and warriors for the renewal of Slovak state sovereignty. They promoted the same ideas as in the 1940s but with different wording. For instance, Štefan Polakovič, the critical ideologue of the Slovak State, presented in the 1970s and 1980s an updated primordial conception of the nation.⁵⁰⁵ He rejected the current “constructivist” political science concepts, arguing that the nation is natural, created by God.⁵⁰⁶ Polakovič drew from Maurice Blondel and presented the nation as a “pneumatic community” independent of the state. He devised “personalist” nationalism, arguing that “nation is an image of God, similarly to a human person. That is why the nation has an eschatological meaning.”⁵⁰⁷ Hence, nations are “immortal,” like the human soul. The

⁵⁰¹ Polakovič, Š., *Na prelome dvoch období*, 53.

⁵⁰² Vondrášek, V., Pešek, J. (2011). *Slovenský poválečný exil a jeho aktivity 1945-1970*. Bratislava: VEDA, 10-79.

⁵⁰³ Badinská (2021). *Politický exil zo Slovenska*, 102.

⁵⁰⁴ See for instance Paučo J. (1952). *Čo po komunisme*. Middletown, 25.

⁵⁰⁵ Polakovič defined nation substantively by language, land, habits, religion, history, tradition, race, and culture.

⁵⁰⁶ Polakovič, Š. (1982). *Čo je národné bytie?* Hamilton: Zaharniční matica slovenská, 22.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. 22.

“pneumatic power” is embodied in the Slovak nation through “prophets,” such as the interwar leader of Slovak popularists, Andrej Hlinka. Furthermore, Polakovič innovated his nationalist conception with Karol Wojtyła's “cultural nationalism” and Poland's messianic tradition as a “chosen nation” that he extrapolated to Slovakia.⁵⁰⁸

However, the neo-popularists were marginalized amongst the 1969 Slovak émigré circles for their fascist past.⁵⁰⁹ In 1970, Štefan Roman, a wealthy Slovak-Canadian entrepreneur independent of neo-Popularist circles, established the Slovak World Congress (SKS) that integrated first and second-wave emigrants, the nationalistic and moderate streams of Slovak exiles. However, the moderate stream became dominant.⁵¹⁰ SKS was self-styled as Christian democratic with the vocabulary of human rights and religious freedom. SKS was founded at the Constitutional Assembly in New York, underlining the anti-communist and anti-fascist outlook. It sided with the Western-style democratic, pluralist system and cross-confessional appeal.

SKS assumed a secessionist position, advocating for Slovak self-determination within the framework of European integration.⁵¹¹ Furthermore, SKS failed to integrate reform Communists and did not establish links to the Slovak or Czech dissidents.⁵¹² After ten years, the actual political program was born, entitled *Základy a politické ciele SKS*, accepted by the General Assembly in 1981 in Toronto. It did not bring many innovations. It mentioned the

⁵⁰⁸ Polakovič, Š. (1985). *Za život národa za trvanie štátu*. Hamilton: Zaharniční matica Slovenská, 187–193.

⁵⁰⁹ The neo-Popularist émigrés lobbied in the 1990s amongst Slovak politicians for Czechoslovak dissolution. They offered a historical narrative of Slovak emancipation in the “Second Slovak Republic,” but to no avail. Slovak Republic did not paint any relation to the Slovak State and became strictly anti-fascist. However, the Cold War books of neo-Popularists were published in Slovakia, combining post-colonialism and nationalism against the threat of post-modernism and globalism. See Lenčesová, M. (2023). *Štefan Polakovič a slovenský politický katolicizmus*.

⁵¹⁰ Hruboň, Šušová (2021). *Ludácka politická*, 121.

⁵¹¹ See Špetko, *Slovenska emigrace*, 1987, 211-2.

⁵¹² Ibid, 214

values of Christian personalism, anti-totalitarianism, Slovak belonging to Western civilization, Slovak state autonomy, democracy, and Christian democratic tradition. SKS played only a marginal role in forming the post-communist Christian democratic parties in Slovakia.

Christian Democratic Prague Spring (1968-1969)

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I chronicled the Christian democratic homegrown and exiled institutional networks in the 1940s and 1950s and constructed the ideological composition. In this chapter, I move toward the late 1960s *Risorgimento* of the Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL) during the 1968 Prague Spring. I ask how the pre-communist Christian democratic ideological legacy was reinvigorated and adjusted to the sea changes brought by the Second Vatican Council, "socialism with human face," and the Marxist-Christian dialogue. I show that the 1960s were crucial for the onset of the new generation of domestic Christian democratic activists that prepared the ground for the late Socialist Christian democratic opposition and post-1989 political party formation.

1968 was a "global event and a local moment of crisis."⁵¹³ In the West, the dissenters from the Left attempted to develop an independent counter-language to revert the course of the postwar political development. However, Jan-Werner Müller pointed out that it depended on the aged Marxist critique.⁵¹⁴ In this chapter, I show that the Czechoslovak Christian democrats also remained somewhat confined to the old Christian democratic language, particularly Thomist personalist discourse, when contesting the communist autocratic system from the Right. Yet they could innovate thanks to the Second Vatican and Marxist-Christian dialogue. They offered what Agnes Heller dubbed "the alternative imagination" rooted in human dignity, conscience, and rights talk that determined the post-1968 political struggles. In this chapter, I highlight that the Prague Spring should be read not only as a moment of Czechoslovak socialist modernization but as a Christian democratic, too.

⁵¹³ Tismaneau, V. (2011). Introduction. In *Promises of 1968. Crisis, Illusion and Utopia*. Edited by Tismaneau, V. Budapest: CEU, 6.

⁵¹⁴ Müller, J., W. (2011). What Did They Think They Were Doing? The Political Thought of (the West European) 1968 Revisited. In: *Promises of 1968*, 73-103.

I structure the chapter as follows. First, I offer an elementary context of the Prague Spring and present the reader with the transmission of the Second Vatican Council to Czechoslovakia. I turn to a short genealogy of Protestant postwar political theory to shed light on the emerging inter-confessional cooperation. Finally, I reconstruct the ideological morphology of the Christian democratic Prague Spring.

Historical Context

The third re-launch of the Czechoslovak Christian democratic ideology unfolded against a backdrop of the Communist Party-initiated reforms toward democratic socialism known as the Prague Spring. The drive for de-Stalinization in Moscow, along with Nikita Khrushchev's 1961 intervention with the Czechoslovak Communist Party to push for a judicial review of the 1950s trials and purges, led to extensive presidential amnesties in 1962. These amnesties laid the foundation for an autocratic opening and the emergence of new opposition movements led by released prisoners.⁵¹⁵ The Soviet-driven de-Stalinization, which exposed state brutality and the illegal practices of the 1950s, destabilized the Czechoslovak autocratic regime.⁵¹⁶ Additionally, from 1962, Czechoslovakia experienced a severe economic crisis marked by zero GDP growth, goods shortages, and a negative foreign trade balance. These factors collectively weakened the Communist Party's grip on power and sparked conflict between conservative and reformist factions within the party.

The Slovak section of the Communist Party launched a campaign against Prague's centralizing efforts and, by 1966, had removed all pro-Prague members from the Slovak party branch. Communist Party General Secretary Antonín Novotný attempted to suppress the

⁵¹⁵ McDermott (2015). *Communist Czechoslovakia*, 100-101.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid. 119.

reformist movement but was ultimately unsuccessful. In January 1968, he was replaced by Slovak reformist Alexander Dubček.⁵¹⁷ Dubček committed to state and economic reforms, building a “socialism with a human face” while asserting the undisputable leading role of the Communist Party.

Key policies of the Prague Spring included the relaxation and eventual abolition of censorship, a presidential amnesty, the rehabilitation of political prisoners, and a public review of Stalinist-era terror and purges. While public debate began to address the possibility of federalizing the state, it remained silent on challenging the Communist Party's leading role or the dominance of the Soviet Union. In addition to the Communist Party's reform wing, several non-socialist movements emerged, such as the reformist branch of the ČSL and the Catholic Conciliary Work Movement, which focused on implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in Czechoslovakia.

The Prague Spring reforms also included the liberalization of state church policies, with proposals to end bureaucratic control over churches and to release citizens who had been prosecuted and sentenced for faith-based activities.⁵¹⁸ These policies led to the renewal of hundreds of priestly permissions and the reinstatement of bishops to their offices.

In light of these groundbreaking changes, Catholic lay activists published the *Open Letter of Catholics Imprisoned for Faith*,⁵¹⁹ addressed to the general secretary Dubček. It was formulated by amnestied former leaders of the Catholic Action and called for the Church's access to media, renewal of religious orders, re-evaluation of state permissions, renewal of religious instructions in schools, and priestly ministry in prisons or hospitals, stating that the regime must comply with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The *Open Letter*

⁵¹⁷ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 169.

⁵¹⁸ Novotný, V. (2014). *Odvaha být církví. Josef Zvěřina v letech 1913-1967*. Prague: Karolinum, 286.

⁵¹⁹ Mádr, O. (1968). Otevřený list katolíků vězněných pro víru, 21. 3. *Literární listy*, n. 4.

pleaded for allowing the Church re-organization in line with the Second Vatican Council and for the continuation of the Christian-Marxist dialogue. The subsequent *Petition on the Removal of Injustice in the Religious Domain* contained similar demands and was signed by over one hundred thousand believers.⁵²⁰

In July 1968, the Communist Party approved two documents reconfiguring the state-church relationship. The first liberalized religious instructions renewed the religious orders, terminated the censorship of the Catholic press and internal Church communication, and relaxed the procedures for obtaining state permission. The second document served as the state's ideological guideline for the liberalized Church policies that should rest in a "dialogue," recognizing the plurality of socialist society and the necessity of state-church separation.

However, these promising developments alarmed Moscow in the summer of 1968. The Soviet Union pressured General Secretary Dubček to reinstate censorship, curb the internal liberalization of the Communist Party, and silence the regime's critics. Dubček's reluctance to comply with these demands led to unsuccessful bilateral negotiations. As a result, the Warsaw Pact forces occupied Czechoslovakia in August 1968. This intervention effectively reversed the reforms toward democratic socialism and replaced the Communist reformist wing with "normalizers." As a result, the invasion and the introduction of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" damaged the Soviet Union's reputation as the sole geopolitical power capable of protecting Czechoslovak autonomy. It weakened the Communist Party's leading role and fueled the rise of reformist, anti-regime democratic opposition from both the Left and the Right.⁵²¹

⁵²⁰ Cuhra, J. (2018). K rezistenci v rámci Katolické církve. In: *Projevy a podoby protirežimní rezistence v komunistickém Československu 1948–1989*, 54-80. Edited by: Vilímek, T. Prague: USD, 44.

⁵²¹ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 172.

To understand the ideological continuity and change in the local Christian democratic canon, I examine the critical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and their transfer to and diffusion in Czechoslovakia by local Catholic and Protestant ambassadors. Many Catholic activists who struggled for religious liberty in the 1940s became again active in the Church and ČSL structures after the 1960s amnesties.

For instance, Oto Mádr, the chair of Prague's Catholic Action in the 1940s and a prominent figure in the underground Church during late socialism, formulated the Catholic Action's overarching programmatic theses in 1951, just days before being sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment.⁵²² Mádr argued that Catholic Action under Stalinist oppression must lead the crusade against global communism, which imposed on the world "Marx's Gospel."⁵²³ Mádr suggested a militant position of the Church to "destabilize" and "unmask" Marxist ideology. He underlined the importance of individual faith and autonomy from the official Church so the Czechoslovak Catholics could "remain firmly connected with the "mystical body of Christ," and urged keeping alive the Catholic Action to sustain the connection with the Vatican.⁵²⁴

Mádr's program corresponded with Pope Pius XII's demands, which saw zero space for a compromise with Communist governments. In his 1951 pastoral letter, *Impensiore Caritate*, addressed to persecuted Czechoslovak bishops, priests, and laics, Pius XII appealed for a strict anti-Communist position and the commitments of personal religious faith and "conscience."

This type of early Cold War Catholic exclusionary anti-Communism was re-evaluated by the papacy of John XXIII (1958-1963) and his encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and

⁵²² Mádr, O. (1992 [1951]). *Slovo o této době*. In: *Slovo o této době*, 209-212. Prague: Zvon.

⁵²³ Novotný (2014). *Odvaha být církví*, 209.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

Pacem in Terris (1963) together with the decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Second Vatican Council and related encyclicals initiated the Catholic *Aggiornamento*, adaptation, and acceptance of pluralist and democratic conditions of modern society and politics (at least on paper). For instance, the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was, for the first time, addressed to all human beings, not only Catholics, who are unconditionally endowed with inalienable human dignity and rights. *Pacem in Terris* relaxed the bipolar geopolitical distinction between the Communist and the Christian world, followed by the new Vatican *Ostpolitik*, which re-opened diplomatic talks between the Vatican and Soviet-controlled states.⁵²⁵ *Pacem in Terris* nudged Catholics to work and collaborate in economics, society, culture, and even politics with atheists and other confessions and religions. In line with this new course, the succeeding pope, Paul VI, in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), defined the Church as a “dialogic community,” stating that dialogue with communists is inevitable.⁵²⁶

Pacem in Terris introduced a new epistemological principle to guide Catholic theology: “the signs of the times.” This principle signaled a new approach to the Church's relationship with the secular world. It emphasized the importance of studying contemporary reality using modern scientific methods before determining how the Gospel and Catholic doctrine principles can address specific historical challenges. The signs of the times marked a significant shift in the methodological order of theological inquiry. Rather than evaluating immediate historical realities through doctrinal lenses and reaffirming the Church's rights and authority, *Pacem in Terris* advocated for assessing historical realities using various modern scientific methods before making normative theological judgments. Similarly, the conciliar decree *Gaudium et*

⁵²⁵ For instance, the encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram* (1959) replaced the Pius XII's anti-communist policy of “ex-communication and containment.” Kosicki, P. (eds.). (2016). *Vatican II Behind the Iron Curtain*. Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 15.

⁵²⁶ Opatrný, A (2002). *Kardinál Tomášek a pokoncilní proměna pražské arcidiecéze*. Prague: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 21.

Spes endorsed this "anthropocentric" and "temporal" shift, highlighting the importance of addressing global social inequalities and supporting workers' rights, particularly in the Third World.⁵²⁷

In addition to the relaxed anti-communism and the newly defined principles of theological inquiry, another significant Catholic innovation emerged in the field of ecclesiology. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* relaxed the Church's stiff hierarchical order by expanding the power of episcopacies (creation of national bishop conferences) and bringing more autonomy to the lower structures of the Church. Crucially, the decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* underlined the independent role of lay apostolate and underscored the synodal principle.⁵²⁸

The dissemination of Vatican II's documents in Czechoslovakia was notably constrained due to the political and religious climate of the time. In 1967, only select excerpts from the conciliary documents were translated and made available to the public. These were published in the state-controlled Catholic journal *Duchovní pastýř* (*Spiritual Shepherd*). Furthermore, only a limited number of copies of key documents like *Gaudium et spes* and *Lumen Gentium* were printed.⁵²⁹

Besides, the library in the Prague Archbishop's Palace was supplied with rich literature that covered the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliary theology thanks to the provisions of the West German Catholic Church.⁵³⁰ After the 1968 relaxation of censorship, the newly created Christian journals *Obroda* (*Renewal*) and *Via* (*Via*), sponsored by the ČSL, introduced a critical debate over the conciliary outcomes. In 1968, the ČSL publishing house Vyšehrad

⁵²⁷ Horn, G.-R. (2015). *The Spirit of Vatican II*. Oxford: OUP, 15-17.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

⁵²⁹ Novotný (2014). *Odvaha být církví*, 287.

⁵³⁰ Skoblík, J. (2007). Vzpomínky na přítomnost. In: *V zápasech za Boží věc*. Edited by Poláková, J., 21-29. Prague: Vyšehrad, 22.

could renew its activity, distributing works by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and reprinting Max Picard and Jacques Maritain's political treaties published in the Third Republic.

However, only the exiled Czech Catholic Action housed by the Christian Academy in Rome published between 1966 and 1983 a comprehensive nine-volume edition entitled *The Second Vatican Council – Documents*⁵³¹ that entailed translations and commentaries of the conciliary decrees. The Christian Academy journals *Nový život* (*New Life*) and *Studie* (*Studies*) also published conciliar materials and commentaries. Interestingly, the official translation of the Second Vatican Council documents, authorized by the Czech Bishop Conference, was published only in 1995.

The critical addition to the Christian democratic canon was the French *nouvelle théologie* Jesuit personalist, paleontologist, mystic, and geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955),⁵³² who enjoyed a global, post-mortem popularity in the 1960s.⁵³³ Censured by the Vatican, Teilhard strove to reconcile theology and science, using the language of modern science and a set of neologisms. In his story of entangled material and spiritual evolution, he underscored the embeddedness of humankind's "evolution" in the framework of Salvation.⁵³⁴ He introduced a new theological genre in which transcendental questions are discussed secondarily, sometimes only in the last sentence.⁵³⁵

Teilhard contended that human activity always points towards God. He translated the notion of spiritual love (*agape*) into the concept of "convergence" that defines the evolutionary

⁵³¹ (1966-1983). *Druhý Vatikánský sněm – dokumenty*. Rome: Křesťanská akademie.

⁵³² Flynn, G., Murray, P. (2012). *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*. Oxford: OUP.

⁵³³ Teilhard work incited a cult in the 1960s and 1970s and was exploited by various movements, including anti-colonialist, New Age, or Liberation Theology.

⁵³⁴ Za hranicemi filosofické antropologie. *Via* 3, n. 4, 49-51; Bendlová, P. (1967). *Teilhard de Chardin, Nová naděje katolicismu*. Prague: Svoboda, 57.

⁵³⁵ See, for instance, the structure of Charles Taylor's seminal *Secular Age* (2007). Cambridge: HUP.

process. For Teilhard, God is an intrinsic part of evolution, moving, unifying, and integrating evolution toward the ultimate “point Omega.”⁵³⁶ Humankind has a unique role in evolution because of its ability to be oriented towards Salvation. Teilhard remained faithful to the Thomist precepts, including anti-individualism and anti-totalitarianism and the Christian responsibility to engage in political life.

Teilhard’s work was first broadcasted to Czechoslovakia through the Marxist historian of religious thought, Peluška Bendlová. She published, alongside her work on *Neo-Thomism* (1965), a monograph entitled *Teilhard de Chardin, the New Hope of Catholicism* (1967) that complexly presented Teilhard’s philosophy to the Czech readership.

However, Jiří Němec, a young Catholic activist⁵³⁷ and later a key organizer of Charter 77, nicknamed a “priest without a collar,” became the Czechoslovak ambassador of Teilhard. He translated and published numerous excerpts of Teilhard’s work in the early 1960s in one of the few non-socialist journals, *Tvář*. In 1967, he translated and published Teilhard’s *Groupe Zoologique Humain*.⁵³⁸ Němec emphasized Teilhard’s new conceptualization of engaged and non-institutional faith, re-Christianization of the secular world, the norm of “convergence,” and the dialogic Church. The Christian-oriented journals *Obroda* and *Via* launched a debate concerning the limits of de Teilhard’s theological method and its discrepancies.⁵³⁹ Alongside the local reception, the exile journal *Studie* devoted a special issue⁵⁴⁰ to Teilhard, and *Studie*’s editor-in-chief, Karel Vrána, published a monograph *Teilhard de Chardin* in 1968.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁶ Bendlová (1967). *Teilhard de Chardin*, 54.

⁵³⁷ Blažek, J. (2011). Doslov. In *Dopisy z Ruzyně a nové šance svobody*. Němec, J. *Dopisy z ruzyně*, 208.

⁵³⁸ Novotný (2014). *Odvaha být církví*, 368-393. Another translation of Teilhard’s essays was published in Czechoslovakia in 1970.

⁵³⁹ Pecka, K. (1969) Teilhard de Chardin. *Obroda* 2, n. 3, 18, Ondok. (1968). Problém filosofické metody Teilharda de Chardina, *Via* 1, n. 4, 48-9.

⁵⁴⁰ *Studie* devoted a special issue to Teilhard de Chardin in 1967 (issue 13).

⁵⁴¹ Vrána, K. (1966). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Nový život*, n. 8, 7-8. Or see the Slovak publication of Lubac, H. de. (1964) *La Priere Du Pere Teilhard De Chardin*.

The most significant domestic movement that sought to implement the conciliary decrees was the Council Work Renewal. Established in March 1968, it replaced the loyal-communist Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy, dissolved by Prague's bishop František Tomášek.⁵⁴² Tomášek chaired the Council, while the presidium was partially laic. Amongst the key activists was the old generation of activists of the pre-communist Catholic Action, but also a new cohort of Catholics. The movement established committees in the dioceses and elected delegates for the first nationwide meeting in May 1968. The movement issued the *Council Work Renewal Action Program*, a parallel title to the Communist Party's reform document entitled *Action Program*, which recapitulated the Catholic "wish list" concerning religious rights, the creation of independent Bishops' Conferences, the renewal of theological faculties and seminaries, and Catholic lay organization.

In May 1968, the ČSL officially recognized and politically supported the Council. The Council also seemed an acceptable partner for the Communist Party as it articulated communist-friendly principles of the Second Vatican Council and lacked strong ties to the Vatican. However, after the Warsaw Pact invasion, the state administration refused to legalize the movement. The movement shortly continued illegally but terminated all its activities in 1970.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, the "normalizers" blocked the conciliar reforms, such as the Bishops' Conference or the Office of Deacon. However, the Church and the lay networks of the Council managed to maintain the lay mobilization through underground Church circles, samizdat circulation, and democratic opposition (see next chapter).⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Novotný, *Odvaha být církví*, 365.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 116.

⁵⁴⁴ Cuhra, J. (1999). *Církevní politika KSČ a státu v letech 1968-1972*. Prague: ÚSTR, 72

Before examining the cooperation between Catholics and Protestants that emerged in the mid-1960s, it is necessary to briefly return to the pre-communist and Stalinist periods to provide a foundational understanding of the essential elements of Protestant political theory that shaped these later developments. I do so through the lens of the largest Protestant denomination, the Brethren Church, and the intellectual history of its foremost public intellectual with an international reputation, Jan Lukl Hromádka (1889-1969).

The Brethren Church was established in 1919 by unifying several smaller congregations. It contained two major currents with an intellectual center at the Hus Evangelical Faculty at Charles University in Prague. First, the prevalent liberal Protestant current was close to President T. G. Masaryk. It valued the religious-inspired ethics with a resolute anti-Catholic stance. Catholicism was seen as an outdated, dogmatic, and authoritarian institution, sharply contrasting with the effort to build a liberal democratic Czechoslovakia.⁵⁴⁵

The second stream involved public intellectuals such as Josef Hromádka. Hromádka studied theology in Vienna, Basel, and Heidelberg under Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth. He developed sympathies for Russia and Orthodox Christianity, influenced by his experiences as a chaplain on the Eastern Front during the First World War.

Hromádka, drawing on elements from Barth's "new orthodoxy," argued that liberal Protestantism had replaced God-given objective norms and the objectivity of Revelation with subjectivism and individualism, thereby substituting religious substance with culture and politics. Inspired by Karl Barth's *Römerbrief* (1918),⁵⁴⁶ Hromádka used "dialectical theology" to rebuff any possibility of cultural, moral, or political synthesis with the Gospel. In Hromádka's interpretation, this development resulted from the Czech Protestant historical

⁵⁴⁵ See Herben, J. (1927). *Otázka náboženská v našem probuzení*. Prague: Čin.

⁵⁴⁶ See, Paul S. (2008). *Karl Barth: God's Word in Action*. Cambridge. James Clarke & Co.

legacies burdened by the nationalistic and cultural agendas of the fifteenth-century Czech Reformation and the nineteenth-century national revival movements.⁵⁴⁷ Besides, he relativized the Protestant anti-Catholicism through the project of “evangelical catholicity.”⁵⁴⁸ In 1921, he co-founded the Czechoslovak branch of the YMCA and edited the influential interconfessional journal *Christian Review*.⁵⁴⁹ Hromádka was committed to liberal democratic principles and actively supported the nation-building efforts led by Tomáš Masaryk.

During the Spanish Civil War, Hromádka cooperated with the Communist Party,⁵⁵⁰ and in 1939, fled the Nazis to the U.S. to lecture at the Princeton Theological Seminary.⁵⁵¹ In 1947, he returned to Czechoslovakia and was appointed the dean of the Hus Theological Faculty. He began to develop his political project of integrating Christian spirituality into the socialist revolution that he believed should be carried out by the Communist Party. Although Hromádka held a genuinely pro-democratic and pro-liberal stance throughout the trans-war era, after 1945, he forfeited his liberal and democratic commitments in favor of the socialist transformation.

Following Barth’s *Geschichte der Protestantischen Theologie* (1932), Hromádka’s “theology of crisis” underscored the relationship between Revelation and history, while theology should become a tool to overcome historical situatedness, emancipate man, and transform history in the direction of Salvation.⁵⁵² His Manichean theological vision determined

⁵⁴⁷ See Rádl, E. (1925). *Válka Čechů s Němci*. Prague: Melantrich.

⁵⁴⁸ Hromádka adopted the concept of “evangelical catholicity” from a Lutheran bishop, Nathan Söderblom, whom he encountered in 1924 in Prague. He used the concept to revitalize Protestantism by integrating it with other resources of Christianity, including Catholicism. Hromádka, J., L. (1931). *Křesťanství v myšlení a životě*. Prague: Jan Leichter.

⁵⁴⁹ Putna, M. (2008). Katolíci a levice. *Lidé města* 10, n. 1, 46-49.

⁵⁵⁰ Hromádka, J. (1945). *Naše dnešní orientace*. Prague: Henclova tiskárna, 24

⁵⁵¹ At Princeton, Hromádka encountered the prominent neo-orthodox Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and after the war used his critique of “bourgeoise democracy.” Niebuhr’s work was transmitted to Czechoslovakia thanks to Hromádka through the 1947 translation of the *Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*.

⁵⁵² Kosuke, N. (1999). *Niebuhr, Hromadka, Troeltsch, and Barth. The Significance of Theology of History for Christian Social Ethics*. N.Y.: Peter Lang Publishing.

Hromádka's conceptualization of politics, seeing the world beset by a struggle between "sin and evil" that creates anarchy and tyranny.⁵⁵³ To oppose the chaos triggered by modern secular ideologies and the atrocities of the Second World War, Hromádka argued that order must be restored through every citizen's loyalty to the new social and institutional structures.⁵⁵⁴

Although Hromádka extolled traditions of European humanism, he stressed that without "conscience" and "compassion," secular modernity is sentenced to doom. Hromádka was deeply influenced by Mikhail Dostoevsky's *Writer's Diary*⁵⁵⁵ and adopted his criticism of Western modernism, especially scientific positivism, individualism, and secularism.⁵⁵⁶ In his reading, modern rationalism presupposes human reason to be the ultimate sovereign and authority that necessarily contradicts God's authority. But, in Hromádka's conception, rationalism historically led to man's disorientation and ultimately to the negation of rationality witnessed by the past two world wars: "Man denied reason and declared himself a powerless expression of natural development and social environment."⁵⁵⁷

Hromádka, diverging from Christian democrats, chose not to return to liberal democratic principles. Instead, he endorsed the "Czechoslovak Road to Socialism." He perceived the political crises of the twentieth century as rooted in moral decay, further exacerbated by the crises of liberal capitalism, parliamentary systems, and property ownership. He read the "Munich trauma" as the end of the liberal democratic era that is to be substituted by the "age of socialism" that should also become the primary national conception.⁵⁵⁸ As he stated: "We can only yearn for the final and definitive end of rotten European liberalism and

⁵⁵³ Hromádka (1945). *Naše dnešní orientace*, 14.

⁵⁵⁴ Smolík, J. (1969). Úvod. In: *Pravda a život*. Edited by: Hromádka, J., L. Prague: Kalich, 7-9

⁵⁵⁵ Dostoevsky, F. (2009). *A Writer's Diary*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

⁵⁵⁶ Hromádka, J., L. (1946). *Z druhého břehu. Úvahy z amerického exilu*. Prague: Jan Leichter, 42.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Hromádka, J., L. (1946). *O nové československo*. Prague: YMCA, 13.

capitalism.”⁵⁵⁹ He rejected liberal notions of party pluralism and private property, arguing that these liberal elements are misused by “reactionary forces” that seek to renew social injustice and protect the economic interest and power of “big industry and financial institutions.”⁵⁶⁰ Hence, Hromádka rejected “conservative and reactionary elements” that hamper the future collaboration between “Anglo-Saxon democracies”⁵⁶¹ and the Soviet Union.⁵⁶²

Unlike Catholics, Hromádka focused on social rather than political human rights. In doing so, he connected the concept of the person to social rights, social justice, and responsibility while downplaying the significance of political autonomy and economic freedom. Hromádka rejected the Catholic notion of natural dignity and rights through a Christological perspective. He argued that dignity is not something one receives automatically. The Incarnation and Crucifixion symbolized for him Christ’s service, compassion for every single person, acceptance of “total responsibility,” unconditional “subordination to authority,” and “individual sacrifice.”⁵⁶³ Thereby, he conceptualized human dignity in a Christological, performative mode⁵⁶⁴ – one grants dignity to others through responsible practice for the “organic community.” Hromádka underlined not only individual obligations but also state duties to guarantee “social rights” and realize social justice so the “weak and poor” can enjoy “human dignity.”⁵⁶⁵

Until 1945, Hromádka underlined that human rights were superior to the state authority: “Neither the state nor political life are the highest values. If a state or politician conflicts with

⁵⁵⁹ Hromádka (1945). *Naše dnešní orientace*, 33.

⁵⁶⁰ Hromádka (1969 [1948]). *Pravda a život*, 63.

⁵⁶¹ This civilizational differentiation was used by Stalin. See Stalin, J. (1946) *Marxism and the National Question*.

⁵⁶² Hromádka (1946). *Z druhého břehu*, 79.

⁵⁶³ Ibid. 27-28.

⁵⁶⁴ Hromádka used the notion of responsibility (*odpovědnost*) interchangeably with the concept of “faith,” as faith means an individual response (*odpověď*) to Revelation (God’s grace). Hromádka (1946). *O nové československo*, 59.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

the higher ideals of the human person, soul, and dignity, they must yield.”⁵⁶⁶ However, in his *Amsterdam Letter*,⁵⁶⁷ written one month before the Communist takeover and addressed to the first general assembly of the World Council of Churches, Hromádka relativized the primacy of human dignity and rights. He argued that democratic processes cannot operate “normally” during the period of socialist state-building. As Hromádka summarized: “Discipline, service, responsibility, self-control, and self-sacrifice are, under certain circumstances, more important than human rights.”⁵⁶⁸

Hromádka uncritically supported the expulsion of ethnic Germans, aligning with the Communist narrative of German collective guilt.⁵⁶⁹ Hromádka’s position was reinforced by the struggle over distributing the confiscated property of the banned German Evangelical Church between the Czech Brethren Church⁵⁷⁰ and the Czechoslovak Church. In November 1945, just after the retribution law was passed, Hromádka warned against German revanchism: “We must not deceive ourselves into thinking that the difficult Czech-German issue has been permanently resolved. It appears that the events of the past fifteen years left us with no option but to remove the German element from our land through revolutionary means.”⁵⁷¹ Hromádka asserted that

⁵⁶⁶ Hromádka (1946). *Z druhého břehu*, 114.

⁵⁶⁷ Hromádka was invited to present his views on the role of religion and churches to the World Council of Churches to contrast the presentation of Foster Dulles, the future U.S. foreign secretary, who considered only the Western Christendom to be the future space for the flourishing of freedom. See Matějka, O. (2007). “Jsou to berani, ale můžeme je využít”. Čeští evangelíci a komunistický režim 1948-1956. *Soudobé dějiny*. 14, n. 2-3, 325.

⁵⁶⁸ Hromádka, J. (1969 [1948]). *Pravda a Život*. Prague: Ústřední církevní nakladatelství, 66.

⁵⁶⁹ To balance Hromádka’s positions, several Brethren Church intellectuals adopted different positions. Also, the resolution of the Czech Brethren Synod from March 1946 approved the German transfers but condemned the violence. See Morée, Piškula (2015). *Nejpokrokovější církevní pracovník*, 206.

⁵⁷⁰ See Abrams (2004). *The Struggle for the Soul*, 80. The preparation committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) pressured the Czechoslovak Protestant churches to uphold the fundamental human rights of the German ethnic minority. Consequently, the Czech Brethren Church decided to step out from the structures of the WCC and renewed its membership only in 1947. Morée, P., Piškula, J. (2015). *Nejpokrokovější církevní pracovník*, 34-42.

⁵⁷¹ Hromádka (1946). *Z druhého břehu*, 6.

the hardships and violations of human rights experienced by ethnic Germans represent “a small measure of retribution for the immense debt owed by Germany and the German minorities under Hitler's leadership.”⁵⁷²

The relativization of human rights was not the only point of divergence from Christian democratic ideology. Hromádka also rejected the “totalitarian thesis” that equated Nazism with Communism. Hromádka defined Nazism as a *sui generis* German phenomenon, as a “dark unrest in German soul.”⁵⁷³ He held that the Catholic “oversimplified” equation between totalitarianism and the Soviet regime diminishes any dialogue between East and West. Additionally, to render the East an acceptable civilizational option for Czechoslovakia, he interpreted “Soviet humanism” as originating in the Christian Orthodox legacy⁵⁷⁴ and urged to integrate the global division through an all-encompassing, universalistic project of “Christian humanism.” Hromádka curated the communist ideology as a “concentrated Christian theology, often radically anti-ecclesiastical,” that cares for the poor.⁵⁷⁵ He added that “When stripped of its materialistic and dictatorial elements, Communism reflects the Christian aspiration for responsible love, albeit in a secularized form.”⁵⁷⁶

Finally, Hromádka did not read ordoliberal German Protestant thinkers but took inspiration from Leonhard Ragaz's interwar Christian socialist ideas developed before the 1930s economic crisis.⁵⁷⁷ Hromádka outright rejected any capitalist form and announced its

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Hromádka, J., L. (1946). *Z druhého břehu*, 43.

⁵⁷⁴ Hromádka interpreted the Soviet Union through the lens of Dostoyevsky, making the bold assertion that “to understand Dostoyevsky means to understand Soviet Russia.” By this, Hromádka suggested that the roots of Soviet social justice and equality policies could be traced back to the Russian humanistic Orthodox tradition of the nineteenth century. Hromádka (1946). *Z druhého břehu*, 70.

⁵⁷⁵ Hromádka (1969 [1948]). *Pravda a život*, 67.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁷⁷ Hromádka was influenced by Ragaz's 1929 *Von Christus zu Marx – von Marx zu Christus*, translated to Czech in 1935. See also Linhart, F. (1947). *Dialektický materialismus a křesťanství*. Tábor: Akademický klub Tábor.

historical demise. He had no scruples with relativizing private property rights and supporting the enlarged nationalization projects of the Communist Party or the economic planning as he considered social revolution inevitable for building new social and political order.⁵⁷⁸

Hromádka's case exemplifies the political position of Czech Protestant activists in the Third Republic. Protestants, rather than reconciling Christianity and liberalism to build a "third way" project, attempted to come to terms with radical socialism and reorient Czechoslovakia toward the Soviet Union. The Czech Brethren Church's synod⁵⁷⁹ (and evangelical Czechoslovak Church) expressed loyalty to the new regime and remained a reliable religious minority until the 1960s.

Therefore, the state administration launched moderate policies toward protestant churches to undermine the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁸⁰ Despite the 1949 church laws that affected the protestant churches, the Brethren Church enjoyed special treatment. For example, Protestant periodicals and publishers continued to operate, and the state provided unequal financial subsidies to Protestant churches. Additionally, compared to the Catholic Church, the decentralized structure of the Brethren Church represented a challenge for the Communist administration.⁵⁸¹

Josef Hromádka symbolized the collaboration between the Brethren Church and the Communist regime. After the 1948 coup, Hromádka became a member of the Central Action Committee of the National Front. He was also involved in the initial meetings of the World Council of Churches (WCC) but was suspended until 1954 for his staunch pro-Communist

⁵⁷⁸ Hromádka, J., L. (1945). *Komunismus a křesťanství*. Hradec Králové: Nakladatelství Evangelického díla. 14.

⁵⁷⁹ Morée, Piškula (2015). *Nejpokrokovější církevní pracovník*, 67.

⁵⁸⁰ Ramet (1987). *Cross and Commissar*, 3.

⁵⁸¹ See Matějka (2007). "Jsou to berani," 323-4.

attitude. However, in 1955, he was elected to the WCC executive board as the first representative from Soviet satellites.⁵⁸²

In 1957, Hromádka was one of the founders of the Christian Peace Conference (led by Communism Parties in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia) that paralleled the World Peace Council, set to counterbalance the WCC. In Hromádka's view, the Christian Peace Conference was one of the ways to moralize and renew the socialist regime and society.⁵⁸³ Furthermore, thanks to Hromádka's contacts with the Hessen Evangelical Church, the Brethren Church's ecumenical networks were instrumentalized in the Czechoslovak Communist foreign policy,⁵⁸⁴ particularly in the diplomatic strategy against Western Germany.⁵⁸⁵ In 1958, Hromádka was decorated with Lenin's Peace Prize (as the first theologian ever) for "strengthening the peace amongst nations."⁵⁸⁶ Despite his self-proclaimed humanistic and democratic orientation, he remained silent regarding the bogus trials in the 1950s and the political practices of the Communist-led government.⁵⁸⁷ He also relativized the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, framing it as an "anti-Soviet hysteria."⁵⁸⁸

In contrast to the loyal Hromádka, the Brethren Church gave rise to a significant dissent movement that played a pivotal role in launching ecumenical collaboration and shaping the democratic opposition in the later years of socialism. In 1958, a group of young reverends founded the New Orientation Movement, aiming to reconcile Protestant theology with secular modernity and redefine Protestantism's public role within a socialist society. Their intellectual

⁵⁸² Ibid. 326.

⁵⁸³ Morée, Piškula (2015). *Nejpokrokovější církevní pracovník*, 178.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. 250-3.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid. 150-3

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 201.

⁵⁸⁷ Dobeš, J. (2006). "J. L. Hromádka – Hlas pravého nebo falešného proroka?" In Marek, P., Hanuš, J. *Osobnost v církvi a politice: čeští a slovenští křesťané ve 20. století*, pp. 462-477. Brno: CDK, 465.

⁵⁸⁸ Hromádka, J. L. (1956). Dnešní světová krize a naše zodpovědnost. *Kostnické jiskry*, n. 39.

endeavor also aimed to de-provincialize the domestic protestant tradition with the theological projects of German Protestant thinkers, including Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The movement's members were former students of Josef Hromádka, and the initial movement meetings took place in Hromádka's Prague apartment. However, after Hromádka endorsed the Soviet military interventions in Central Europe in 1956, the New Orientation movement distanced itself from him.

The New Orientation became publicly active only in the 1960s in the context of the Civil Rights reform, particularly during the debate over the Law on Family (1963). The Movement contested the Socialist formulation of upbringing and education in the "Communist spirit." According to the law, upbringing should be transferred from the family to the whole society through the state education system and youth organizations. Furthermore, the New Orientation began to criticize the 1949 church laws, contending that if the class conflict had indeed ended, as claimed by the 1960 Socialist Constitution, then the relationship between the state and the church should return to the pre-1948 church-state arrangement.

The central intellectual contribution of the New Orientation Movement in the 1960s was the initiation of Marxist-Christian dialogue and the promotion of ecumenical cooperation through a seminar held at Prague's Jircháře. It aimed to renew the activities of the interwar and postwar YMCA, which was shut down in 1951.⁵⁸⁹ The seminar expanded in 1963 to informal ecumenical seminars with around a hundred frequentists, including Catholic laics, priests, and Marxist humanist philosophers. The Jircháře agenda centered on the problematizations of the Stalinist era, ecumenism, and the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Amongst the seminary speakers were critical homegrown Marxist philosophers and conciliary theologians, including Yves Congar, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Johann Baptist Metz.⁵⁹⁰ These seminars

⁵⁸⁹ Hejdánek, L. (2008). Vzpomínky na Jircháře. *Křesťanská Revue*, n. 5, 32-37.

⁵⁹⁰ Novotný (2014). *Odvaha být církví*, 399.

were paralleled by a course at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University organized by the leading Marxist philosopher Milan Machovec. It initially focused on Marxist critique of religion but later centered on Marxist and Christian humanism.⁵⁹¹

In the literature, these postwar interactions between Protestants, Catholics, and Marxists are dubbed “Marxist-Christian dialogue.” These “dialogues” started in France and Germany in the 1940s and in Hungary or Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁹² In Czechoslovakia, the dialogue was far from a free exchange of ideas and was closely monitored by the Secret Service, which considered it a “threat of ecumenism.”⁵⁹³

The New Orientation thinkers related to Marxism by combining Christian ethics with a Marxist emphasis on social-economic justice. Teilhard’s work also drew together the New Orientation and Catholic activists. The Catholics focused on the dialogue with non-dogmatic, humanistic-oriented Marxism by accentuating human rights language and pluralism. In lieu of the classical Marxist reading of religion as an apparatus that reproduces and conserves social inequalities and injustices, the Marxist philosophers focused on the Christian emancipatory features as the entry point for the dialogue.⁵⁹⁴ Eventually, the state administration decided that the seminar should exclude Catholics and instead focus exclusively on Protestant doctrinal issues. Despite the state’s surveillance, the seminars kept developing in the initial direction. They represented the most pluralist platform in the Czechoslovak religious milieu in the 1960s

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 384.

⁵⁹² Mojzes, P. (1981). *Christian-Marxist Dialogue in Eastern Europe*. Augsburg Publishing House; Shortall (2021), *Soldiers of God*, Kosicki (2018), *Catholics on the Barricades*.

⁵⁹³ Novotný (2014). *Odvaha být církví*, 283.

⁵⁹⁴ The fundamental vantage point for the Czechoslovak Marxist philosophers was Roger Garaudy's *From Anathema to Dialogue*, translated by Machovec and another prominent Marxist philosopher, Vítězslav Gardavský, in 1967. Furthermore, Machovec published a monograph *Neo-Thomism* and a take on Christology in *Jesus for Atheists*. Gardavský published a revisionist monograph on religious modernity, *God is not Entirely Dead* (1970), that relativized Marxist anti-religious critique and pointed out the weaknesses of the Marxist materialist philosophy of history.

and gave rise to the cross-confessional cooperation in the Ecumenical Movement of Intelligentsia and Students in 1968.⁵⁹⁵

Protagonists' Line-up

The 1968-1969 reappearance of Christian democratic ideology in Czechoslovakia was triggered by old and new generations of Catholic activists primarily based in Prague. They published in journals created and protected by the Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL), including the daily *Lidová demokracie*, internal party bulletin *Důvěrník*, and intellectually oriented bi-weekly *Obroda*. Catholic intellectuals also published in a newly established theological journal, *Via*.

Artur L. Pavelka (1903-1997) was the son of the ČSL interwar senator Artur Pavelka. He became a priest and joined the Dominican order. In the Third Republic, he was in the orbit of the ČSL and Catholic Action circles in Prague and edited several volumes on Thomist personalism and critique of Marxist philosophy. During the Prague Spring, Pavelka decisively shaped the program of the renewed ČSL as the chair of the Ideological Committee.

Ladislav Hanus (1907-1994) returned to Catholic circles in the 1960s after spending over a decade in the Communist prison, where he met with other key theologians of

the future underground Church Josef Zvěřina and Oto Mádr. During the Prague Spring, Hanus published a monograph on organic pluralism and several essays in *Obroda* and *Via*. After 1969, Hanus served as a priest in a remote parish until his retirement in 1983.

Josef Zvěřina (1913-1990) studied theology at the Lateran University in Rome. From 1938, he lectured in the Prague based theological seminary. After the war, he was appointed a lecturer at the Theological Faculty at Charles University. He spent a year at École des Hautes Etudes, where he finalized his dissertation in art history.

⁵⁹⁵ Hejránek, L. (1968). Křesťané a společnost. *Student* 4, n. 22, 3.

Furthermore, he acted as an advisor to archbishop Josef Beran. He was active in the academic Catholic Action in Prague. Zvěřina co-developed its ecclesiological principles, departing from the theology of terrestrial realities (Gustave Thils), underscoring the role of praxis and the lay apostolate. After spending twelve years in prison for organizing Catholic Action, Zvěřina became active in the Catholic circles, the Council Work Renewal and closely collaborated with bishop František Tomášek. He was appointed editor-in-chief of the journal *Via*.

Oto Mádr (1917-2011) was a priest and pastoral theologian who studied at Pontifical Gregorian University. He was the key organizer of the postwar Catholic Action well into the 1950s. For the underground activities, he was imprisoned for twelve years. After his release in the 1960s, he became active in the Council Work Renewal. As an advisor of František Tomášek, he drafted official Church statements and lectured at Charles University.

Jiří Němec (1932-2001) represented the new generation of homegrown Catholic activists. In the 1950s, he frequented private seminars of Jan Patočka. In the 1960s, he started writing for one of the only non-socialist journals, *Tvář* (published

between 1964-5 and 1968-9). He established a close relationship with the Catholic Action intellectuals, episcopacy, and Polish *Znak*. Němec also collaborated with Czech Marxists and Protestants through the Marxist-Christian seminars held at Jircháře. He cemented the cooperation with Protestants (especially Ladislav Hejdánek) through the Ecumenical Movement of Intelligentsia and Students and the reception of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Němec was one of the founders of Charter 77. He was imprisoned in 1978 and forced to emigrate to Vienna, where he was affiliated with the IWM.

Karel Vrána (1925-2004) studied theology at Lateran University in Rome during 1948. He remained in Rome and became the editor-in-chief of *Studie*. He was also a board member of the Christian Academy and later a rector of the Czech Roman theological seminary (Nepomuceno). Vrána was a key Czech ambassador of Jacques Maritain, Waldemar Gurian, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Ladislav Hejdánek (1927-2022) Hejdánek was a protestant philosopher. He was an active member of the New Orientation Movement and co-organized the Christian-Marxist dialogue and the Ecumenic Movement of Intelligentsia and Students.

Table 6: Prague Spring Christian Democratic Ideologues

Name	Position	Resources	Transmission
Artur Pavelka 1903-1997 philosopher and priest	Chair of the ČSL's Ideological Committee	ČSL programs, essays in <i>Obroda</i> , <i>Via</i> , <i>Důvěrník</i>	Pre-communist Christian democratic program, Conciliary theology
Josef Zvěřina (1913-1990) theologian and priest	Catholic Action, Council Work Renewal, editor in chief <i>Via</i>	Essays in <i>Obroda</i> , <i>Via</i>	Gustave Thils, Jacques Maritain, Conciliary theology
Oto Mádr (1917-2011) theologian and priest	Catholic Action, Council Work Renewal	Essays in <i>Obroda</i> , <i>Via</i>	Conciliary theology
Jiří Němec (1932-2001) psychiatrist	Council Work Renewal, Ecumenical Movement of Intelligentsia and Students	Essays in <i>Tvář</i> , <i>Via</i>	Teilhard de Chardin, Conciliary theology
Ladislav Hanus (1907-1994) Theologian and priest	Underground Church	<i>Idea pluralismu</i> (1967), essays in <i>Obroda</i> and <i>Via</i>	Conciliary theology, Teilhard de Chardin
Ladislav Hejránek (1927-2022) philosopher	New Orientation Movement, Ecumenical Movement of Intelligentsia and Students	Essays in <i>Tvář</i> , <i>Křesťanská revue</i> , <i>Vesmír</i>	Teilhard de Chardin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Josef L. Hromádka
Karel Vrána (1925-2004) theologian	Christian Academy, Rome, editor in chief <i>Studie</i>	Articles in <i>Nový život</i> , <i>Studie</i> , <i>Svědectví</i>	Jacques Maritain, Waldemar Gurian, Teilhard de Chardin

Ideological Morphology

The Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL) was not immune to the changes in global Catholicism and the socialist reforms of the Prague Spring. In March 1968, ČSL elected a partially pro-reform leadership and sought to emancipate from the Communist Party's control.⁵⁹⁶ Due to the 1960s amnesties and rehabilitations, the party recorded a fleeting *Risorgimento*, with seventy thousand members entering the party within only one year. Furthermore, ČSL replaced the

⁵⁹⁶ Konečný, K. (2019). *Československá strana lidová v období nastupující normalizace (1969–1972)*. Prague: ÚSTR.

editorial board of the leading party journal *Lidová Demokracie*⁵⁹⁷ and created a new journal, *Obroda*, intended to renew the pre-communist critical journal *Obzory*. In this section, I explain the ČSL programmatic shift, which I read as the most institutionalized episode of Christian democracy halfway through the Communist autocratic era.

Until 1968, the official ideology of ČSL hinged upon the 1951 party convention resolutions. In March 1968, the ČSL's Central Committee established the Ideational Committee and appointed as a chair Artur Pavelka. The Committee published the first ideological draft in March 1968⁵⁹⁸ and the final program in May 1968.⁵⁹⁹ It is important to note that although the ČSL Central Committee accepted the program, it was eventually not accepted by the party convention (the highest party body), as the scheduled convention was called off due to the Warsaw Pact invasion. The program, Pavelka's lengthy commentary, and the programmatic debate in the ČSL-sponsored journals represent the source for my reconstruction of the Christian democratic ideological composition.

The new program blended the language of Prague Spring socialist reforms, Christian-Marxist dialogue, and the Second Vatican Council theology with the Third Republic Christian democratic commitments. The program deployed the core features of Christian personalism, including universal human dignity and rights, and was messaged in a heavily metaphysical language. It underscored religious rights and the autonomy of religious institutions – a taboo or a marginalized issue in the public debates and the ČSL. The program subscribed to a “non-confessional” profile and newly politicized ethical issues, including abortion. It aimed to implement “Christian ethics and morality” in politics according to the Thomist natural order.

⁵⁹⁷ *Lidová demokracie* was, at the beginning of the Prague Spring, one of the most popular journals as it uncovered the unsavory practices of the Stalinist era. The work is associated with Rudolf Ströbinger, deputy editor-in-chief of *Lidová demokracie* and an active member of the post-1989 ČSL. See Putna, M. (2017). *Česká katolická literatura 1945–1989*. Torst: Prague, 114.

⁵⁹⁸ ČSL (1968). Programové prohlášení Československé strany lidové. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40.

⁵⁹⁹ ČSL (1968). *Pracovní návrh programu Československá strany lidové*. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40.

The Ideological Committee re-described the pre-communist notion of “organic pluralism” into “socialist pluralism” but maintained the pre-communist conceptual meaning.

Alongside the resurrected Third Republic principles, the ideologues marginalized the previously dominant notions of anti-totalitarianism, anti-communism, militant democracy, Christian patriotism, supranationalism, and social capitalism at the expense of the “convergence” and “dialogue” with democratic socialism.⁶⁰⁰ As the first lines of the program stated, the ČSL strove to be a part of the “socialist society” “with a human face” but also with a “human heart.”⁶⁰¹ Significantly, Christian democratic ideologues did not use the label “Christian democracy” disqualified through the official discourse that considered German CDU a proxy of Western capitalism and the U.S. hegemony.

Freedom of Conscience

The ideologues reiterated the Thomist personalist principles and framed them as a reflection of the post-conciliar “anthropological” turn.⁶⁰² The ČSL programmatic documents referred to “human dignity, professed by Christianity” as an indispensable premise of “individual fundamental human rights and freedoms.” The ČSL outlets published crucial international legal documents to support the human rights agenda, e.g., the *Declaration of Human Rights* or the 1966 *International Pact on Civic and Political Rights* that the Czechoslovak National Assembly was about to ratify in 1968.

⁶⁰⁰ Also, the new critical party journal *Obroda* noted in the first editorial (August 1968) that the new ČSL orientation is rooted in “dialogue, ecumenism, and acceptance of modernity.” Rotrekl, Z. (1968). Editorial. *Obroda* 1., n. 1, .2

⁶⁰¹ ČSL (1968). *Čím jsme a čím chceme být (ideový program čsl v tezích)*. KDU-ČSL Archive, Box 40.

⁶⁰² Hanus, L. (1969). Teológia kultúry ako problém a úloha. *Via* 2, n. 10. 154-8.

The central conceptual innovation was the newly emphasized role of *freedom of conscience* (*svoboda svědomí*).⁶⁰³ The then-exiled Czech Cardinal Josef Beran initiated the conscience discourse and his plenary speech at the Second Vatican Council, widely circulated in Czechoslovakia. Beran, in his Vatican speech, articulated that any material or spiritual coercion that forces a human being to act against his “conscience” effectively forces a human being to “sin against God.” Beran further framed his appeal by his hands-on experience with the Communist regime. The autocratic system deprived citizens of freedom of conscience and resulted in “moral decay.” Beran suggested adding the following sentence to the fourth chapter of *Gaudium et Spes*: “The Catholic Church urges all governments to uphold the principle of freedom of conscience for all citizens, including those who believe in God, and to cease any form of oppression against religious freedom.”⁶⁰⁴ Thus, the personalist accent on negative freedoms protected through inviolable human dignity and rights was expanded to positive freedom via the notion of conscience, i.e., to act according to one’s moral compass against the prevalent ethical norms.

Alongside references to Beran’s speech, the local Christian democrats referred to the conciliary document *Dignitatis Humane* (1965). For instance, Josef Zvěřina argued that freedom of conscience was the only “genuine freedom” that “fundamentally precedes social and human freedoms.”⁶⁰⁵ Conscience was coupled with personal responsibility in the public space as it “calls Christians to a deep love for freedom and a strong sense of responsibility to protect and promote it. Christians must dedicate all their efforts to the fight against any form of oppression, enslavement, hostility, threat, or sin.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ The concept of conscience was included in the *Declaration of Human Rights* and also in the *UN Charter* but gained political traction in Czechoslovakia only at the end of the 1960s and particularly in the 1980s.

⁶⁰⁴ Beran, J. (1969). Projev kardinála Josefa Berana na II. vatikánském sněmu. Přetisk z knihy II. vatikánský sněm, Řím 1966. *Obroda* 1, n. 6. 101-102. Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, article 16.

⁶⁰⁵ Zvěřina, J. (1969). Problém svobody (pokračování), *Via* 1, n. 2, 25.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

The discourse on conscience also functioned as a proxy for ideologues who, after spending more than a decade in Communist prisons, sought to reconcile with the groundbreaking Catholic shift in attitude toward communism, as exemplified by John XXIII's *Ostpolitik*. To prevent *Ostpolitik* from being interpreted as a Vatican attempt to downplay the sacrifices of Eastern European Catholics, local Catholics emphasized that personal, intrinsic faith transcends any “terrestrial” affiliations, including the institutional Church. They articulated this through the language of conscience, highlighting the “primacy of conscience when confronting the totalitarian regime.” Consequently, they argued that opposing the “totalitarian” regime was an autonomous choice driven by individual responsibility to one's conscience rather than a directive from the Vatican.⁶⁰⁷

In addition to advocating for freedom of conscience, Artur Pavelka replaced the Catholic anti-totalitarian theory with his theory of the “anonymity of power,” which he used to describe the disorders of modern politics. Against the “anonymous forces” of contemporary science and technology or socialist “anonymous collective,” Pavelka asserted the imperative of individual moral obligations and duties. He believed power is always “concrete” and “personal,” analogous to God-person or intersubjective relationships. He conceptualized faith as a gift of God's grace and inferred that individuals must also accept responsibility for the temporal body politic, thereby assuming “full responsibility for their political presence.”⁶⁰⁸ By implication, the personal responsibility urges Christians to unmask “the structure and praxis of the Communist Party.”⁶⁰⁹

The Christian democratic human rights talk in Czechoslovakia can be read as a genealogy of who can be counted as a person. In the interwar era, Catholics theorized as

⁶⁰⁷ Quoted in Novotný, V. (2013). Antonín Mandl – svědek diskusí mezi katolíky ve druhé polovině 20. Století. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica* 3, n. 2, 105.

⁶⁰⁸ ČSL (1968). *Čím jsme a čím chceme být*.

⁶⁰⁹ Pavelka, A. (1968). Nástin referátu. Politická tradice. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40, 17.

“persons” only members of the Catholic Church. They prioritized collective human dignity—bestowed by membership in a community—while recognizing only men as the bearers of economic human rights. In the postwar era, the Christian democratic ideologues individualized and universalized the conceptualization of a person. However, they still privileged the system of patriarchal families, and therefore, men enjoyed more rights than women.

Moreover, postwar and early Cold War Christian democrats, via the appeal to universal human dignity and rights, struggled to protect the fundamental human rights of ethnic Germans and Hungarians. The Prague Spring re-launch was marked by yet another expansion of personhood through the Christian democratic anti-abortion agenda. This expansion emphasized the human dignity and rights of the “unborn,” which, in turn, watered down women’s rights.

Abortion was criminalized in the Habsburg Monarchy in 1852. In 1912, the law was amended in Transleithania, permitting abortion when the mother's life was at risk. During the interwar period, the Czechoslovak Socialist Party attempted to soften the strict criminalization of abortion, but confessional parties thwarted these efforts. In 1950, during the Stalinist era, abortion became permissible for health and eugenic reasons, and the penalties for abortion were reduced. The 1950s saw a surge in illegal abortions as women were compelled to work, and social facilities for children were lacking. In response, the 1957 abortion law (68/1957) was introduced, framing the legalization of abortion as a pro-populational measure. This law aimed to secure safe abortion procedures, ensuring that women could still have children after undergoing an abortion. The official abortion discourse centered on the “reproductive health of women,” “healthy population,” and “the suffering of unwanted children.”⁶¹⁰

The novelization of abortion rights was a state-led decision based on macro-social expertise in the context of insufficient anti-conception and the need to ensure a sufficient women workforce in the state economy. Czechoslovakia also followed the 1955 termination of

⁶¹⁰ See Dudová, R. (2012). *Interrupce v České republice: zápas o ženská těla*. Prague: Sociologický ústav.

abortion criminalization in the Soviet Union. The newly instituted “abortion commissions” had to approve the eligibility of women based only on health reasons and family situation. The commission was composed of health workers and National Committee members.⁶¹¹ In the late 1960s, the number of abortions grew immensely, numbering around one hundred thousand cases per year in a fifteen million country. Against the governmental intentions, due to the staggering growth of abortions, the population levels decreased in the 1960s.⁶¹²

In this context, the Christian democratic ideologues attempted to challenge the official legal and medical abortion discourse into a moral language tied with the appeal to the fundamental human rights of the “unborn.” For the thinkers, the “morality of abortion” had three dimensions. First, it entailed a “social amnesia” that blurred the actual meaning of abortion – “a killing of an entire and actual person.” Second, the meaning of abortion was distorted by the “material” and “consumerist” values. Third, the ideologues hinted at the “alleged” female emancipation and the “fallacy that women possess an absolute right of disposition over their own bodies.”⁶¹³

Christian Democrats did not attribute rising abortion rates to the 1957 law itself, arguing that neither legalization nor prohibition could alter the underlying moral decline. Instead, they focused on promoting economically centered family policies that could potentially reshape societal values and perceptions of the “unborn.” Christian democrats also linked the issue of abortion to declining reproduction and birth rates, emphasizing the “procreative” role of the family.

⁶¹¹ The abortion commission policies changed over time, together with the institutional setting. It was initially represented primarily by doctors but later through representatives of district or national committees composed of Communist party members.

⁶¹² Szabó, M. (2020). *Potraty. Dejiny slovenských kultúrnych vojen od Hlinku po Kuffu*. Bratislava: N Press, 31.

⁶¹³ Svoboda, K. (1969). Nezabiješ. *Obroda* 2, n. 8, 5.

Relatedly, the ČSL programmatic thesis also devoted space to the role of organic “communities” within the natural order. It reinvigorated the pre-communist paternalist vision of family, particularly in the war against the socialist “emancipatory” policies regarding women’s employment. The program stated that women should not be “forced to work profitably.” Additionally, the program underlined the “human rights” of children to “personal maternal care” and the elevation of “motherhood and childrearing to employment.”⁶¹⁴

Plural Socialism

In 1968, the Communist Party announced the need for greater social and political pluralism in the framework of the National Front. Consequently, the Ideological Committee of ČSL translated the pre-communist notion of “organic pluralism” into “plural socialism” while remaining committed to the Thomist social ontology. The ČSL ideologues coined the term “plural socialism” as a “Christian contribution to the socialist building.” They suggested inserting the Catholic “natural principle”⁶¹⁵ of plurality into the current phase of socialism. The ČSL program stated that the new historical stage of Czechoslovak socialism must introduce respect for “fundamental human rights and equality of rights of all citizens regardless of their worldview, nationality, race, or social status”⁶¹⁶ and correspond with the international human rights order.⁶¹⁷

The ideologues pressed Czechoslovak Catholics to recognize that socialism has various forms (liberal, democratic, humanistic) and that the “atheist principle” does not necessarily conflict with Christianity. They contended that the “new, evolutionary higher form of

⁶¹⁴ Pavelka (1968). *Myšlenky*, 18.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶¹⁶ ČSL (1968). *Programové prohlášení*, 4.

⁶¹⁷ ČSL (1968). *Pracovní návrh programu*, 3.

socialism” within the Communist movement opened space for the “Marxist-Christian” dialogue.⁶¹⁸ Besides, the ČSL ideologues often referenced the encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Populorum Progressio* (1967) to weaken the antagonism between Catholicism and Marxism in the name of “plural socialism” and to reconcile political parties as divergent and asymmetrical in terms of power as the Communist Party and the ČSL. Yet, they asserted that the Communist Party misused its “absolute” political power in the past two decades and “suppressed the expression of the Christian worldview” by the “dictatorship of unfit and unprincipled.”⁶¹⁹

Despite the past injustices, the ČSL ideologues underlined the idea of “overlapping space” centered on a shared recognition (Marxist and Christian) of principles of fundamental human rights and urged strengthening this “overlap.” Thus, Christian-based personalism came to terms with Marxist humanism through the language of fundamental human rights that should create the ideological “eclipse.”⁶²⁰ The ideologues further articulated the notion of *agape* and the “action law of love”⁶²¹ that should serve as the glue for the modern socialist society.⁶²² They also reinvigorated the pre-communist principle of legitimate inference of “Christian worldview” in the public domain. Concerning state-church relations, the ČSL demanded the churches’ autonomy and renewal of their rights.

In the debate surrounding the new program, some Catholic intellectuals attempted to adjust the “Christian worldview” to a post-conciliar context. They argued that “worldview” is an empty notion without any theological backing. There cannot and should not be one and rightful Christian worldview, as the relationship between worldview and faith must remain

⁶¹⁸ Kuklík, V. (1969). Křesťan a socialismus. *Důvěrník* 2, n. 12, 6-7.

⁶¹⁹ *Programové prohlášení Československé strany lidové*, 8.

⁶²⁰ Pavelka (1968). *Myšlenky*, 20.

⁶²¹ ČSL (1968). *Čím jsme a čím chceme být*.

⁶²² Pavelka (1968). *Myšlenky*, 18.

open. Referring to Karl Rahner, these critics underlined the changing relationship between a historically conditioned man's worldview and the transhistorical nature of faith.⁶²³ They argued for a "pluralist" conceptualization of the "worldview" to fit the Czechoslovak multi-confessional context: "The ČSL is a party of Christian citizens, in which everyone can have according to his Church affiliation, and according to the degree of faith, his worldview."⁶²⁴ In this context, the ČSL must represent a platform for ecumenic cooperation.

Alongside the idea of "plural socialism" that dominated the ČSL program, the key Third Republic concept of "organic pluralism" was still alive in the Christian democratic discourse. Ladislav Hanus, the central figure of the pre-communist transfer of Jacques Maritain's political theory to Slovakia, re-asserted this concept alongside "Christocentric humanism" in his 1967 *Principle of Pluralism*, published shortly after being released from twelve years of imprisonment.⁶²⁵ Hanus updated organic pluralism with Karl Rahner's "dialogue in a pluralist society," Teilhard De Chardin's "convergence," and Harrold Laski's "political pluralism."

Hanus built the theory of organic pluralism on the Thomist notion of subsidiarity, which he considered a "classical pluralist principle"⁶²⁶ contrasted with modern "anti-metaphysical" pluralism. The Catholic subsidiarity perspective amounts to a universalist perspective on the complex and plural reality that integrates diversity under one roof.⁶²⁷ Such a perspective, Hanus argued, can "see" and "recognize" the plurality and must be implemented through the method of "dialogue and tolerance" that respects human dignity and personal autonomous development and "scale of values" within the structure of the "natural order."

⁶²³ Rahner, K. (1967). *Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch*. Herder.

⁶²⁴ Rosenreiter, L. (1968). Symposion o křesťanském světovém obzoru. *Obroda* 1, n. 1, 8.

⁶²⁵ Hanus, L. (1967 [1997]). *Princíp pluralizmu*. Bratislava: Lúč.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 35.

Hanus' organic pluralism as an "open" social system also rescued the early Cold War counter-concept of totalitarianism, which he also dubbed the "monistic system."⁶²⁸ He reiterated Maritain's genealogy of modernity, framing Hegel as the prime representative of monism, a "single source of antithetical ideas of the absolute state" and "racial and class totalitarianism." In Hanus' interpretation, the modern state centralized control over all domains of human activity, effectively abolishing the principle of pluralism.⁶²⁹

Hanus' pluralist vision underlined the autonomy of every social actor and his embeddedness in a "pluralistic hierarchy"⁶³⁰ and suggested accommodating the plurality of antagonistic actors into a "new synthesis." The principles of pluralist integration dwelt in intersubjective tolerance and dialogue. These principles have a "similar relationship as negative and positive freedom. Tolerance is a pre-condition of dialogue, and dialogue integrates the antagonistic poles into unity." Hanus defined the chief integralist force in the pluralist system as "verticality," a regulative principle that evaluates to what extent the autonomous social systems conform to universal human values ("human rights" and "common good"). The concept of verticality is contingent upon the degree of freedom within a regime, which is demonstrated by the fact that no single sphere of human action is dominated by the rationality of another sphere.

Procedural and Constitutional Democracy

During the 1968 ideological re-launch, Christian Democrats emphasized the procedural aspects of the democratic system while remaining committed to a substantive democratic vision. The

⁶²⁸ See Isaiah Berlin's concept of positive liberty and his take on the intellectual tradition of "monism." Berlin, I. (2017). Two concepts of liberty. In *Liberty Reader*, 33-57. London: Routledge.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 101.

ideological development of Christian democracy occurred in the context of the planned elections to national committees and the National Assembly in the fall of 1968. These elections anticipated a more pluralist electoral system, with more candidates on the unified candidacy list than seats available in the parliament. That is why the ČSL ideologues advocated “parliamentary methods” and articulated the importance of popular sovereignty, “the highest and genuine representation of the will of the citizens.”⁶³¹ They contested “socialist democracy,” which, according to the Communist Party reformist Action Program, still premised the leading role of the Communist Party.

Besides the rejection of the leading role of the Communist Party, the program pleaded for constitutional transformations, equality of the National Front parties, the establishment of the Constitutional Court (a reinvention of the pre-communist legacy), and ratification of the international fundamental rights and freedom documents the *Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Pact on Human Rights*.⁶³²

ČSL rearticulated democratic egalitarianism as the “fundamental humanistic principle,” rooted in the Catholic norm that “through human dignity, we are all equal.” However, Pavelka contested the Communist identification of equality and justice. Based on the Thomist ontology, they argued that society comprises unequal individuals endowed with different physical and intellectual talents. The principle of justice organizes these inequalities so everyone can acquire conditions that secure the full development of “personality.” In contrast, the principle of equality addresses a different problem: recognizing another human being as having a similar value. Pavelka argued that the “Christian perspective” opposes any form of discrimination.

⁶³¹ ČSL (1968). *Programové prohlášení*, 4.

⁶³² Ibid., 5.

Still, equality cannot engender the principle of justice that protects the “uniqueness of every individual.”⁶³³

Eclipsed Concepts: Civilisationism and Social Market Economy

During the Prague Spring re-launch, the Christian democratic ideologues did not revive the notions of Christian patriotism and civilisationism due to the (partial) demotion of anti-totalitarian theory and the Second Vatican Council relaxation of the Cold War civilizational battle. The ideologues argued that, similarly to the “Christian worldview,” “Christianity” *per se* cannot be equalized with a single culture, nation, or civilization. Notions such as “Christian culture” or “Christian civilization” must wither away as they conflate different phenomena – the historically bound and contingent culture and Christianity that transcends the time and space of any culture. Culture can be conceptualized only as having features of Christianity or as inspired by Christianity.⁶³⁴ The ideologues argued that even more impermissible for the new Christian democratic program in the era of decolonization was to equate Western culture and Christianity, which would implicitly exclude non-European societies.⁶³⁵

The ČSL program recognized and affirmed the Soviet hegemony in Central Europe and the Czechoslovak foreign and economic policy orientation on the Warsaw Pact and Comecon. Yet, the ČSL program appealed for a “gradual liquidation of current power formations in Europe and the rest of the world.” The program called for “the gradual withdrawal of Soviet armies in the framework of the Czechoslovak and Soviet Agreement.” The programmatic draft also mentioned the “normalization of the relationships with the Vatican.”⁶³⁶

⁶³³ Pavelka, A. (1968). Spravedlnost a rovnost, *Obroda* 1, n 6, 6.

⁶³⁴ Pecka, K. (1968). Aggiornamento a jeho meze. *Via* 1, n. 3, 44-46.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 45-6.

⁶³⁶ ČSL (1968). *Programové prohlášení*, 6.

Finally, the *Action Program* of the Communist Party aimed at the gradual removal of the command economy and central economic planning to move slowly toward a more market-oriented economy. In this context, grounded in *Populorum Progressio*,⁶³⁷ the Christian democratic ideologues conceptualized the need for economic reformation as the “moral program.” They contested the Communist “hasty industrialization” and restructuring of the agricultural sector while articulating the Christian democratic notions of common good and solidarity. They argued that the “political, economic praxis of past years and deviation from moral values in the economic sphere” ushered in an economic and social crisis in Czechoslovakia. The ideologues called for transforming the command economy to comply with the market’s needs, not the prescribed imperatives of the “Marxist ideology.”

In this context, Christian democrats emphasized the return of the “fundamental human right” of private property, “family wage,” and the possibility of economic freedom (individual entrepreneurship). Referencing the distributivist principles of the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, the program underlined that the employee must participate in the management of enterprises.⁶³⁸ The ideologues pleaded for “autonomous cooperatives,” implementation of cooperative entrepreneurship, and privatization to reach “independence of national enterprises from the Communist Party structures and unions.”⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Karas, M. (1968) Světová krize a encyklika *Populorum progressio*. *Obroda* 1, n. 3, 9-10.

⁶³⁸ Rozehnal, A. (1969). Pracující člověk je víc než práce. *Obroda* 2, n. 9, 133-5.

⁶³⁹ Pavelka (1968). *Myšlenky*.

Table 7: Prague Spring Ideological Morphology (*signalizes a conceptual innovation)

Core	Adjacent	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral
Person	Human dignity, human rights, responsibility, *freedom of conscience	*Unborn person	*Consumerism	*Anonymity of power
*Plural socialism	Legitimacy of Christian worldview, subsidiarity, organic social units, the threat of materialism	*Overlapping space *Convergence *Dialogue	Organic pluralism, totalitarian theory	*Ecumenism, re-Christianization, Church autonomy
Democracy	*Parliamentarism, political egalitarianism, human rights constitutionalism (domestic, international)	Constitutional court	Inter-confessional party	National Front
Eclipsed Concepts: Civilisationism and Social Market Economy	Private property, family welfare transfers, unionism, *economic transformation	x	x	x

Conclusion

In the *Christian Democratic Prague Spring*, I unearthed the resuscitation of the Christian democratic pre-communist ideological legacy in the context of the socialist democratization (1968-1969) and the Second Vatican Council and Marxist-Christian dialogue. The Prague Spring episode modernized Christian democratic ideology but led to ideological thinning compared to the Third Republic due to continuing one-party constitutionalism and Soviet hegemony.

The ideologues demoted exclusionary anti-communism towards “non-communism” and anti-totalitarianism towards the idiom of “dialogue” and “convergence” with democratic socialism and the search for “overlapping space.” Nevertheless, to justify and forge collaboration with the Left, Christian democrats continued in their pre-communist personalist strategy and inserted Thomist anthropology and social ontology into the political discourse via human dignity and human rights discourse. The key update in Christian personalism was the “language of conscience” supported by the new conciliary ecclesiology that emphasized the departure from “institutionalized religion” to “inward faith” and “laic apostolate.” This era also saw the incorporation of “anti-consumerism” into the homegrown Christian democratic ideology, set to unmask the socialist regime’s legitimacy, control mechanisms, and human dignity violations (e.g., abortions).

I highlighted the enduring commitment of Christian democracy to moralizing politics and society, emphasizing the need to base political communities on moral foundations. This theme will become central to Czechoslovak dissent political theory in the next two decades. Christian democratic ideology, if compared to the Communist Party reform proposals, offered a more serious plea for democratization, pluralization, and economic liberalization.

I showed that the Christian democratic canon was rearticulated by reprints of old French and German personalist political theory and new translations and reflections of (post)conciliary

personalism. A crucial finding of this chapter was that the Prague Spring movement introduced Catholic-Protestant canon convergence, which was absent in the previous eras.

Charles Maier contended that “1968 closed an epoch as surely as it opened one.”⁶⁴⁰ This dictum also applies to the historical development of Czechoslovak Christian democracy. As I illustrate in the next chapter, the 1970s and 1980s saw an eruption of Christian democratic discourse that abandoned the promises of the convergence theory (decline of “fraternal” Catholicism) and instead absorbed and diffused the key elements of the Western postwar Christian democracy and emerging U.S. neo-conservatism. From this perspective, if one speculates on the convergence between Marxism and Catholicism in the post-Prague Spring era, the Left opposition in Czechoslovakia converted to the political principles promoted by the Right (natural human rights, anti-totalitarianism, and civil society) rather than vice versa.

⁶⁴⁰ Maier, C. (2011). Conclusion: 1968—Did It Matter? In: *Promises of 1968*. Edited by Tismaneanu, V. 413-435.

Christian Democratic Post-Modern (1984-1989)

Introduction

In this chapter, I unpack the genealogy of the Christian democratic ideology during late state socialism. The entry point for my analysis is the Christian democratic idiom of human rights. The eruption of the human rights discourse in the North Atlantic space at this time constituted a *lingua franca* for the newly established counter-elites and oppositional movements in Eastern Europe and created possibilities of transnational cooperation across the Iron Curtain.⁶⁴¹ Yet, the available literature on the historical meaning and role of the human rights language in Czechoslovakia has been overrun by research on liberal,⁶⁴² socialist,⁶⁴³ and republican⁶⁴⁴ vernaculars and eclipsed religious semantics.

The first wave of historiography on Eastern European human rights constructed a canon of secular-liberal advocates who embodied “open dissent” for the Western audience. In

⁶⁴¹ See Hoffmann, S.-L. (2011). Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights. In: *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Hoffmann, S.-L., 13-25. Cambridge, MA: CUP; Moyn (2011). *Last Utopia*; Hoffmann, S.-L. (2016). Human Rights and History. *Past & Present* 232, n. 1, 279-310; Brier, R. (2021). *Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁶⁴² Judt, T. (1988). The Dilemmas of Dissidence: The Politics of Opposition in East-Central Europe. *East European Politics and Societies* 2, n. 2, 185-240; Abrams, B. (1995). Morality, Wisdom, and Revision: The Czech Opposition of the Late 1970s and the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 9, 234-256; Tucker, A. (2000). *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; Falk, B. (2003). The dilemmas of dissidence in East-Central Europe. Budapest: CEU Press; Příbáň, J. (2005). Political Dissent, Human Rights and Legal Transformations. *East European Politics and Societies* 19, 553-572; Blokker, P. (2009). Democracy through the Lens of 1989: Liberal Triumph or Radical Turn. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, n. 3, 273-290.

⁶⁴³ Kopeček, M. (2016). Human Rights between Political Identity and Historical Category. *Czech Journal of Contemporary History* 4, n. 1, 5-18.

⁶⁴⁴ Baker, G. (2002). *Civil Society and Democratic Theory. Alternative Voices*. London: Routledge; Blokker, P. (2011). Dissidence, Republicanism, and Democratic Change. *East European Politics and Societies* 25, n. 2, 219-243.

response, revisionist scholarship sought to diversify this liberal portrayal by emphasizing “socialist legalism,” a discursive strategy developed by the Marxist democratic opposition. Reform Marxists engaged with human rights advocacy by building on the language that informed the 1960s rehabilitation commissions, which addressed the Stalinist era's injustices. Additionally, scholars have identified republican themes, such as “self-organization” and “freedom as non-domination,” as significant yet overlooked aspects of human rights advocacy. However, this literature often continues to focus on the intellectuals canonized by Western observers.

In this chapter, I aim to update the historiography of human rights that snubbed the reformulation and development of an independent Christian democratic discourse and religious mobilization in Czechoslovakia and, by implication, left key Christian activists outside the margins of the research on Eastern European democratic counter-elite.⁶⁴⁵ I seek to illuminate the actual meaning and intellectual context behind the widespread vocabulary of human rights, demonstrating that Catholic and Protestant human rights theories existed alongside secular human rights discourses. Moreover, Christian democrats successfully mainstreamed the “natural” human dignity and rights tradition.⁶⁴⁶

In this chapter, I extend recent historiography on twentieth-century Christian democracy, Roman Catholicism, and Christian human rights by broadening the focus beyond the mid-century heyday of Western European Christian democratic parties and the “Catholic

⁶⁴⁵ For an exception to this rule, see Doellinger, D. (2002). Prayers, Pilgrimages and Petitions: The Growth of Civil Society in Slovakia. *Nationalities Papers* 30, n. 2, 215–40; Doellinger, D. (2007). The 1985 Pilgrimage at Velehrad: Slovak Catholics and the Creation of a Public Space. *Slovakia* 39, n. 72–73, 99–116; Doellinger, D. (2013). *Turning Prayers into Protests. Religious-Based Activism and its Challenge to State Power in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany*. Budapest: CEU Press.

⁶⁴⁶ On the post-communist institutionalization of dissent political theory, see Blokker, P. (2010). *Multiple Democracies in Europe*. London: Routledge; Brier, R. (2009). The Roots of the ‘Fourth Republic’: Solidarity’s Cultural Legacy to Polish Politics. *East European Politics and Societies* 23, n. 1, 63–85. For the opposite argument that downplays the importance of dissidence for post-communist politics, see Kotkin (2009). *Uncivil Society*.

modern.” I expand the temporal, geographical, and confessional scope to include new contexts. I offer a fresh portrayal of Christian democracy by exploring its confrontation with *post-modern* challenges during the late Socialist authoritarian period.⁶⁴⁷

To understand the meaning and role of Christian democracy, I situate my case narrative to the mid-1980s *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* reforms, the democratization processes in the Soviet satellites (Poland and Hungary), and Eastern European religious revival.⁶⁴⁸ In addition to bringing the Christian democratic movement during state socialist Czechoslovakia into the academic spotlight and situating it within the crucial moments of Czechoslovak history, my ambition is to trace the origins of the revival of the wrecked Right. This revival paralleled the rise of neo-conservatism in the Western world⁶⁴⁹ and the fusion of the neoliberal economic order with human rights morality.⁶⁵⁰ The critical question is how Christian democrats defined the Right within the quasi-public sphere of transnational samizdat circulation, paving the way for the post-communist formation of right-wing political parties.

As the available literature documented, the language of human rights in Eastern Europe led to a coalition of strange bedfellows comprising reform communists, socialists, and Christians. However, this consensus was exhausted in the mid-1980s at the height of anti-regime activism. I argue that it was due to the spill-over of human rights talk beyond the confines of abstract universalist jargon articulated by the leading Czechoslovak counter-elite movement, Charter 77, a pioneering movement that made “international human rights activism

⁶⁴⁷ This historical period in Western Europe has been characterized as the era of “ideological dilution” of Christian democratic theory. Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy*, 194.

⁶⁴⁸ The return of religion to Eastern Europeans was symbolized by the papacy of the Polish Pope John Paul II (1978-2005).

⁶⁴⁹ Ferguson, N. (eds) (2011). *The Shock of the Global*. Cambridge: HUP.

⁶⁵⁰ The human rights messaging was a strategic choice of Carter’s administration to sweep under the rug the U.S. Vietnam War fiasco or support of Pinochet and renew the U.S. prestige in global politics. Moyn, S. (2018). *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*. Cambridge: HUP, 143–144.

exciting” and served as a model for other regional and global human rights advocacy networks.⁶⁵¹

In building the Christian democratic canon of the late Socialist era, I categorize the Christian democratic transnational network into three main factions: the underground Catholic Church linked with the lay Catholic opposition, the Czech Christian democratic exiles, and the Protestant New Orientation Movement. While human rights activism in the West signaled the end of the ideological era, the reinvention of Christian human rights also brought a revival of early Cold War scripts to fight and prevail in the local Cold War. They integrated these concepts and narratives with post-conciliar Catholic theology, the local phenomenological tradition, and U.S. neoconservatism.

I organize the chapter as follows. First, I provide a brief historical context. Second, I identify the key protagonists and specify the new Christian democratic ideological canon and anti-canon. Third, I reconstruct the meaning of human rights and the supportive cluster of concepts related to anti-totalitarianism, philosophy of history, new ecclesiology, and Europe. Finally, I determine how Christian democrats innovated human rights talk when carrying out campaigns on memory politics, anti-abortion, and religious liberty.

Historical Context

This chapter focuses on a period in Czechoslovak history commonly referred to in the literature as “frozen post-totalitarianism”⁶⁵² or “normalization.” It was marked by renewed repressive

⁶⁵¹ Bolton, J. (2012). *Worlds of Dissent. Charter 77, The Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism*. Cambridge: HUP.

⁶⁵² Linz, J., Stepan, A. (1996). Modern Nondemocratic Regimes. In: *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 38-54. Kitschelt, H. (eds.). *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Cooperation*. Cambridge, MA: CUP.

measures against the political opposition following the fiasco of the 1968 Prague Spring.⁶⁵³ The regime's legitimizing and stabilizing factors included a version of socialist *Rechtsstaat*, rooted in "legal legitimacy" and the promise to deliver consumerist standards to eclipse the regime's unsavory authoritarian practices.⁶⁵⁴ However, the weak economic performance, the inability to control corruption, and the booming grey economy gave rise to the "second culture" and anti-regime movements in the late 1970s.⁶⁵⁵ In the 1980s., similar to the 1950s, when the Czechoslovak Communist nomenclature was ignoring the Soviet-launched de-Stalinization processes, the party standpatters were snubbing Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* reforms.

Protagonists and Canon Re-Articulation

Unlike Poland, where the official Roman Catholic Church enjoyed a prominent and autonomous position, in Czechoslovakia, the institutional Church was shipwrecked, as shown in the previous chapters. Hence, lay and clergy activists developed an alternative infrastructure – in the literature termed a "secret," "underground," "non-conformist," or "dissent" Church – with an independent repertoire. It engaged in activities banned by the regime, such as theological research, catechism instruction, the distribution of foreign literature, and the production of Catholic samizdat.

The Czechoslovak Church's dissent was a continuation of the 1960s reinvigoration of local Church life that resulted from the amnesties of religious activists and clergy, the Second Vatican Council reforms, ecumenism, and Marxist-Christian dialogue. The underground Church comprised Catholic parish communities and the so-called small "circles" that self-

⁶⁵³ Otáhal, M. *Opoziční proudy v české společnosti 1969–1989*. Praha: ÚSTR, 68.

⁶⁵⁴ Příbáň (2005). *Political Dissent*, 9-10.

⁶⁵⁵ Rothschild (1999). *Return to Diversity*, 208-211

consciously continued the legacy of the pre-communist Catholic Action. The underground Church emphasized the role of lay apostolates tasked with the mission of re-Christianising and democratizing society.⁶⁵⁶

Another impetus to create the underground Church networks came from John Paul II's pontificate (1978-2005). The new Pope ended the official Church's conciliatory stance toward the Soviet bloc and revisited the Second Vatican Council concept of "convergence" between Catholicism and Marxism towards exclusionary anti-communism. In 1982, John Paul II banned the Czechoslovak communist-loyal priest association *Pacem in Terris*.⁶⁵⁷ The local Christian democrats also followed John Paul II in downplaying the Liberation theology program.⁶⁵⁸ Further, the pope prompted the only Czechoslovak archbishop, František Tomášek, to greater anti-Communist resistance. In turn, Tomášek intervened in the trials against priests and laics and flagged the instances of violations of the Church's rights and religious freedoms.⁶⁵⁹ These activities coincided with Tomášek's closer collaboration with Charter 77 and explicit advocacy for human rights.⁶⁶⁰ For instance, since 1983, it became customary to introduce the Charter's spokesperson to the archbishop.

The underground Church networks co-founded the central oppositional movements, including Charter 77 and the Human Rights Watch Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS).⁶⁶¹ They were active in the instruction school of the ČSL. From the 1980s, some of the activists became archbishops' advisors.^x While the Catholics in Czech lands were

⁶⁵⁶ Cuhra (2018). *K rezistenci*, 60.

⁶⁵⁷ *Pacem in Terris* was a loyal Communist clergy association (housing around one-third of all priests) built in the tradition of the former organization Peace Movement of the Catholic Clergy.

⁶⁵⁸ The Catholics, for instance, rejected the political theology of the Jesuit Pierre-Jean Labarriére. Day, B. (1999). *Velvet Philosophers*. London: Claridge Press, 156.

⁶⁵⁹ The papal encyclicals were not published in Czechoslovakia, except for *Laborem Exercens* (1981).

⁶⁶⁰ Balík, Hanuš (2004). *Katolická církev*, 97.

⁶⁶¹ VONS as a human rights watch committee was established in 1978 to advocate the release of unjustly prosecuted citizens. Luxmoore, J., Babiouch, J. (1999). *The Vatican and the Red Flag*. London: Cassell, 294.

one segment amongst many in the oppositional ferment, in Slovakia, the opposition was dominantly Catholic and independent of the Charter 77 structures. The Slovak underground Church lacked the official episcopate and narrowed their “human rights agenda” to rallies for religious freedom. Only in 1988, thanks to the future Christian democratic party leaders, did the Slovak Catholics recognize the “indivisibility” of the relationships between civic and religious rights and freedoms.

The second Christian democratic current comprised Czech Catholic émigrés of 1948 and 1969. They supported the homegrown opposition and promoted it internationally, reprinting its reports, statements, essays, and communiques and smuggling new literature to Czechoslovakia.⁶⁶² The exiles were active in the pre-communist Christian democratic movement and Catholic Action and established parallel exiled platforms.⁶⁶³ A central institution was the Christian Academy in Rome. In 1958, the Academy began to publish the journal *Studie* to discuss the Second Vatican Council modernization. It became the leading interconfessional platform,⁶⁶⁴ assuming a post-conciliary, “convergence” position. However, on the brink of the 1980s, the editorial team of *Studie* became internally conflicted between the reformist and traditionalist wings.⁶⁶⁵ In 1983, the latter founded two strictly anti-communist journals: London *Rozmluvy* and St. Gallen *Nové obzory*.

In the 1980s, after nearly four decades of communist rule, the homegrown Christian democrats could also publish or were published in these exile periodicals, creating inter-

⁶⁶² See Kosicki, P., Kaiser, W. (2021). *Political Exile in the Global Twentieth Century*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

⁶⁶³ Hruboň, A., Šušová, P. (2021). Ľudácka politická emigrácia po roku 1948. In: *Politický exil zo Slovenska*, 121

⁶⁶⁴ The Academy smuggled *Studie*, along with other religious literature, through Katowice into Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak counterintelligence estimated that between four and five hundred copies were in circulation. In contrast, the leading exiled journal *Svědectví* had a circulation of approximately four thousand copies. Blažek, O. (2016). Český katolický exil v ideovém sporu o časopis Studie. *Soudobé dějiny* 23, n. 4, 652.

⁶⁶⁵ Skalický, K. (1990 [1979]). Ideologická koncepce. *Studie*, n. 132, 414.

generational and transnational communication space. The Czech exile supplied the homegrown Right with resources to mold theoretical and ideological coherence. As an unintended outcome, this two-directional communication differentiated factions within the Christian democratic movement. In contrast, the Slovak exile, represented by the umbrella organization Slovak World Congress (SKS), founded in 1970, which brought together first- and second-wave emigrants and the nationalist and moderate factions of Slovak exiles, had no contact with the domestic dissent.⁶⁶⁶

The third network within the Christian democratic archipelago was the Protestant New Orientation movement established in the late 1950s. It comprised reverends and theologians of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, who aligned with the democratic oppositional movements and cooperated with the underground church.⁶⁶⁷ In the 1970s, most New Orientation reverends lost the state permission and opposed the official line of the Brethren Synod.⁶⁶⁸

Czechoslovakia had no independent Catholic journals, unlike Hungary (*Vigilia*) or Poland (*Wież* and *Znak*).⁶⁶⁹ Hence, the Samizdat circulation⁶⁷⁰ played an essential informational and mobilization role in the dissent,⁶⁷¹ creating a semi-public discourse through which different political positions were articulated and contested.⁶⁷² These texts included various genres:

⁶⁶⁶ Kmeť, N. (2005). Opozícia a hnutie odporu na Slovensku 1968-1989. In: *Opozície a odpor proti komunistickému režimu v Československu 1968-1989*. Edited by Blažek, P., 41-54. Praha: Dokořán.

⁶⁶⁷ (1980 [1978]) 31 příslušníků československé církve evangelické. In *Křesťané a charta*. Edited by Prečan, V. Munich: INDEX, 111-112.

⁶⁶⁸ Morée, Piškula (2015). *Nejpokrokovější*, 309.

⁶⁶⁹ Putna (2017). *Česká katolická*, 490.

⁶⁷⁰ The history of Czechoslovak samizdat dates back to the Stalinist period and the distribution of pamphlets, prison lectures, or pastoral letters. However, the “mature samizdat” coincides with the birth of the democratic opposition in the 1970s.

⁶⁷¹ Falk, B. (2011). Resistance and dissent in Central and Eastern Europe. An emerging historiography. *East European Politics and Societies*, 25, n. 2, 320.

⁶⁷² Bolton (2012). *Worlds of Dissent*, 15.

official statements, manifestoes, petition campaigns, open letters, documentation of human rights violations, or thematic analyses. Most importantly, the samizdat communications networks and channels glued different Christian democratic branches together.

Besides, the Catholic samizdat reacted to Czechoslovakia's non-existent religious book market. Initially, the activists focused on translating and publishing post-conciliar theology. In the 1980s, the traditionalist émigré platforms assumed a critical stance towards conciliary reforms and Vatican *Ostpolitik*. They introduced the homegrown Christian democrats with the late work of Jacques Maritain⁶⁷³ and Urs von Balthasar,⁶⁷⁴ the “democratic capitalism” of Michael Novak,⁶⁷⁵ and Leszek Kolakowski's rebuttal of all stripes of Marxism.⁶⁷⁶ Importantly, the Christian democratic ideology was newly infused by secular works, the early Cold War political theory of Hannah Arendt and Eric Voegelin,⁶⁷⁷ and the anti-Soviet anti-totalitarianism of André Glucksman. The traditionalists returned to the pre-communist, anti-totalitarian, anti-communist, and capitalist elements of Christian democratic ideology absent in the discourse since the 1950s. These ideological modules became the essential reference for the young cohort of homegrown Catholics in building counter-elite communist-era movements and, after 1989, political parties.

⁶⁷³ The underground Catholics were preparing a publication of Maritain's *Le paysan de la Garonne*. See Maritain, J. (2013 [1966]) *The Peasant of the Garonne*. Wipf and Stock. Notably, the first issue of *Nové obzory* opened with an excerpt from Maritain *Integral Humanism*. See Proč? *Nové obzory* 1, n. 0., 3-5. Also, *Rozmluvy* opened with Bernanos's *Letter to Europeans*.

⁶⁷⁴ Balthasar, U. (1984). O protiřímském zaujetí. *Rozmluvy* 2, n. 2.

⁶⁷⁵ Tomský, A. (1985). Církev proti totalitarismu, *Rozmluvy* 4, 86-94.

⁶⁷⁶ Christian democrats were familiar with the classical Kolakowski's three-volume study, *Main Currents* (1976-1978). In particular, they appreciated his critique of Marxist revisionism, and the implausibility of any form of Marxism. See, for instance, Kolakowski, L. (1979). Fantazie marxismu. *Svědectví* 15, n. 58, 232; Preisner, R. (1981). Ke Kolakowského kritice marxismu. *Nové Obzory* 1, n. 2-3, 99-101.

⁶⁷⁷ Except for publishing excerpts and commentaries to Voegelin's work, the Catholic parallel educational platform Kampademia published a samizdat collective monograph in 1988 entitled *Voegelin & Patočka*. Korder, T. R. *Voegelin & Patočka*. Praha: Anatheum, 1988, 57.

Additionally, parallel educational platforms, although not as important as the flying university in Poland, were vital in transmitting Western scripts. For instance, the Jan Hus Foundation provided the democratic opposition with the first-class lecturers and literature. The Foundation, established in 1980 by Oxford philosophical sections, was initially chaired by Charles Taylor. The British project was followed by the creation of French (with Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Lyotard on the board) and U.S. branches. The Christian democratic activists hosted these activities.⁶⁷⁸

Despite the samizdat circulation, humanities and social sciences literature was absent in the Christian democratic language. Since political science and sociology were prohibited disciplines in Czechoslovakia (unlike, for instance, in Poland), the homegrown Christian democrats deployed idiosyncratic counter-language composed of notions of Thomist personalism (person, human dignity and rights, conscience, natural order, *agape*, anti-totalitarianism), post-conciliary theology (dialogue, convergence), Eric Voegelin terminology (*gnosis*, *metaxy*, *eschaton*, political religion), and existentialist phenomenology of Jan Patočka (truth, lifeworld, alienation, and authenticity), Václav Havel (post-totalitarianism and co-responsibility), and the antique political philosophy revived by Patočka (*polis*, *agora*, *techne*).⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁸ See Day (1999). *The Velvet*.

⁶⁷⁹ Jan Patočka (1907-1977), the most famous non-communist Czech philosopher of the twentieth century. He was a student of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. He specialized in antique philosophy (Plato, Aristotle) and, amongst other things, focused on the problem of Czech national identity and history from a phenomenological perspective. After the communist takeover in 1948, he was kicked out of Charles University and gave private lectures. He returned to Charles University in 1967 and was suspended in 1972 to continue in the underground lectureship. He drafted the *Charter 77 Declaration* and died during the police interrogation in January 1978.

Protagonists Line-Up

The late Socialist era was a breakthrough for a new generation of Catholic and Protestant activists born in the 1940s, who experienced the failure of the Prague Spring during their early adulthood. The Christian democratic networks were primarily concentrated in Prague, but in the 1980s, they also developed in Bratislava and Brno.

The key samizdat platforms for the Christian democratic ideological crystallization were the bulletin *Informace o církvi*,⁶⁸⁰ paralleling the official bulletin of the Charter 77 *Informace of Chartě 77*,⁶⁸¹ Prague-based journals *Paraf*, *Střední Evropa* and *Reflexe*, Bratislava-based *Bratislavské listy*, and exile *Studie* and *Rozmluvy*.

The Catholic underground Church can be differentiated into multiple smaller groupings. These included the “Prague Circle” in the orbit of the parallel Catholic university Kampademia, the journal *Střední Evropa*, and underground seminars close to the European Union. The “Bratislava Circle” was close to the progressive religious samizdat journals *Orientace* and *Náboženstvo a současnost* and the first political samizdat journal *Bratislavské listy* with close ties to the Pan-European Union. All these groupings were supported by the Jan Hus Foundation and centered mainly on the reception of neo-conservatism and the work of Hannah Arendt, Leszek Kolakowski, Raymond Aaron, August von Hayek, and Eric Voegelin. Amongst the key lecturers sponsored by the Jan Hus Foundation were John Finnis, David Levy, and *Esprit* editorial board members.⁶⁸²

The Czech exile included the reformist-oriented “*Studie* circle” that spearheaded the Second Vatican reforms and broadcasted them to Czechoslovakia, and the “*Rozmluvy* circle”

⁶⁸⁰ *Informace o církvi*.

⁶⁸¹ *Informace of Chartě 77*.

⁶⁸² Alongside the percolation of Western political traditions, Czechoslovak samizdat translated Polish handbooks on Thomism.

spread across Western Europe and the U.S. that put emphasis on the reception of neo-conservatism and was reserved to the Second Vatican Council reforms.

The left-leaning New Orientation Movement established two key seminary platforms in Ladislav Hejdánek and Jakub Trojan flats focused on phenomenology and theology, with lectures by Paul Ricoeur (also *Esprit*), Tony Judt or Etienne Balibar, amongst many others.

“Prague Circle”

Václav Benda (1946-1999) was the leading lay Catholic activist. He was one of the first signatories of Charter 77 and acted as its spokesperson in 1979 and 1984. In 1978, he co-created the human rights watch committee VONS. Later, he belonged to the advisory circle of Cardinal Tomášek. Benda also acted as the editor-in-chief of the samizdat philosophical journal *Paraf*, supported by the Jan Hus Foundation. For instance, he attempted to build an aura similar to Havel by emulating his famous prison *letters to Olga* with his prison letters to his wife entitled *Letters to Kamila*.

Josef Zvěřina (1913-1990) grew in the 1970s into the most sophisticated Catholic thinker within Charter 77. In numerous essays and lectures, Zvěřina developed a three-volume dogmatics entitled *Theology of Agape* that espoused the core innovations of the Second Vatican Council. He inserted the notion of *agape* – spiritual love – into the center of his personalist theological

system. In line with inductive theology, he stressed the value of subjective religious experience, in which the role of theology is to describe the possibilities of subjective faith under modern conditions. Amongst numerous underground activities (e.g., advisor to the Prague Archbishop, samizdat journals editor), he also trained the new ČSL cadres in the party instruction school in the 1980s.

Oto Mádr (1907-2011) was alongside Zvěřina, an unofficial leader of the Czech underground Church, and developed a theology of the “dying Church.” He signed Charter 77, edited theological samizdat series and journals, led an underground theological seminary (*Živá theologie*), and advised the Prague Archbishop.

Václav Malý (1950-) entered a theological seminary based on Mádr’s underground lecture series. He was ordained and received official permission in 1976, which he lost after signing Charter 77. He organized Catholic petition campaigns and

was active within the ČSL Renewal Stream structures.⁶⁸³ In 1989, he was the spokesperson of the oppositional umbrella organization Civic Forum.

Daniel Kroupa (1949-) studied under Jan Patočka. He was a Charter 77 signatory and co-chaired the underground Catholic university and “think tank” called Kampademia. The title referenced Plato’s Academia and the “search for the truth” and the place where the activists met – Kampa – a historical part of Prague’s old town. Martin Palouš, an active member of Kampademia and samizdat translator of Arendt, framed Kampademia as a parallel to the *Geistkreis* (Mind Circle), the leading interwar Viennese seminar founded by Friedrich Hayek (and frequented by Eric Voegelin). This circle centered on the reception and translations of Eric Voegelin, Andre Glucksmann, August von Hayek, and Hannah Arendt to formulate a conservative response to the Czechoslovak autocratic context. The circle indulged in totalitarian theory, the notion of lifeworld, and the philosophy of history. Kampademia maintained close relations with Roger Scruton and David Levy through the Jan Hus Foundation.

Pavel Bratinka (1946-) was a Charter 77 signatory and core member of Kampademia. He co-organized secret flat seminars supported by the Jan Hus Foundation (on modern political thought and Aristotelianism). Thanks to the American Embassy library in Prague, he became the key ambassador of August von Hayek and Eric Voegelin in Czechoslovakia. For instance, in 1979, he finalized the translation of Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom*.

Rudolf Kučera (1947-2019) was a Catholic historian who founded the journal *Central Europe*. He hosted political thought secret flat seminars attended by André Glucksmann or Steven Lukes. The journal *Esprit* (Olivier Mongin and Jean-Claud Eslin) and the Jan Hus Foundation sponsored and assisted *Central Europe* editorially. Kučera was also closely related to Roger Scruton, who published Kučera’s work in *Salisbury Review*.

Petr Pithart (1941-) entered the Communist Party in 1960 and became an active member in the reformist wing, participating in the study group “Study of the Political Regime Change” led by Zdeněk Mlynář, a high-ranking party cadre. Pithart left the Communist Party after 1968

⁶⁸³ Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 183.

and became a worker at a power plant. In the 1970s and 1980s, he grew into one of the crucial figures of Charter 77 in both intellectual and organizational sense. He founded the collective entitled Podiven together with Catholic psychologist Petr Přihoda and Milan Otáhal to draft an alternative grand narrative of Czech history and revive Catholic historiography. The Jan Hus Foundation sponsored the project. After 1989, Pithart became the first Czech Prime Minister,⁶⁸⁴ and Přihoda acted as his spokesperson. Otáhal founded the Institute of Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Science, which crucially shaped the Czech post-communist memory regime. Pithart also served as the first President of the Senate and was a Christian democratic candidate (1996–1998 and 2000–2004).

“Bratislava Circle”

Ján Čarnogurský (1944-) was a defendant of the politically prosecuted and publicized cases of religious discrimination. A son of a high-profile pre-communist neo-popularist, Pavol Čarnogurský, Čarnogurský was active in the underground church, anti-communist campaigns, and was one of the

few Slovak signatories of Charter 77. He edited the first Slovak political samizdat journal, *Bratislavské listy*.

Anton Hlinka (1926-2011) was an exiled Slovak Catholic priest. He was active in Munich-based RFE, radio Vatican, and Voice of America. He informed the international public about the underground Church and antiregime campaigns and broadcasted the latest philosophical and theological thought to Slovakia. He organized the smuggling of tens of thousands of books to Slovakia.

“*Studie* Circle”

Karel Skalický (1934-) was a leading reformist Catholic theologian in the Italian exile. In the 1960s, he served as a secretary to Cardinal Josef Beran and participated in the Second Vatican Council. In 1967, he was appointed editor-in-chief of *Studie*, the leading platform of the Christian Academy in the mid-1970s. *Studie* were published quarterly and, from 1977, bi-monthly, numbering over one hundred and thirty issues. Skalický published alongside Catholic contributions, reformed Marxist

⁶⁸⁴ A similar situation occurred in Poland, where Tadeusz Mazowiecki, although he would resist the Christian democratic label, became the first non-

communist prime minister in a post-Socialist country.

and Protestant authors, emulating Parisian *Svědectví*.

“*Rozmluvy Circle*”

Rio Preisner (1925-2007) was a German literature scholar focusing on teatrology, particularly on J. N. Nestroy, and was recognized for his translations of Hermann Broch, Erich Auerbach, or Karl Kraus. Preisner began to publish his political treatises only after his 1968 emigration to the U.S., where he became a professor of German literature at Pennsylvania State University (1969-1992). Despite his emigration, Preisner remained well connected with the political ferment in Czechoslovakia and the transnational networks, widely contributing and entering political debates in numerous exiled or samizdat journals. Preisner influenced Czechoslovak Christian democratic thought, mainly through the journal *Rozmluvy*. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, Preisner joined the Christian Democratic Union and, in 2000, received the Medal of Merit from President Václav Havel.

“New Orientation Movement”

Ladislav Hejdánek (1927-2020) became a Charter 77 spokesperson and editor of the samizdat Protestant journals *Reflexe* and

Oiykoimenh. Prevented from working in academia during normalization, Hejdánek made a living as a menial worker. In the 1970s, he re-organized the 1960s Jicháře seminar in his flat to which he invited prominent French, German, and British intellectuals, including Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricoeur and Marxists (Etienne Balibar or Jean-Pierre Vernant). In 1988, Hejdánek became part of the HOS. After 1989, the New Orientation Movement did not transform into a political party. In 1990, President Havel offered Hejdánek the role of Deputy Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak Republic. Hejdánek instead chose an academic position at Charles University.

Jakub S. Trojan (1927-), a theologian and reverend, was a root member of the New Orientation Movement, Charter 77, and VONS. He became known for celebrating the burial of Jan Palach (a Brethren Church member). In the 1970s, Trojan lost the state permission and worked as an economist. He organized ecumenical theological flat seminars with Hejdánek. After 1989, Trojan was appointed dean of the Evangelical Theological Faculty at Charles University.

Božena Komárková (1903-1997) was an anti-Nazi-resistance prisoner, a lecturer in secret seminars throughout the communist era, and a signatory of Charter 77. She

drafted an essential account of Protestant human rights in 1979, a crucial inspiration for the New Orientation and the dissent milieu.

Table 8: Late Socialist Era Christian Democratic Ideologues

Name	Position	Resources	Transmission
Václav Benda 1946-1999 philosopher	Charter 77, VONS, underground church, editor <i>Paraf</i>	Charter 77 and VONS documents, samizdat, and exile essays	Václav Havel, Jan Patočka, Eric Voegelin, Catholic social doctrine
Josef Zvěřina 1913-1990 theologian, priest	Charter 77, the ČSL, Underground church,	Samizdat and exile essays	Post-conciliary theology, personalism
Oto Mádr 1907-2011 theologian and priest	underground church, Charter 77, editor <i>Teologické texty</i>	Samizdat and exile essays	Post-conciliary theology
Václav Malý 1950- priest	Charter 77, the ČSL, underground church	Samizdat and exile essays	Post-conciliary theology
Daniel Kroupa 1949- philosopher	Charter 77, underground university Kampademia	<i>Voegelin a Patočka</i> (1988)	Jacques Maritain, Eric Voegelin, Jan Patočka
Pavel Bratinka 1946- physicist	Charter 77, underground university Kampademia	Samizdat essays	Eric Voegelin, August von Hayek
Karel Skalický 1934- priest	Exiled Catholic Action, editor-in-chief <i>Studie</i>	Editorials and essays in <i>Studie</i>	Post-conciliary theology
Rio Preisner 1925-2007 Germanist	Exile, Editor <i>Rozmluvy</i> and <i>Nové obzory</i>	<i>Kritika totalitarismu</i> (three volumes 1973, 1984, 1987), essays in <i>Studie, Rozmluvy, Nové obzory</i>	Eric Voegelin, Jacques Maritain, Urs von Balthasar, Leszek Kolakowski
Jiří Němec 1932-2001 psychiatrist	Charter 77, IWM	<i>Tvář</i> , Charter 77 documents, <i>Únos Evropy</i> (1981)	Post-conciliary theology, Jan Patočka
Rudolf Kučera 1947-2019 historian	Pan-European Movement, editor-in- chief <i>Střední Evropa</i>	<i>The Right for History</i> (1984), essays in <i>Střední Evropa</i>	Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi
Petr Pithart 1941- lawyer	Charter 77, Podiven	Samizdat essays, <i>Češi v dějinách nové doby</i> (1991)	Bernard Bolzano, Jan Pekař, Roger Scruton
Ladislav Hejdánek 1927-2020 philosopher	Charter 77, New Orientation	Samizdat and exile essays, Charter 77 documents	Emanuel Rádl, Josef L. Hromádka, Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Arnold Toynbee
Jakub Trojan 1927-	Charter 77, New Orientation	Samizdat and exile essays, <i>Studie</i>	Liberation theology

priest, theologian			
Božena Komárková 1903-1997 theologian, sociologist	Charter 77	<i>Původ a význam lidských práv (1979)</i>	Georg Jellinek
Ján Čarnogurský 1944- lawyer	Underground Church, Charter 77, editor-in- chief <i>Bratislavské listy</i>	Charter 77 documents, essays in <i>Orientace and Bratislavské listy</i> , <i>Vážnili ich za vieru (1986)</i>	Catholic social doctrine

Ideological Morphology

In this section, I describe the Catholic reinvigoration of the Thomist-natural rights tradition and the Protestant endorsement of the human rights language in the context of the newfound anti-totalitarian theory and the novel conceptualizations of civil society. In the second step, I chronicle the usage of Christian human rights in three campaigns, memory politics, anti-abortion, and religious freedom, which exemplify the gradual mobilization potential of the Christian democratic movement in Czechoslovakia.

Conscience Talk

In the late 1970s, the Catholic Christian democrats revived the strategy that cut back to the immediate postwar years when the Christian democratic parties used human rights as the ideological hallmark and an inherent tenet of Christian confessions and injected it with individual and universalist meaning. Christian human rights rested in the Thomist anthropological conceptualization of an individual as a “person” that presupposed a divine foundation of human nature that endows human beings with an inviolable dignity and responsibility within the God-created organic order. As I showed in the first chapter, in the Third Republic, Christian democratic activists attempted to constitutionalize human rights and sign international human rights pacts to combat Communist-led autocratization, but to no avail.

Human rights discourse remained marginal in Czechoslovakia, overshadowed by ethnonationalist discourse and the promise of social equality.

Only during the late 1960s, with the relaxation of censorship, was the *Declaration of Human Rights* and *Pact of Human Rights* diffused outside the Catholic milieu.⁶⁸⁵ As I noted, the reform Communists employed human rights in developing the socialist version of the *Rechtsstaat*. Socialist human rights were granted by the state, independently from international law, foregrounding collective social rights over individual rights and freedoms.⁶⁸⁶ The rights had no unavoidable character and could be constrained depending on “social interest.” However, the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968 thwarted the legislative enactment of the *Pact of Human Rights* scheduled for the fall of 1968.

Therefore, Czechoslovakia became part of the international human rights system only after signing the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. After thirty years of domestic and transnational advocacy for enacting and constitutionalizing human rights in Czechoslovakia, Christian democrats could newly mobilize around the contradictions between the existing domestic constitutional order and international norms and the oppressive practices of the one-party state.

Only in this era did the human rights idiom grow from marginal status to a political mainstream in the entire democratic opposition. The rights talk was newly used by human rights watch committees and various advocacy networks.⁶⁸⁷ It is well documented that Charter 77, a flagship of human rights advocacy in Eastern Europe, was an idiosyncratic and loosely connected movement. However, it is not much problematized that the Charter’s divergent ideological currents, including reform Marxists and Trotskyists, accepted the “natural human

⁶⁸⁵ (1969). *Dokumenty o lidských právech*. Prague: Mladá fronta.

⁶⁸⁶ See Donert (2011). Charter 77 and the Roma.

⁶⁸⁷ After 1977, the democratic opposition devised the boomerang strategy present amongst the early Cold War exiles, i.e., advocating domestic human rights through transnational networks. See Keck, M., Sikkink, K. (1999). *Activists beyond Borders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

rights” tradition and, by implication, the idea of the ethical foundations of politics and economics. In this chapter, I demonstrate that the key human rights language of the Czechoslovak counter-elite originated not only from the phenomenological conceptual universe⁶⁸⁸ but also from the natural (Thomist) and performative⁶⁸⁹ (Evangelical) traditions.

In the aftermath of Helsinki, the Christian rights talk centered on negative freedoms (civil, religious, and political rights), accentuated the Final Act’s reference to the “inherent dignity of the human person,”⁶⁹⁰ and banished social rights, which the ideologues considered a part of the autocratic state depoliticizing strategy. The Catholic right talk remained faithful to Thomist anthropology with references to “Christocentric personalism” and “natural order.” Hence, the ideologues yet again injected the Czechoslovak political discourse with Thomist metaphysics via human rights talk, and they succeeded in converting the political interaction between the opposition and the one-party state into an “ethical-moral” struggle. In this venture, they accepted new and unlikely allies, vilified for most of the twentieth century: Protestants, liberals, reform communists, and socialists.

The Catholic rights talk was closely related to the “conscience” discourse lingering from the Prague Spring.⁶⁹¹ With reference to the Second Vatican Council constitutions *Gaudium et Spes* and *Populorum Progressio* that were concerned, amongst many other things,

⁶⁸⁸ Gubser showed that the entanglements of Catholic personalism and phenomenology existed from the start, particularly concerning communitarianism, personalism, “moral decay,” and “rooting of the social and the political in the ethical.” In Eastern Europe, this intellectual blend was manifest in Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner’s oeuvre. See Gubser (2014). *Far Reaches*, 13.

⁶⁸⁹ I borrow this term from Vincent Llyod, who applied it for the study of the 1950s black American accounts of dignity see Lloyd, V (2021). The Dignity of Paul Robeson. In: *Christian Human Rights Reconsidered*, 189-207.

⁶⁹⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (1975). Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, 6.

⁶⁹¹ For the conceptual genealogy of Catholic conscience discourse used in political struggles in the postwar France, See Johnston-White, R. (2022). The Christian Anti-Torture Movement and the Politics of Conscience in France. *Past & Present* 257, n. 1, 318–342.

with religious liberty, the ideologues conceptualized religious faith as a personal responsibility to conscience, but newly also as a duty towards the “oppressed.”⁶⁹² As the leader of the underground Church, Zvěřina contended: “Human rights are not a privilege for us, for the church, etc., but they are our duty towards others.”⁶⁹³

Conscience was an essential compass for moral and political decision-making under autocratic duress, indicating whether the temporal power (a law or a government) respected the natural law inscribed in everyone’s soul. Similarly to dignity and rights, conscience was “inviolable” and represented a shield against any possible state infringement.⁶⁹⁴ Furthermore, the language of conscience was politicized by oppositional activists to articulate anti-state objections, mobilize for religious liberty, and justify the disobedience against “secular totalitarianism.”⁶⁹⁵ Besides, this conscience-based activism functioned as a proxy to revive active *citizenship*.

The New Orientation Movement tapped into human rights discourse by inventing a canon that comprised the Czech Protestant legacy and personalist phenomenology.⁶⁹⁶ Božena Komárková, an anti-Nazi resistance prisoner and a signatory of Charter 77, published samizdat *Origins and Meaning of Human Rights* in 1979.⁶⁹⁷ These collected essays constructed the

⁶⁹² Jowitt argued that Eastern European dissidence was focused on developing only private virtues while liberal democracy necessitates public virtues. However, the story of Christian democrats shows that they struggled to politicize the *Charter* and develop forms of active Catholic political engagement. Jowitt, K. (2023 [1993]). *New world disorder: The Leninist extinction*. L.A.: Univ of California Press. 293.

⁶⁹³ Zvěřina, J. (1969). Problém svobody (pokračování), *Via* 1, n. 2, 25-27. The lay Catholic activists adopted Zvěřina’s conceptualization of conscience. See, for instance, Benda, V. (1986). O odpovědnosti v politice a za politiku. In *Noční kádrový dotazník a jiné boje texty z let 1977-1989*. Edited by Benda, P. 221-239. Prague: Fra.

⁶⁹⁴ Maritain (1944). *Christianity and Democracy*, chapter 4.

⁶⁹⁵ Hanus, L. (1998 [1982]). Svedomie - subjektívna norma mravnosti. Principy kresťanskej morálky. In *Listy z podzemia*. Edited by Lesňák, R. 296-297. Prešov: USPO.

⁶⁹⁶ See for instance, Komárková, B. (1990 [1979]). *Původ a význam lidských práv*, Praha: SPN, 11.

⁶⁹⁷ Komárková was inspired by Georg Jellinek’s *Erklärung der Menschen und Bürgerrechte* (1895), which stressed Christian personalism as a crucial element of modern citizenship.

genealogy of Protestant human rights and became a crucial inspiration and reference for the New Orientation Movement and the democratic opposition. Komárková's treatise was the most systematic discussion of human rights published in the late Socialist era. Her key argument was that "natural" and "inalienable" human dignity and rights could not exist without "freedom of conscience" – the first Reformation demand that must represent the bedrock of human rights⁶⁹⁸ – and "responsibility to truth," which corresponds with Biblical Revelation.⁶⁹⁹

Crucially, Komárková introduced a human rights anti-canon not far from the Catholic one.⁷⁰⁰ It included "philosophical monists," first and foremost Hegel, Comte, and Marx. In her reading, this intellectual tradition denied natural human rights, stating that "Hegel is primarily responsible for spiritual slavery and the formation of totalitarian states."⁷⁰¹ For her, the vilest offspring of monism in the twentieth century was the Soviet Union, which derailed man as a mere "function within the state mechanism."⁷⁰² She held that human rights can be guaranteed only in democracies confined by the international human rights regime.⁷⁰³

The young cohort of the New Orientation Movement contested the conception of natural human rights. They introduced a version of human rights that hinged upon *agapeic* acts performed in the struggle against oppression. For instance, in 1978, the Czech Brethren reverend and a leading theologian of the New Orientation, Jakub S. Trojan, contested the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* for its Thomist "natural law" tenets.⁷⁰⁴ He argued that human beings are not "naturally" endowed with autonomy, reason, and conscience. These

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 214.

⁶⁹⁹ Komárková (1990 [1979]). *Původ a význam*, 11.

⁷⁰⁰ For a similar Cold War liberal anti-canon, see Talmon, J. (1952). *The origins of totalitarian democracy*. London: Secker & Warburg.

⁷⁰¹ Komárková (1979) *Původ a význam*, 11, 203.

⁷⁰² Ibid., 215.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁰⁴ Trojan, J. (1978). Svoboda a důstojnost člověka, In *Křesťané a charta*, 245.

qualities can be developed only through practical responsibility toward transcendence and fellow human beings and, if necessary, through “sacrifice and self-defeat.” In other words, the metaphysical foundations of the international human rights norms are unfit for contemporary, “secular-atheistic” challenges. Trojan’s performative dignity was essentially communitarian as he considered individuals “creators of dignity for others.” Dignity and responsibility are constituted in acts of “personal risk” to benefit the “weak.”⁷⁰⁵ In this context, Trojan reformulated Havel’s famous catchphrase “living in the truth.”⁷⁰⁶ into “living in responsibility (=freedom).”⁷⁰⁷

Another leading figure of the New Orientation Movement and Charter 77, Ladislav Hejdíánek, conceptualized human dignity as a product of conscience. He underlined the individual practice of “examination of conscience,” through which Christians must reveal their “co-responsibility” for the present situation and express solidarity.⁷⁰⁸ Hence, the capacity for critical reflection represents the fundamental principle of personal freedom that determines the possibility of resistance against institutionalized violence and the protection of the human dignity of others.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid, 254.

⁷⁰⁶ Protestants christened Patočka’s and Havel’s phenomenological appeal to truth. In Hejdíánek’s writings, the “truth-faith” nexus establishes an absolute normative criterium that incites the subject to reason, act, and become responsible. Hejdíánek on many instances emphasized that in old Hebrew or Aramaic, the notions of faith and truth are etymologically equal. Hejdíánek, L. (1990 [1989]). *Lidská práva, budoucnost Evropy a jedna česká tradice. Reflexe*, n. 4, 1–9

⁷⁰⁷ Trojan, (1978). *Svoboda a důstojnost*, 250.

⁷⁰⁸ Hejdíánek, L. (1978 [1977]). *Dopisy přáteli*, list č. 10. Smysl a místo křesťanství v dnešním světě. In *Křesťané a Charta*, 234.

The Christian democrats upheld the conscience talk through a supportive cluster of concepts: anti-totalitarianism, non-conformist ecclesiology, and civil society articulated as “parallel polis” and “non-political politics.”

In the Third Republic, totalitarian theory with a strong anti-communist focus was prominent in Christian democratic circles, though it faced opposition from Protestant and leftist intellectuals. During the early Cold War, Czechoslovak émigré Catholics borrowed U.S. anti-totalitarian rhetoric to internationalize their fight against the Soviet Union and advocate for a “Liberation strategy” targeting Soviet-controlled states. This rhetoric was largely set aside during the Prague Spring when the emphasis shifted to fostering “dialogue” and “convergence” between Marxism and Christianity. However, in the 1980s, anti-communist totalitarian theory saw a resurgence, gaining traction not only among Catholics but also among Protestants and secular groups, including reform-minded Marxists. Exiled Marxists, through the Rome-based journal *Listy*, adopted anti-totalitarianism, drawing parallels between Fascist and Communist regimes and even equating the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in the 1940s with the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion and the normalization period that followed.⁷⁰⁹

In late state socialism, Christian democratic totalitarian theory described the nature of power relationships and the illegitimacy of the Communist one-party state and created room for Christian critique of the modern, secular world. It enabled the ideologues to highlight and frame the systemic oppression of human rights and freedom of conscience, justify civil disobedience, and theorize the prospects of democratization.⁷¹⁰ Pace Jacques Rupnik, I show

⁷⁰⁹ See Andělová, K. (2016). *Reinventing Central Europe and the Decline of Marxism*. IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings, vol. 35.

⁷¹⁰ See Keane, J. (ed.) (1988) *Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives*. London: Verso; Tismaneanu, V. (1992) *Reinventing Politics: Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*. N.Y.: Free Press.

that the rediscovery of the totalitarian paradigm in the 1970s by the democratic opposition was not an Eastern European innovation.⁷¹¹ I highlight that the local ambassadors repurposed the classical Western totalitarian model⁷¹² and took on board its ideal-typical features: (i) the role of the guiding ideology, (ii) the leading role of the party, (iii) and state terror.

The Christian democratic totalitarian theory came in two, although entangled, “post-totalitarian” and “gnostic totalitarian” models. While the Prague Circle around the prominent lay Catholic activist Václav Benda adopted Václav Havel’s post-totalitarian theory and mixed it with Catholic social teachings and phenomenology, the Rozmluvy Circle rescued Eric Voegelin’s early Cold War “gnostic” version of totalitarian theory and reverted the imperative of exclusionary anti-communism.

I read the post-totalitarian model as a local articulation of the trends present in Western political theory. In the 1960s, the totalitarian theory was pluralized, fracturing the hegemonic status of standard Cold War conception. The new non-statist and non-communist models of totalitarianism marked a shift away from the state apparatus to society and “cultural conformity,” emphasizing internal psychological manipulation and individual co-responsibility for the totalitarian system rather than external coercion (e.g., Soviet Union).⁷¹³ In line with what was described as the “Solzhenitsyn effect”⁷¹⁴ amongst Western left-leaning intellectuals after 1968, also Václav Havel’s famous concept of post-totalitarianism in *The Power of Powerless* (1978) shifted the focus from a state-centered totalitarian explanation toward societal dynamics.

⁷¹¹ Rupnik (1988). *The Other Europe*.

⁷¹² Arendt, H. (2017 [1951]). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. London: Penguin Modern Classics; Friedrich, C., J., Brzezinski, Z. (1965 [1956]). *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. Cambridge MA: HUP.

⁷¹³ Joscelyne, S. (2020). Norman Mailer and American Totalitarianism in the 1960s. *Modern Intellectual History* 19, n. 1, 241-267.

⁷¹⁴ Horwath, R. (2007). “The Solzhenitsyn Effect”: East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege. *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, n. 4, 879–907.

Havel disentangled the persistence of the post-totalitarian system through the existence of a “false consciousness” style ideology that enables citizens to “deceive their conscience and conceal their true position.” For Havel, the function of ideology was to blur the system’s power operations and objectives (self-preservation) and render the power structures anonymous, creating a “world of appearances.” The post-totalitarian system was detached from reality and alienated from individuals’ “authentic existence.”⁷¹⁵ The post-totalitarian system integrated individuals through rituals (e.g., public manifestations or rallies). It turned them into loyal citizens who co-created the system and, by implication, became co-responsible for its endurance.⁷¹⁶

Reading Hannah Arendt’s explanation of the origins of totalitarianism, Havel portrayed society as a being in a “deep moral crisis” composed of uprooted and indifferent individuals. Havel’s counterstrategy rested on renewing individual responsibility through “moral acts” that would negate participation in the system and produce instances of autonomous social and political activity. For Havel, the way to escape the post-totalitarian system and subvert the hegemonic ideology was a revolt through “living in truth” (authenticity)⁷¹⁷ against “living in a lie” (ideology–alienation).

Catholic ideologues rephrased Havel’s post-totalitarian theory through Thomist language and countered several features of Havel’s conception. Václav Benda replied to Havel’s conception in the volume devoted to *The Power of Powerless* in 1979.⁷¹⁸ Benda

⁷¹⁵ Havel, V. (1985 [1978]). Power of Powerless. In: *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*. Edited by John Keane, J., 23-96. London: Verso.

⁷¹⁶ The “co-responsibility” feature was new in Havel’s theory compared to his 1975 *Letter to Husák*, which depicted the citizens as passive objects of the totalitarian oppressive power.

⁷¹⁷ Havel explained authenticity through phenomenological terms, including the individual response to “the human predisposition to truth.”

⁷¹⁸ Benda, V. (2009 [1979]). Katolicismus a politika – kořeny a perspektivy dnešní situace. In *Noční kádrový*, 67-86. The essay was reprinted many times in samizdat and exile editions and in Keane’s influential edition *The Power of Powerless*.

accepted Havel's idea of "co-responsibility."⁷¹⁹ Like many other dissidents across the ideological spectrum, Benda compared the Stalinist and normalization eras, arguing that the "evil" used to be clear in the 1950s, and one could assume a position against it in the "Manichean struggle." However, the current Communist "evil" is a "binding burden, which every citizen already carries on himself and in himself. The only possibility is to shake it off, escape from its power, and set out on the path toward the truth. Under these circumstances, every genuine struggle for one's soul becomes explicitly political and even creatively political."⁷²⁰ Hence, Benda localized the struggle against totalitarianism to human conscience. He framed the individual co-responsibility for the endurance of the totalitarian system as a "sin" to be examined in one conscience and redeemed through solidarity-based deeds in the public space.⁷²¹

Although Benda and other Christian democratic dissidents reflected the new techniques and power mechanisms through the "post-totalitarian" model, they remained faithful to the standard totalitarian perspective parallelly revived by the U.S. neoconservatives. These included the irreformability of the socialist system, the incompatibility between socialism and democracy, the kinship between fascism and Communism, and the role of the state's repressive apparatus.⁷²²

The second, the gnostic totalitarian model, revived the early Cold War totalitarian theory related to "Christocentric personalism" and "Gnosticism." The advocates of this model

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 76-7.

⁷²¹ Benda's writings show that the Gurian totalitarian thesis – communism as a punishment for secularization – was still alive in late socialist Czechoslovakia. See Greenberg, U. (2015). *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War*. N. J.: Princeton University Press, 159.

⁷²² The standard reference here is the political thought of Jeane Kirkpatrick, an advisor in Reagan's administration. Kirkpatrick, J. (1979). Dictatorships and Double Standards. *Commentary* 68, n. 5, 34–45.

rejected *tout court* the dialogue with Marxism and the idea of “co-responsibility.”⁷²³ They contested the contemporary social science literature for relativizing the concept of totalitarianism due to the convergence theory or for reducing it only to the case of German national socialism.⁷²⁴ Rio Preisner, the most sophisticated intellectual of the exile Christian democratic movement, delivered a three-volume *Critique of Totalitarianism*,⁷²⁵ devising fundamental notions of Voegelin’s⁷²⁶ *New Science of Politics*, including gnosis, metaxy, the structure of reality, or the Occident. He mixed Voegelin’s vocabulary with Hermann Broch’s critique of utopia and the modern dissolution of traditional values taken from *Die Schlafwandler* and *Der Versucher*, which Preisner himself translated in the 1960s.

Transcribing Voegelin, Preisner claimed that totalitarianism had pre-modern, “gnostic” roots. In this sense, Preisner radicalized the Third Republic Christian democratic anti-totalitarianism, which saw totalitarianism only as an offspring of modern secularism.⁷²⁷ Relatedly, Preisner constructed a more robust Gnostic anti-canon than Voegelin himself.⁷²⁸ He held that in modernity, Gnosticism merged with German idealism, particularly in Hegel’s philosophical system,⁷²⁹ and continued in Hegelian entanglements with Marxism and in

⁷²³ Putna (2017). *Katolická literatura*, 809.

⁷²⁴ Preisner, R. (1986). O české existenci (Rozhovor Karla Hvízdaly s Rio Preisnerem). *Rozmluvy* 6, n. 6, 79

⁷²⁵ Preisner’s first volume of the *Critique of Totalitarianism* was published by the Christian Academy. The second and third volume was published in *Rozmluvy*.

⁷²⁶ Preisner introduced Voegelin’s political thought to the Czechoslovak intellectual audience, underlining Voegelin’s critique of modernity, divinization of man and politics, positivist science, and confusion of utopian projects with political reality.

⁷²⁷ For instance, in the second volume of *Critique of Totalitarianism*, Preisner adopted Jacques Maritain’s anti-totalitarian Christocentric personalism but partially rejected it as a “one-sided” critique of capitalist democracy that overlooked the dangers of Soviet totalitarianism. Preisner, R. (1992 [1984]). *Česká existence*. Prague: Rozmluvy, 26

⁷²⁸ Putna (2017). *Moderní katolická*, 822.

⁷²⁹ In this sense, Preisner adopted Karl Popper and Jacob Talmon’s classical critiques of totalitarianism that framed Hegel as the thinker of modern totalitarianism.

phenomenological and existentialist “derivations” of idealism.⁷³⁰ Preisner included Teilhard de Chardin in his anti-canon, framing him as a “Hegelian student.”⁷³¹

The kernel of Preisner’s totalitarian model was the rejection of the Gnostic epistemological method that approaches “objective” reality as a simple reflection of *apriori* ideological patterns and schemes, particularly apparent in the “heretical” notion of God perceived as an object of theoretical knowledge and reducible to a philosophical inquiry.⁷³² In Preisner’s theory, Gnostic (atheist) epistemology impairs the possibility of the “metaxy” – encounter between immanence and transcendence. Preisner’s Christocentric personalism rooted transcendence in the material world through the historical events of the *Incarnation* and *Crucifixion* that encompassed and reconciled transcendence and immanence.⁷³³

Christ’s passion inscribes meaning to the meaninglessness of suffering. Christ’s sacrifice connects supernatural and natural orders, symbolizes his fidelity to immanent history, and rejects any escape to “abstract historicity.” In contrast, Gnosticism defines the modern *Occident (okcident)* and alienates human beings from transcendental reality and concrete historical “materiality,” individual uniqueness, and lifeworld, producing “abstract utopias” and a “total negation of reality.”⁷³⁴

Preisner’s philosophy of history, which underlined his Gnostic totalitarian model, was on par with other Christian democratic conceptualizations, either Catholic or Protestant. The Christian meaning of history contested the deterministic laws of dialectical materialism and utopianism. The “communist-totalitarian lifeworld” with deterministic historical schemes obliterated the principles of natural order.⁷³⁵ Christian democratic ideologues redescribed the

⁷³⁰ Preisner, R. (1982) K hegelianským principům marxismu. *Nové obzory* 2, n. 2-3, 5-10.

⁷³¹ Hanus, J. (2020). *Rio Preisner: portrét konzervativního myslitele*. Brno: CDK, 121.

⁷³² Preisner, R. (1992 [1987]). *Americana*, London: Rozmluvy, 1992 (1984).

⁷³³ Preisner, R. (1972). K fenomenologii sporu o smysl českých dějin. *Studie*, n. 2, 669, 690-692.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., 694.

⁷³⁵ Preisner (1992 [1984]). *Česká existence*, 7.

Marxist notion of a “utopian,” “abstract” future with Christian “hope” that denoted “eschatological expectation.” They pondered history in “personalistic” terms as a responsibility in and for the history of Salvation (see below).⁷³⁶

Society Against the State

How did the Christian democratic ideologues demarcate the private zone and reformulate the public domain during late socialism? In Eastern Europe, the open dissent introduced various normative conceptualizations of civil society to offer an alternative to Marxist-Leninist anti-pluralist social ontology (class objectivism) and the conflation of the state and society.⁷³⁷ Marxist-Leninist doctrine interpreted society as a passive tool in the hands of the avant-garde epitomized by the Party that controls the state to create and sustain hegemony. This resulted in the marginalization of civil society, which Marxist-Leninism considered a *bourgeois* invention to retain social inequities blurred by formal legal equality. Dissidents such as Václav Havel, Adam Michnik, and György Konrád envisioned civil society as a space of spontaneous social order contrasting with modern bureaucratic states’ oppressive and rigid structures.⁷³⁸ Civil society was equalized with a lifeworld outside the state realm and correlated with a space of individual freedom, authenticity, associational life, solidarity, public critique, and other elements of civic life systematically destroyed by the (Communist) state.

⁷³⁶ See Palouš, R. (1986). Proti pokrokářství a gnózi. *Paraf* 3, 12-19; Preisner, R. (1988). Epilog o totalitarismu, In: *Hostina*. Edited by Havel, V. Toronto: Sixty-Eight Publishers, 237-249.

⁷³⁷ Přibán, J. (2004). Reconstituting Paradise Lost: Temporality, Civility, and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Constitution-Making. *Law & Society Review* 38, n. 3, 407-432.

⁷³⁸ Keane (1988). *Civil Society*.

The civil society talk was a proxy for theorizing democratization and defining the totalitarian “mass society” as composed of demobilized, manipulatable, and uprooted individuals.⁷³⁹ If the theory of totalitarianism diagnosed the logic of the late Socialist autocratic rule, civil society talk highlighted the decay of morals and identity crisis. This widespread “society first” discourse sat well with the longstanding commitments of Christian democratic political theory that articulated the ethical malaises of modernity through the notions of natural order and anti-totalitarianism.

In the late Socialist context, Christian democratic activists developed a distinctive conceptualization of civil society through notions including “non-conformist church,” “parallel polis,” and “non-political politics.” The “society first” principle enabled them to revive their anti-statist commitments and rally for protecting the organic societal units – family and church. Furthermore, Christian democrats complied with the strategy of the democratic opposition’s “self-limiting evolutionist strategy”⁷⁴⁰ to boost civil society, hollow out the state, and incite peaceful regime transition.

For Christian democrats, civil society became the vantage point for building counter-hegemony, a parallel structure of democratic opposition composed of “organic” social units: family, grassroots associations, and churches. The self-organized and autonomous society became a sight of political emancipation, not an object of constraint.⁷⁴¹ Christian democrats

⁷³⁹ For instance, Havel maintained that modern industrial society has become similarly oppressive, translating the convergence totalitarian theory of, for instance, Herbert Marcuse, to Czechoslovakia. See Joscelyne (2020). Norman Mailer.

⁷⁴⁰ The idea of evolutionism was widespread across Eastern Europe and promoted also by the exile Catholic journal *Studie* and more ecumenical *Svědectví*. See Baker (2002). *Civil society and Democratic Theory*, 14.

⁷⁴¹ Tismaneu, V. (2001). Civil society, Pluralism, and the Future of East and Central Europe. *Social Research* 68, n. 4; Arato, A. (1994). The Rise, Decline and Reconstruction of the Concept of Civil Society and Directions for Future Research. *Javnost - The Public* 1, n. 1.

treated society as a moral and Christian renewal domain, far from a free-market conceptualization that assumed a dominant status in the post-communist era.⁷⁴²

Furthermore, Christian democrats updated the theory of social order. In the pre-communist era, the local Christian democrats curated Thomist social ontology via Jacques Maritain's notion of “organic pluralism.” During the Prague Spring re-launch, the notion was translated into “socialist pluralism.” In the late Socialist era, Christian democrats redescribed natural order into the language of “parallel polis” (Catholics) and “anti-political politics” (Protestants).

Christian democratic thinkers repeated that any era necessitates Christian norms for their socially integrative and critical function, rejecting the liberal or socialist imperative of religious non-interference in the public square and religious privatization that would leave the social life to a “laissez-faire”⁷⁴³ and unconstrained economic and political interests. Society must be rooted in transcendence to surpass the omnipresent modern nihilism and abstract ideological schemes by inducing a religious renewal to convert the indifferent and demoralized majority. Additionally, the activists revived the critique of undue modern scientific rationalism and the inability of secular ideologies to justify moral maxims, primarily human dignity and rights. In other words, they continued to assert the superiority of ethics over politics and equated secularization with ethical decline. Such a conceptualization enabled Christian democrats to politicize ethical issues and, at the same time, moralize the political conflict with the autocratic state.

Amongst the concepts Christian democrats used in the civil society discourse were the longstanding ideological principles: social intermediaries (family, church), *agape* (duties to

⁷⁴² See Craiutu, A., Kolev, S. (2022). Political thought in Central and Eastern Europe: The open society, its friends, and enemies. *European Journal of Political Theory* 21, n. 4, 808-835.

⁷⁴³ Komárková (1979). *Původ*, 156

God and fellow human beings), pluralism, subsidiarity (principle of non-absorption and decentralization),⁷⁴⁴ and a small state. Additionally, they underscored the role of laics and the democratization of the Church structure in the struggle for political and social emancipation.

Non-Conformist Church

In the 1980s, Eastern Europe experienced a religious revival exemplified by the election of a Polish pope, large-scale pilgrimages, and religious-based petition campaigns. The ecclesiological development was conceptually anchored in the Church doctrine. It sidelined Pius XII's "mystical body of Christ," which assigns a position and role to every member within the natural order,⁷⁴⁵ and underlined Paul VI's Church as a "missionary enterprise" tasked with re-evangelizing the modern world⁷⁴⁶ and John Paul II's "new evangelization" project highlighted the role of the laity⁷⁴⁷ and the "ever-reforming Church."⁷⁴⁸

As I noted in the previous chapter, the diffusion of Catholic (post)conciliar ecclesiology in Czechoslovakia strengthened the Christian democratic oppositional strategy by emphasizing "personal faith" and "personal conscience" as independent of the shipwrecked institutional Church. Václav Havel's famous dissent slogan, "living in truth," resonated with Catholic and Protestant political and social theory, which interpreted the phenomenological "truth" in a theological sense. The accompanying concepts of individual "conscience" legitimized any practice aligned with one's personal beliefs rather than imposed norms, and the concept of

⁷⁴⁴ Chaplin, J (2014). Subsidiarity and Social Pluralism. In: *Global Perspectives on Subsidiarity*. Edited by Evans, M, Zimmerman, A. (eds.), 65–83. Dordrecht: Springer.

⁷⁴⁵ See Druga, J. [Mikloško, F.]. (1988). Oslavná zamyslenie, *Bratislavské listy* 1, n. 1.

⁷⁴⁶ See encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964)

⁷⁴⁷ See exhortation *Christifideles laici* (1988) and encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990).

⁷⁴⁸ Halík, T. (1990 [1989]). Evangelium musí být hlášáno nově. In: *Obnovíš tvář země*. Edited by: Halík, T. Prague: NLN.

agape, translated as “compassion,” mobilized Catholics towards political disobedience. This ecclesiastical shift enabled Christian democrats to frame the underground Church in non-conformist terms and actively participate in the democratic opposition.

The leading figures of the underground Church in Czechoslovakia developed ecclesiological models tailored to the local context.⁷⁴⁹ Drawing on the Second Vatican constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, they underlined the role of the laity, traditionally seen as passive, towards an active laic apostolate mandated by baptism and organized through the synodal principle. In considering the Church’s defense mechanisms against the authoritarian regime, activists proposed two conceptual frameworks: the “Dying Church” and the “Agapeic Church.” The bottom line of the new ecclesiological principles rested in non-conformism “to break the ritual of production and consumption, enslaving those it seemingly liberates.”⁷⁵⁰

In 1977, amid the severe repression of the burgeoning opposition, Oto Mádr, a leading theologian of the Czech underground Church, authored *Modus Moriendi of the Church*. He derived the title from Vatican diplomat Agostino Casaroli’s 1968 report regarding Church-state negotiations in Eastern Europe: in Poland, they concerned the *modus vivendi* (the modality of co-existence); in Hungary, the *modus vivendi vel moriendi* (the modality of co-existence or dying); and in Czechoslovakia, the *modus moriendi* (the modality of dying).⁷⁵¹

For these purposes, Mádr introduced a pastoral “theology of the dying Church,”⁷⁵² problematizing whether a Church can indeed die and affirming that it can. But he emphasized the “productive character” of a dying Church, asserting that the “liminal situation [of death]

⁷⁴⁹ Mádr, O. (2007 [1971]) *Církev dnes a zítra*. In: *V zápasech za Boží věc*, 223.

⁷⁵⁰ Němec, J. (1980). *Nové šance svobody*. In: *O svobodě a moci*. Edited by Havel, V., 257-269. Köln: Index.

⁷⁵¹ Mádr, O. (2007 [1979]). *Modus moriendi církve*. In: *V zápasech za Boží věc*, 236-242.

⁷⁵² Mádr pointed out that there exists a “theology of emerging church” (the theology of Church Fathers or the missionary theology) and a theology for a “developed Church” in pastoral theology but no theology of a “dying church.”

forces us to open our eyes.”⁷⁵³ Accepting death, he argued, has an “invaluable, stimulating value for life.” Mádr believed that this perspective should shape the incentive structure for Czechoslovak Catholics and galvanize an intensive campaign to “prevent the Church from dying.”⁷⁵⁴

The second key figure of the underground Church, Josef Zvěřina, in his 1978 *Courage to be Church*,⁷⁵⁵ redescribed the notion of “church,” burdened in his view by unruly history and insufficient backing in the Gospel, into a “community.” Zvěřina conception underscored the communitarian core of the “agapeic Church” that manifests in friendships, marriage, familial relationships, or spiritual community; it is a space of the “highest freedom,” openness, and solidarity⁷⁵⁶ that replaces the Church as a hostile institution.

For Zvěřina, the Church must become “anti-class,” anti-consumerist,” “anti-materialist,” and concerned with the practical solidarity with the least well-off. Zvěřina projected “the church of the future” as a “small flock.” Referring to Roger Schütz, founder of Taizé, the community must be present in the secular world and assume a missionary attitude through political engagement to remove “indifference” and, using Havel’s vocabulary, participate in the “conspiracy of the powerless.”⁷⁵⁷

In 1986, at the height of Christian democratic campaigning (see below), Mádr updated his ecclesiology in *How the Church Does not Die: Theology of a Threatened Church*.⁷⁵⁸ He theorized the Church’s defensive mechanisms⁷⁵⁹ against the “totalitarian state.” He argued that disobedience is permissible to “defend rights of the fellow citizens against the abuses of

⁷⁵³ Ibid., 239.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 243

⁷⁵⁵ Zvěřina, J. (1979). Odvaha být církví. *Studie* 3, n. 63, 177-195.

⁷⁵⁶ Zvěřina, J. (2003). *Teologie agape*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 3.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., 266-7

⁷⁵⁸ Mádr, O. (2007 [1986]). Jak církev neumírá. K teologii ohrožené církve. In: *V zápasech za Boží věc*.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., 246.

power.”⁷⁶⁰ In Mádr’s mind, Catholics held an unavoidable responsibility to protect “Christ’s mystical body.”⁷⁶¹ Zvěřina and Mádr’s disciple and 2014 Templeton Prize laureate, Tomáš Halík, emphasized the Church’s “co-responsibility” for the “life of nation and society.”⁷⁶² This responsibility denotes the mission of “Christianizing” society. However, Christianization cannot dwell on protecting Church privileges but on the emancipation of society, which is implemented through “dialogue and cooperation.”⁷⁶³

The New Orientation Movement developed an ecclesiological conception more proximate to the prominent Ibero-American liberation theology, the “Theology of Trouble.”⁷⁶⁴ In theorizing the church mission under autocratic rule, the New Orientation activists underlined Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s thesis on the “end of a religious era”⁷⁶⁵ and secularization’s “positive effects” on modern religious forms. Ladislav Hejránek, reiterating the principles of Barth’s neo-orthodoxy, underlined the necessity of independence of faith from any institutional structures and modern rationalism and positivism through a concept of “methodological atheism” as opposed to Marxist “ontological atheism.” He called for disconnecting the

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 254.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 265-6.

⁷⁶² Halík, T. ([1989] 1990). *Evangelium musí být hlasano nove*. In: *Obnovíš tvář země*. Edited by: Halík, T. Prague: NLN.

⁷⁶³ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁴ In the 1970s, Liberation Theology emerged as a significant movement in Catholic social and political theory, particularly in Ibero-America. It focused on addressing social inequalities and opposing global neoliberal hegemony. While Czechoslovak Catholics acknowledged some aspects of Liberation Theology, they ultimately rejected it as a strategy of opposition due to its associations with Marxism.

For instance Zvěřina commented Liberation Theology as follows: “We warmly sympathize with liberation. With every liberation from injustice, misery and slavery. However, we are also for liberation from racial, class, and national oppression. We are against discrimination and ideological oppression! Doesn’t a liberation theology turn a blind eye to this, if not both?” Zvěřina, J. (1986). *Teologie osvobození viděná z Čech. Teologické texty*, n. 13, 14. See Rowland, C. (ed.). (1999). *The Cambridge companion to liberation theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; McGovern, A., F. (2009). *Liberation theology and its critics: Toward an assessment*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

⁷⁶⁵ Bonhoeffer’s *Nachfolge* (1953) was published by the Protestant publishing house Kalich in 1962.

Christian faith from metaphysical religious forms since the modern plural conditions impede reducing human life to any particular “divine archetype.”⁷⁶⁶ Through “methodological atheism,” the Christian metaphysical images of God must be altered.⁷⁶⁷ Hejdánek re-defined religious faith as a practice, a modality of inward subjective reflection that propels new forms of personal orientation and conduct based on the response to God’s “challenge.”⁷⁶⁸

Trojan’s “Theology of Trouble” asserted that in the context of church marginalization, it must depart from the “post-Constantine imagination.”⁷⁶⁹ He underlined the role of grassroots, charismatic groups within the church and their critical and “prophetic” role. The Theology of Trouble “is practiced only in personal commitment and with risk.” It is exercised through public acts: “Without a risky contact with power on the level of public protest or responsible engagement ... the capacity of Biblical truth cannot be verified.”⁷⁷⁰ The notion of “trouble” served as an instrument to mobilize the church and stemmed from the social grievances concerning the “dehumanizing situation” of late Socialism. For Trojan, the trouble denoted “concentrated preparation” for the conflict with the power, not consensus or appeasement.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁶ In this context, Hejdánek downplayed the Catholic principle of *Imitatio Christi* as a religious archetype. In Hejdánek view, Christ represented an “anti-archetype” who appeals not to the past but incite us to conduct a new, creative act. Hejdánek, L. (1990). Ježíš jako výzva. *Souvislosti*, n. 4, 62–66

⁷⁶⁷ Hejdánek, L. (1966 [1964]). Atheismus a otázky nové interpretace. *Křesťanská revue* 33, 66–69, 92–94.

⁷⁶⁸ In the conceptualization of historical meaning, Hejdánek followed Arnold Toynbee (1946) and his concepts of “challenge” and “response” to the present moment. Hejdánek, L. (1978) *Několik slov úvodem*. Retrieved 07.04.2024 from <https://www.hejdanek.eu/Archive/Detail/90>.

⁷⁶⁹ Trojan, J. (1977). Křesťanská existence v socialistickém Československu aneb teologie průšvihů. *Studie*, n. 67, 68. Trojan took this concept from his teacher Josef Hromádka. Hromádka used the notion of the “Constantine epoch” to highlight the end of an alliance of the throne and altar in the post-1945 period. The role of the institutionalized church as a part of the power structures must be remolded into the church, understood as a “fellowship of pilgrims.” Hromádka, J. L (1955). Poslání církve dnes. *Kostnické jiskry* 28, n 2.

⁷⁷⁰ Trojan (1977). Křesťanská existence, 80.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Central Europe saw the widespread circulation of concepts like “parallel structures,” “self-organization,” and “second culture.” Within the Czechoslovak democratic opposition, Catholics were the first to initiate a crucial shift from merely condemning the regime on moral and legal grounds to engaging in oppositional politics. This included the establishment of human rights watch committees. Václav Benda formulated the “parallel polis” principles in 1978, expanding on the ecclesiological debates.⁷⁷² He hinted at the “abstract morality of Charter 77,” claiming that the opposition must forge institutional “parallel” structures⁷⁷³ to “humanize” the existing dysfunctional social structures and to reject any compromise with the regime.⁷⁷⁴ Benda believed the underground Church structures were the first step towards building an independent civil society. In his view, the underground Church created communities, a personal web of connections against “fear” and “distrust” imposed by the totalitarian system. The Church and other parallel structures (primarily cultural and educational) must become widespread to escape the Charter 77 “ghetto,”⁷⁷⁵ raise civic consciousness and responsibility, and internationalize the human rights agenda.

Benda’s “parallel structure” concept was the Christian democratic democratization strategy that entailed a Catholic communitarian spin. For Benda, the Thomist social ontology was an essential tool to combat “the atomized society, the mutual isolation of individuals, and the deliberate destruction of all ties and realities that could overcome the loneliness and thus

⁷⁷² Benda V. (1978). Paralelní polis. In: *Noční kádrový*, 56-66 Benda wrote the well-known essay *Paralel Polis* a few months after Patočka’s death. It sparked a widespread debate. See Benda, V. (Ed.) (1988). *Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry*. *Social Research* 55, 214-22.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 64.

the manipulability of the individual.”⁷⁷⁶ Benda noted that laics cannot obey the “secular power” that acts “against divinely anchored, natural law” but must emancipate and “antagonize” against the state and struggle for Church autonomy. The conflict between Christianity and “totality” is unavoidable, and any compromise is “immoral.”⁷⁷⁷

Reflecting on the concept of parallel polis after nine years, Benda reiterated that the strategy aimed to break down “miniature iron curtains” between individuals and the “informational and social blockade.”⁷⁷⁸ According to Benda, only “organic” social units that survived the communist hardship and hegemonizing policies can reinvigorate the asthenic society and recreate the social bonds, trust, and care for the “common good”: first and foremost, the family and the Church.⁷⁷⁹

In line with his post-totalitarian model, Benda doubted the plausibility of the interwar and early Cold War papal anti-communist encyclicals, arguing that they are “morally unrealistic” and “obscure.” Following the notion of co-responsibility, he showed that Czechoslovak Catholics are “in” the system and cannot pursue a purely negative attitude towards the regime. He promoted new “radical conservative politics”⁷⁸⁰ against the “officially staged pseudo-politics,”⁷⁸¹ calling for the creation of a new Christian democratic political force, as the Charter’s unity was only provisional and hinged on a voluntary resignation from politics.⁷⁸²

Similarly to Benda, the exiled Christian democratic traditionalist branch contested Charter 77’s apoliticism even more. For instance, Růžko Preisner equalized the Charter’s

⁷⁷⁶ Benda, V (1988). Výzva z Bratislavy. In: *Noční kádrový*, 50.

⁷⁷⁷ Benda, V. (1986). Znovu křesťanství a politika: jak dál po Velehradě. In: *Noční kádrový*, 207.

⁷⁷⁸ Benda, V. (1988). O situaci, perspektivách a smyslu paralelní polis. In: *Noční kádrový*, 241-3.

⁷⁷⁹ Benda, V. (1987) Problematika rodiny v relacích totalitního statu. In: *Noční kádrový*, 251.

⁷⁸⁰ Benda (2009 [1979]). *Katolicismus a politika*, 86.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., 78.

⁷⁸² Ibid., 83.

“abstract” principles with the “catastrophic” Prague Spring, framing both projects as a contradictory struggle for “human rights and socialist regime preservation.”⁷⁸³ In 1968, the reform Communists, in the struggle to conserve the single-party rule, effectively “neutralized” the protection of human rights. However, for Preisner, human rights can be protected only in opposition to the “totalitarian party” and “socialism.”⁷⁸⁴

For Preisner, Jan Palach’s self-immolation should become the general epitome of the “moral” character of the Cold War and the impossibility of cooperation with socialism, which only induces “man’s annihilation.” Through the Palach case, Preisner revived the civilizational and moral-theological framing of the Cold War conflict as a struggle between “truth” and a “system of evil and ideology of lie.” Preisner rebutted the Charter 77 accent on the “dialogue” with power as a legacy of the 1960s. However, for Preisner, “in a totalitarian system, dialogue is reduced to nothing more than a series of police interrogations that repeatedly occur in response to the monologic statements published by Charter 77.”⁷⁸⁵

Preisner focused on Charter’s *Document 21*, which exemplified the contradictory “ideational core of Charter 77.” In Preisner’s reading, the document rested in Jan Patočka’s combination of “Marxist-Leninism and phenomenology” that sought to blend principles of “socialism, democracy, and humanism.” At the same time, the self-described “non-political” aims positioned Charter 77 both against the system and against those who wanted to strike it down. In Preisner’s account, Charter 77 assumed a similar ambivalent attitude to the Czechoslovak autocratic rule as did the Western New Left towards the “Soviet system.”⁷⁸⁶

The homegrown Christian democratic activists responded to Preisner’s criticism and pointed out the limits of the “old-fashioned” exclusionary anti-communism. For instance,

⁷⁸³ Preisner, R. (1982). Dvě úvahy na okraj Charty 77. *Nové Obzory* 1, n. 0, 22.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., 30.

Benda shared Preisner's "scepticism to dialogue" but concurred that his approach is too radical and, therefore, not Catholic.⁷⁸⁷ In his reading, Preisner's "right-wing critique" premised "the principle of collective guilt and the Manichean view of deterministic evil that negates individual guilt. Such a perspective reduces human beings to mere carriers of good and evil, making them passive substances in the struggle over transhistorical principles."⁷⁸⁸ In Benda's view, Preisner's perspective blinded him from subtle differentiation and effectively denied the possibility of personal conversion ("metanoia") and, by implication, social and political change.

The New Orientation Movement's democratization recipe dwelt in the Christian political praxis of *agape*, translated as an "unconcealed solidarity" with the "destitute" to revert the institutionalized violence of the autocratic system. To that end, Christians must co-create the alternative public domain and deploy open social and political critique to set limits on the hypertrophied bureaucratic nation-state.⁷⁸⁹ The New Orientation Movement accentuated⁷⁹⁰ the principles of "civil society" to underline the autonomy and freedom of every human being. Only a political regime based on a robust civil society anchored in the Christian faith can facilitate freedom and democratization and protect the rule of law.⁷⁹¹

However, unlike Catholics, the New Orientation was against establishing a political project and called for a society-based critical, prophetic, and "watchdog" role of Christian movements. For this purpose, Ladislav Hejránek offered his "anti-political politics" strategy

⁷⁸⁷ Benda, V. (1984). O etice polemiky a potřebné míře tolerance. In: *Noční kádrový*, 96-118. Despite their disagreements, Preisner saw in Benda a leader of the Czechoslovak anti-communist opposition, which was apparent from his letter to Pavel Tigrid. Preisner, R. (1988). Otevřený dopis redakci "Svědectví." *Nové obzory* 8, 27-28. Special supplement, 1-12.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁸⁹ See Gubser (2014). *Far Reaches*, 181.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 177-78.

⁷⁹¹ Hejránek, L. (1981[1980]). Naše cesta k lepšímu uspořádání společnosti nepovede přes žádné návraty ke starým pořádkům. *Svazky pro dialog*, n. 4, 1-32.

in 1978. He disbelieved “technical politics,” which he identified with the modern bureaucratic state and political parties. Moreover, akin to Václav Havel or György Konrád, Hejdánek understood the vices of party politics not merely as a problem of state socialism but as a global issue, also present in the Western European party systems. Hence, anti-political politics cannot be converted into “technical politics.” The fundamental principle of non-political politics was the “right” to criticize and hold “technical politics” accountable⁷⁹² and to promote and protect universalist principles, particularly human rights, independent of state power.⁷⁹³

Human Rights Campaigning

Human rights language was a unifying strategy for Christians, reform Marxists, and socialists in the democratic opposition from the late 1960s. However, this unity gradually unraveled in the mid-1980s due to the influence of Catholic personalists at home and in exile. The democratic opposition’s internal divisions emerged from disagreements over implementing human rights outside the universalist and normative anti-regime claims. Hence, implementing human rights revealed their pacified yet contradictory conceptions within the “open dissent.” The collapse of the tentative consensus on human rights led to the breakdown of cooperation amongst the democratic opposition, resulting in the formation of new movements and, after 1989, political parties. This section examines three pivotal Christian human rights campaigns that exposed the muted cleavages within the Czechoslovak counter-elite: the clash over memory politics, the amendment to abortion law, and religious liberty.

⁷⁹² Hejdánek, L. (1968). Ideologie a kýč. *Plamen* 10, n. 6, 12–21.

⁷⁹³ Hejdánek, L. (1977). *Dopisy přáteli*. Prague: Edice Petlice, 92–105.

“The Right for History”

The first campaign I reconstruct here addressed the Christian democratic effort to promote alternative, pluralist memory politics through the Charter 77 agenda.⁷⁹⁴ The project was entitled the “Right for History” and started in 1984. It announced the need to deconstruct Marxist historiography’s foundational “revolutionary” myths and the conception of Communist ethnonationalism.⁷⁹⁵ Catholics and Protestants applied the right talk to raise claims over the right to express alternative historical conceptions and identities. Hence, human rights were newly extrapolated to the problem of historical memory and its complex relationship to national identity. I highlight the new narrative construction of past events by Christian democrats – the newly demarcated historical continuities and discontinuities – that became part of the resistance strategy and served as a reservoir for oppositional claims.

The campaign over the (primarily Czech) historical identity and culture unfolded after the publication of the Charter 77 *Document n. 280* entitled *The Right for History*.⁷⁹⁶ It was numerous reprinted in samizdat editions and exile journals. *The Right for History* was drafted by historians Rudolf Kučera and Jan P. Kučera, editors-in-chief of the Catholic journal *Central Europe*, and addressed the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The text was unprecedented amongst the Charter 77 official documents because it put forward a concrete (Catholic) ideological position and was supported by the leading Catholic dissident Václav Benda, then one of the Charter’s spokespersons.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁴ Kubik, J. (1994). *The Power of Symbols against the Symbol of Power*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press.

⁷⁹⁵ Bernhard, M., Kubik, J. (2014). *Twenty Years After Communism*. Oxford: OUP, 7.

⁷⁹⁶ (2007 [1984]). Dokument č. 286. In: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*. Edited by Říčan, V., 625. Prague: AV.

⁷⁹⁷ The debate can be interpreted as another episode of the so-called “Czech Question” – a longstanding public discussion spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the present over the meaning and role of Czech historical identity, the plausibility of Czech state sovereignty, and the Czech relationship to Europe.

The memory activists suggested “de-totalizing” historical memory and pluralizing Czech historiography. In search of usable pasts, the document demanded to advance the research on the historical role of the Catholic Church and the Habsburg Monarchy. The possibility of spelling out alternative historical traditions to those canonized by the Marxist cultural policies was defined as indispensable for sustaining the relevance of Charter 77 human rights agenda. The document proposed a counterstrategy to the “falsification” and “canceling” of historical memory and demanded the “right” for independent historical memory, an essential element for constituting individual identity. Besides, the document’s wording resonated with the dissent catchword of searching for the “authentic truth” that the authors extrapolated to scientific historical research.

The Left current of Charter 77 rebutted the *Right for History*, siding with the official interpretation and accusing Christian democrats of reviving “integral Catholicism.”⁷⁹⁸ A few months after the publication of *The Right for History*, Václav Benda supported the document by issuing another Charter 77 statement. In the *Document n. 286*, he argued that the Charter’s main agenda of “inviolable” human rights hinges upon historical memory. In his mind, a person is a “historical being” and cannot develop his most fundamental rights if he is denied “access to historical memory, to his nature.”⁷⁹⁹ By implication, if a man is alienated from history, he loses life’s “meaning.” The Christian democratic accent on the historicity of a person was encouraged by the conciliary “inductive theology” that foregrounded man’s historical embeddedness in and responsibility for the presence. For instance, Mádr suggested that human beings must escape, through historical inquiry, from “false consciousness” to “life in truth” and “authenticity.” Otherwise, individuals can be manipulated by the “totalitarian power.”⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ Uhl, P. 1986 [2006]. *Za svobodu je třeba neustále bojovat*. Praha: Neklíd, 60-65.

⁷⁹⁹ Document n. 286. (2007 [1984]). In: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, 659-661. Praha: AV, 659.

⁸⁰⁰ Mádr, O. (1984). Editorial: Odpovědnost za dějiny. *Teologické texty*, n. 9, 2-4.

Christian democrats, both Catholic and Protestant, strove through the critique of Marxist historical ontology to empty the Communist historical storyline and legitimacy and replace it with alternative and internally pluralistic grand narratives about the modern national genealogy. Christian democrats justified the necessity to redraw the Czechoslovak historiography through the “traumas” and “crises” caused by the failures of communism. The Christian democratic personalist philosophy of history countered dialectical materialism and the fatalism of objective, “totalitarian historical laws.”⁸⁰¹

The Christian democratic memory activists focused on fragmenting two foundational myths of Communist historiography. First, they deconstructed the national legacy of the nineteenth century – “the Czech national revival” – rooted in cultural and ethno-linguist nationalism.⁸⁰² As an alternative, they underscored the eighteenth-century Baroque legacy (Catholics) and the fifteenth-century Reformation (Protestants) and sought to rescue legacies of civic nationhood (*patria*).

Second, they revisited the Communist “myths” of 1945 and 1948, conceptualized by the official historiography as moments of emancipation from fascism and the bourgeois liberal-capitalist democracy. Christian democrats redescribed Marxist foundational myths via human rights discourse by highlighting the instances of Communist human rights violations that paved the ground for the onset of the communist rule: the atrocities against ethnic Germans during the postwar ousting, the Stalinist-era repressions, the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, and the 1970s “normalization.” This mnemonic strategy effectively restored the pre-communist and

⁸⁰¹ In Říčan, 659-661, p. 659 Document n. 286. (2007 [1984]). In: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, 659.

⁸⁰² Christian democrats built their critique on Jan Patočka’s treatise *Co jsou češi*, which disputed the legacy of “language nationalism” in lieu of “regional patriotism” that would allow the re-integration of the German element into the Czech historical memory. This was later extensively developed by the Catholic historiographical projects “Ackermann” and “Podiven” that chronicled the Czech-German relationship in a long historical perspective.

early Cold War era Christian democratic vocabulary and combined human rights, anti-totalitarianism, and civilisationism.

Patria

Catholics theorized the problem of modern Czech nationhood through the concept adapted from the official Catholic doctrine but muted for several decades: *patria* or *homeland* (*vlast*). Christian democrats reinvigorated the notion through the political thought of Bernard Bolzano, a nineteenth-century Prague-based, liberal Catholic priest and mathematician. Through Bolzano, Christian democrats read patriotism as defined by civic rights instead of romantic ideas and language-based ethnonationalism.⁸⁰³ In other words, *patria* was a Christian democratic normative idea developed to replace the “divisive” and “anonymizing effect” of communist ethno-nationalism.⁸⁰⁴ The *patria* discourse was most prominent in the works of the authors’ collective entitled Podiven, which had a dominant Catholic presence.⁸⁰⁵ Podiven resuscitated the synthetical and interconfessional conceptualization of the most prominent Catholic historian and public figure of the interwar era, Jan Pekař. Podiven imbued *patria* with communitarian content, accentuating the notions of “localism” and “solidarity” as necessary premises to create “normal political conditions.”⁸⁰⁶

First, the Podiven collective defined *patria* as relating a person to a concrete place and landscape of a “home.” This concreteness and stable societal and cultural bonds protect

⁸⁰³ Pithart, P. (1990 [1981]). Proměny intolerance. In: *Dějiny a politika: Výbor z esejistiky*. Edited by Pithart, P. Prague: Prostor, 43.

⁸⁰⁴ Pithart, P. (1990 [1985]). Mrtvá a živá voda. In: *Dějiny a politika*, 366.

⁸⁰⁵ Podiven was established by a liberal Catholic and a crucial figure of Charter 77, Petr Pithart, Catholic psychologist Petr Přihoda, and historian Milan Otáhal and drafted an alternative grand narrative of Czech history in line with the *Right for History* appeal.

⁸⁰⁶ Pithart, P. (1979). Pokus o vlast. *Svědectví*, n. 59.

individuals from succumbing to “abstract” modern ideologies that destroy “concrete” relationships, disintegrate solidarity, and incite “pseudo-religious faith in absolutized values of nation and language.”⁸⁰⁷ Second, the notion of *patria* fits the human beings’ “natural” need for belonging – but in non-exclusionary terms. The Podiven collective argued that each person is embedded in the organic social units, through which one “feels to be part of not merely the narrowest but also broadest frameworks of the social order: family, city, associations, region, parish, church, nation and homeland and finally indirectly the world state.”⁸⁰⁸ These “multiple loyalties” create a system of subsidiary relations, produce responsibilities and bonds while constituting the spiritual and material world form one’s “home” to the “supranational community.”⁸⁰⁹ The conceptualization of overlapping identities, Podiven argued, is the most effective way to build social trust and reconcile local, national, and transnational loyalties.

The New Orientation Movement activist Ladislav Hejdánek paralleled the Catholic rejection of modern Czech nationalism. He argued that it rested in the “metaphysical romanticism” and “language nationalism”⁸¹⁰ of Johann G. Herder.⁸¹¹ The motif of the Romantic era as a reason for the onset of totalitarian states was a firm part of Cold War liberalism. It represented a re-occurring anti-canonical reference amongst the Czech Christian dissidence.⁸¹²

The deconstruction of the Communist memory regime was underpinned by the Christian democratic philosophy of history that fended off mono-interpretations and advocated for the coexistence of plural historical narratives.⁸¹³ Catholics focused on reviving, in their

⁸⁰⁷ Pithart (1990 [1981]). *Proměny intolerance*, 44.

⁸⁰⁸ Pithart, P. (1990 [1987]). Kavalír Josef Pekař. In: *Dějiny a politika*, 88.

⁸⁰⁹ Pithart (1990 [1985]) *Mrtvá a živá voda*, 367.

⁸¹⁰ Hejdánek (1978). *Několik slov úvodem*, 4

⁸¹¹ Hejdánek, L. (1993). *Národ a nacionalismy. Úvahy o roli idejí a ideologií. Reflexe*, 9, n. 8, 1–17

⁸¹² See Moyn (2023). *Liberalism against Itself*, 39–63.

⁸¹³ Pithart, P. (1990 [1983]). “Fronta” proti Hradu. In: *Dějiny a politika*, 135.

view, “organically” established historical traditions⁸¹⁴ whose marginalization impeded societal integration, tolerance, and protection of human rights.⁸¹⁵ Historical synthesis and moderation was a Christian democratic framing of what they perceived as the constant motif of “exclusion” in Czech history and historiography.⁸¹⁶

The Podiven collective centered on two allegedly “integrative” historical traditions. First, they argued that national hagiography⁸¹⁷ entails an emancipatory value for the present moment. Catholics offered a new interpretation of Czech and Central European saint legends to renew the relationship between the local culture and Czech Catholic tradition, interpreting the saint legends in secular terms to appeal to non-Catholics. They underscored the legends’ motif of “the respect for fulfilling the moral obligations even at the expense of extreme danger when facing brutal power.”⁸¹⁸

The dusted-off national hagiography was further reinforced by John Paul II’s hagiographic interventions – making the two ninth-century Greek missionaries Cyril and Methodius, who Christianize the Czechoslovak territory, co-patrons of Europe,⁸¹⁹ and canonizing two Czech saints in 1989, a unique event in the whole history of Czechoslovakia.

Besides, the Catholic mnemonic strategy recognized the reformist priest of the fifteenth century, Jan Hus, as a “reformer of the Church,” which was in turn certified by John Paul II. This change was aimed against the dominant grand Communist historical narrative, in which Hus was considered the first social and national revolutionary and adamant critic of the Roman

⁸¹⁴ Pithart, P. (1990 [1986]). Dějiny, kampaně a národní sebevědomí. In: *Dějiny a politika*, 20 (19-33).

⁸¹⁵ Pithart. (1990 [1983]). “Fronta” proti Hradu, 135.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

⁸¹⁷ For instance, Petr Pithart refers to the ninth-century legend of St. Wenceslaus and the fourteenth-century legend of St. John of Nepomuk.

⁸¹⁸ Pithart, P. (1990a [1982]). O bourání bohů. In: *Dějiny a politika*, 181.

⁸¹⁹ See John Paul II’s encyclical *Slavorum apostolici* (1985) and bulla *Cyril and Methodius* (1980) that made these saints co-patrons of Europe.

Catholic Church. Concurrently, the Catholic recognition of Hus can be read as a strategy to weaken the Protestant claim over Hus's legacy.

The second revived historical tradition was the Baroque era,⁸²⁰ described by the official historiography as the “dark epoch” of the re-Catholisation of Bohemia in the seventeenth century. In search of usable pasts, the Catholic dissidents sought to rehabilitate the Baroque era and restore the richness of the Baroque and Jesuit culture and art as an antithesis to the official atheist culture of the present. Catholics underlined the Baroque sensitivity for “local lifeworld” and “patriotism.”⁸²¹ Moreover, the Baroque era represented a nostalgic historical epoch for Catholics, a period immediately preceding the onset of Enlightenment and nationalism. For instance, Zdeněk Neuwirth, one of the central figures of the parallel Catholic educational platform Kampademia, extolled the Baroque tradition for its Christocentric humanism and order that was replaced by modern “Gnostic” rationalism as a source of modern malaises.

The final component of the 1980s Catholic memory politics was the revived genre of victimization and heroization of the Church under communist duress.⁸²² This genre was already present in Christian democratic exile journals in the early Cold War to mobilize the Western governments toward the liberation of the Soviet satellites. Through the stories of prosecution – of monastic orders, individuals, or religious communities, Catholics framed the Church and the Christian segment of the population as the authentic protectors of human dignity, rights, freedoms, national community, and democratic principles throughout the Cold War. They centered on documenting the prosecuted Christians and institutionalized Church, chronicling the sights of past and present injustices and heroic anti-communist acts.⁸²³

⁸²⁰ See Kalista, Z. (1982). *Tvář baroka*. Munich: Arkýř; Rak, J., Kučera, J. P. (1983). *Bohuslav Balbín a jeho místo v české kultuře*. Prague: Vyšehrad.

⁸²¹ Neuwirth, V. (1970). Věra a základy křesťanské kultury. *Studie*, n. 22, 152–175.

⁸²² For instance, Dokument č. 291. In: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, 671–677.

⁸²³ Mikloško, F. (1991). *Nebudete ich moct' rozvrátiť*. Bratislava: Archa; Čarnogurský, J. (1990). *Väznili ich za vieru*. Bratislava: Pramene.

(Central) Europe

In conjunction with the alternative concept of nationhood, Christian democratic ideologues reinvigorated the discourse on “Europe” conceptualized as “West” and expanded it to the notion of “Central Europe.” The common ground of the European discourse dwelt in the taken-for-granted premise that the Czechs and Slovaks belong to the Western *civilization* (*civilizace*).⁸²⁴ Hence, this era was a critical turning point for Protestant political thought that, until then, accentuated Czechoslovak belonging to the East.

The mid-1980s debate over “Central Europe” was pre-figured by Jiří Němec, the key lay Catholic activist forced to emigrate to Vienna in 1982. In his response to Patočka’s *Heretical Essays* (1975), he conceptualized a normative, phenomenological account of Europe grounded in the motifs of “kidnapping” and “discontinuity.”⁸²⁵ Němec rooted his interpretation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses II*, in which Jupiter falls in love with Sidon princess Europa and kidnaps her. Europe is irretrievably lost, and from this moment onwards, Němec argued, Europe has been constantly and unsuccessfully searched for: “Her kidnap is an act of God, hence something that fundamentally goes beyond the reach of mortal beings.”⁸²⁶

In Němec’s reading, the search for Europe is desperate, “but it is indispensable to practice it. It results in acceptance of one’s alienation and individualization.” Europe is “endlessly re-established in contrast to other civilizations, whose foundations are ritually repeated as the absolute sameness.”⁸²⁷ Europe is established “polemically,” only “in passing”

⁸²⁴ See for instance, Pachman, L. (1975). *Boha nelze vyhnat: Od marxismu zpět ke křesťanství*. Rome: Křesťanská Akademie.

⁸²⁵ As Gubser notes, the phenomenological tradition can be defined “as a philosophy of Europe and Europeanism,” deeply rooted in ancient Greek philosophical reflection and Christianity. Gubser (2014). *Far Reaches*, 30.

⁸²⁶ Němec, J. (1985 [1982]). *Únos Európy: Divertimento k filozofii dějin*, 57.

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 61.

while being searched, and thus has a “discontinuous” history. Němec held that this discontinuous element was destroyed by the ascendancy of “totalitarianism,” which eliminated polemics and established the “absolute” cyclical time.⁸²⁸

Hejdánek, a close friend and collaborator of Němec since the 1960s, shared a similar phenomenological notion of Europe that he applied to Czech nationhood. He argued that the only viable conceptualization of collective identity is its potential to become a proxy for the ethical renewal and cultivation of societies.⁸²⁹ He urged that the only viable Czechoslovak nation-building project dwells in establishing the European identity: “It is time to indulge ourselves in the European national consciousness. It is time that we begin to say: I was born as a European.”⁸³⁰ Nonetheless, Hejdánek rejected the idea of a “return to Europe,” dominating the discourse of the Soviet satellites’ dissent in the 1980s as it only denoted the desire to return to “historical significance.” However, societies cannot return to history through rituals; they only “enter” history when acting historically. Using Arendt’s notion of the “new beginning,” Hejdánek argued that the new community can be established if it squares with the past. In Hejdánek’s conception, soviet satellites should refrain from merely imitating the West because they would become even more excluded from history.⁸³¹ They can only “continue” the history by becoming active participants and co-producers of Europeanness.

Alongside these phenomenological takes, the idiom of “Central Europe” rose in prominence across the ideological divides in the mid-1980s in Czechoslovakia and other Soviet satellites.⁸³² The idea implied a distinctive character of Central Europe *vis à vis* the rest of

⁸²⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁸²⁹ Hejdánek (1993). *Národ a nacionalismy*, 10.

⁸³⁰ Hejdánek (1981). *Naše cesta k lepšímu*, 5.

⁸³¹ Hejdánek L. (1990). *Lettre Internationale* 1, n. 1, 11–13.

⁸³² Kundera, M. (1984). A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out. *Granta* 11. See also Bibó, I. (2015 [1946]) *The Art of Peacemaking: Political Essays*. New Haven: YUP; Konrád, G. (1984). *Antipolitics: An Essay*. San Diego: Harcourt.

Eastern Europe.⁸³³ Central Europe was elaborated as a decolonizing concept that challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet hegemony.⁸³⁴

The Paris-based Czechoslovak novelist Milan Kundera drafted a critical take on Central Europe. His thesis, which, similarly to Němec's conception, worked with the myth of the "abduction of Europe," asserted the distinctive *culture* of Central Europe. The Christian democrats immediately contested Kundera's vision. The first issue of the journal *Central Europe* accused Kundera of ignoring the Christian spiritual legacy.⁸³⁵ All the Christian democratic circles ultimately narrowed the question of Europe to the Christian West that could emancipate Central European nations from Soviet domination and bypass the closure of the modern nation-state. Drawing from John Paul II's vision of a united Christian Europe, Christianity was considered the only "spiritual force in Europe capable of confronting modern enslavement; the only integrating force of Western civilization able to stop the expansion of Marxist ideology."⁸³⁶

The Central Europe debate also re-introduced inter-confessional fault lines. The latter underlined the positive role of the interwar republic, while the former interpreted it as the era that prepared the way for the onset of communist secular atheism.⁸³⁷ Catholics rejected the interwar Czechoslovak state sovereignty for it established only a "pre-totalitarian" ideology of an exclusive "Kulturation" directed against the Christian historical traditions, forging false identitarian dichotomies in a region of multiple ethnicities. For Catholics, the establishment of interwar nation-states destroyed the "organism of the neighborhood," read the Habsburg Empire, and prepared the way for the "colonial" control of this territory, beginning in the 1930s

⁸³³ Wolff, L. (1994). *Inventing Eastern Europe*. Stanford: SUP.

⁸³⁴ Čarnogurský, J. (1988). O putiach a o inom. In: *Videné od Dunaja*. Bratislava: Kaligram, 53-65.

⁸³⁵ Hradec, J. (1984). Hodnota jednoho svědectví. *Střední Evropa* 1, n. 1, 3-27.

⁸³⁶ Pachman (1975). *Boha nelze vyhnat*, 57.

⁸³⁷ Hejránek, L. (1990). Filosofie a národní ideologie. *Reflexe*, n. 3, 6.

takeover by the Nazi regime and then Bolshevik communism.⁸³⁸ Since 1945, Central Europe has been transformed into a buffer zone of Soviet totalitarianism that terminated any viable political conceptions of Europe because “Western optimists” ignore the suffering of “millions of slaves of totalitarianism.”⁸³⁹

In particular, the homegrown *Central Europe* circle and the exiled traditionalists romanticized political and religious policies during the Habsburg era and contrasted them with the Communist cultural policies.⁸⁴⁰ For the exiled Rio Preisner, Central Europe stood for the legacy of civic and regional patriotism⁸⁴¹ under the auspice of the Habsburg monarchy, aristocracy, and the Roman Catholic Church. The Habsburg Monarchy was the last genuine Christian empire that should serve as the only “legitimate” and “non-ideological” model for the federalization of Central Europe. In his interpretation, only the Habsburg rule secured democratic freedoms for the Central European societies, refraining from creating a centralized and robust nation-state and fending off modern ideologies.

German Ousting and the Holocaust

The second component of the Christian democratic mnemonic strategy was the re-exposition of the expulsion of roughly three million ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948 and the Holocaust. The Christian democratic memory tactics coincided with the launch of Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, a West German strategy to come to terms with Eastern European countries. The revisionism of German ousting was championed by homegrown

⁸³⁸ Preisner (1992 [1984]). *Česká existence*, 242.

⁸³⁹ Preisner (1988). *Epilog o totalitarismus*, 244.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., 217.

⁸⁴¹ The Habsburg Monarchy was considered “reactionary” by Marxist historiography, however, it found uncritical sympathy across the Catholic Christian democratic network, including Kampademia, Podiven, and the underground Church. See Preisner (1992 [1984]). *Česká existence*, 210.

Slovak historian, Charter 77 signatory and later émigré, Ján Mlynárik, who shed new light on the atrocities and injustices committed by Czechs against ethnic Germans. His work was prefigured by multiple accounts published in the (Catholic) exile.⁸⁴²

Throughout the communist era, the critical study of German transfer was tabooed and packaged as a foundational and emancipatory moment in Czechoslovak post-war history that remedied the Nazi-induced war injustices. The official historiography portrayed Germans as inherent enemies and the German “displacement” as a rightful payback for the “Munich betrayal.” Mlynárik grounded his evidence in the testimonial letters published in the pre-communist leading Christian democratic journal, *Obzory* (see first chapter). For the New Orientation, a critical legacy was the interwar Protestant critique of the Czechoslovak minority policies.⁸⁴³

Mlynárik’s conclusions sparked immediate responses, negative and affirmative. Reform Marxists retorted Mlynárik’s arguments. For instance, the first spokesperson of Charter 77⁸⁴⁴ relativized the moral guilt of Czechs on the ousting and described it as a “necessity” and a legitimate element of “transitional justice,” a response to the fear of “revanchism,” and “border revisionism.” In contrast, Christian democratic interpretation moralized the German ousting through the concepts of “communist guilt,” “human rights,” and “conscience.”

Christian democrats replaced the Communist “foundational moment” by constructing the “discontinuity,” pointing out the disruption of the interwar constitutional human rights regime through the postwar deprivation of ethnic Germans of Czechoslovak citizenship and confiscation of their private property. In the Christian democratic narrative, the expulsion

⁸⁴² See, for instance, Pachman (1975). *Boha nelze vyhnat. Svědectví*, run by a pre-communist Christian democrat, Pavel Tigrid, published Mlynárik essays.

⁸⁴³ See Rádl, E. (1928). *Válka Čechů s Němci*. Praha: Čin. Rádl contested the interwar constitutional conception of the “exclusionary” Czechoslovak nation.

⁸⁴⁴ See the samizdat anthology (1980). *K dějinám česko-německých vztahů*. Prague.

exemplified the dangers of linguistic and cultural nationalism and the all-powerful “nation-state.” Christian democrats contested the idea of German collective guilt, arguing that the expulsion had constituted the critical obstacle to resurrecting any form of collective identity and belonging of Czechs in “democratic Europe.” Christian democratic ideologues held that the German ousting enabled Communist forces to carry out the subsequent atrocities directed not only against “external” but also “internal” foes (class enemies) and marked the “breakthrough” of illegality, violation of the rule of law, and institutionalized violence. The ousting caused a “moral collapse”⁸⁴⁵ and the “pathology of hatred.”⁸⁴⁶

Hence, the anti-communist totalitarian theory loomed larger behind the Christian democratic discourse on German ousting. Not only that the ideologues equalize the (allegedly) Communist crimes during the transfer with the Nazi war crimes, but they also equated the postwar degradation of German rights with the normalization era crackdown on political opposition. Besides, the Christian democratic take on German expulsion was another explanation of the Communist ascendancy to power and a historical rationalization of the present “moral collapse” that bred from these unreconciled historical legacies.

Besides the recognition of Czech guilt in the German expulsion, in October 1987, a Slovak oppositional group with a dominant Christian presence issued a *Declaration*⁸⁴⁷ that recognized the Slovak guilt concerning the deportations of Jews during the existence of the Slovak State. The *Declaration* stood for the first Slovak apology to the survivors of the Holocaust. It asked for forgiveness in “the name of our conscience, humanness ...and religious faith.” The Declaration was published through the bulletin *Information about Charter*, broadcasted through *Voice of America*, sent to the Bratislava Jewish community, and read by

⁸⁴⁵ Hejdánek (1981). Naše cesta k lepšímu, 1.

⁸⁴⁶ Zvěřina, J. (1980). Nežít v nenávisti. In: *O svobodě a moci*, 251-261

⁸⁴⁷ Čarnogurský, J. (1987). Spomienka na Holokaust. *Infoch* 77 10, n. 18, 19-20.

Slovak émigrés in Dachau. Besides, the Catholic samizdat began to publish Church-issued documents (e.g., pastoral letters and communiques) from the Slovak State era that disclosed instances of Catholic manifest protection of Jews.⁸⁴⁸ The regime crackdown on the signatories followed the *Declaration* publication, and it was framed by the official media as a plot of Slovak “clero-fascists.” Later, the Charter 77 issued *Document n. 541* in April 1989. It underlined that the Communist memory regime entail “antisemite elements” that try to censor that over two-thirds of the Czechoslovak victims of the Nazi rule were Jews. The *Document* highlighted the erasure of the Holocaust memory and the impossibility of reflecting the “totalitarian neopagan revolt against European, Judeo-Christian tradition.”⁸⁴⁹

“The Right to Life”

The second campaign I discuss is the Christian democratic anti-abortion campaign. Importantly, the Czechoslovak case paralleled the Eastern European anti-abortion campaigns waged also in Hungary and Poland. The local campaign aggregated broad support to forestall the enactment of the new liberalization amendment to the abortion law,⁸⁵⁰ which was nevertheless authorized in 1986. The pre-legislative advocacy was carried out through Catholic samizdat and exile outlets and supported through petitions and letter campaigns. Surprisingly, the issue of anti-abortion campaigning in state-socialist Czechoslovakia has been below the radar of human rights historiography.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁸ For instance, (1986). Slovenskí biskupi a židovská otázka. Cirkevný oběžník z 15.4.1942. *Historický zápisník* 1, n. 1.

⁸⁴⁹ (1989). Document 541. In: *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, 1103-1109.

⁸⁵⁰ Pohunková, D. (ed.). (1988). *Právo na život: Soubor ohlasů na liberalizaci zákona o umělem přerušení těhotenství v ČSSR*. Prague: Duch a život; Also printed in a special issue of *Studie* n. 110-111 (1987).

⁸⁵¹ Only recently, several accounts were delivered that scrutinized the role and strategy of the Catholic Church in Poland concerning the reproductive rights in late Socialism. See Kuźma-Markowska, S., Kelly, L. (2022). Anti-

The 1986 legal amendment terminated the existence of abortion commissions. Newly, women were not forced to justify the abortion procedure until twelve weeks of pregnancy. The amendment also entailed the right to free access to hormonal and intrauterine counter-conception. The abortion law was very liberal in the global context of the 1980s. It coincided with the 1982 Czechoslovak ratification of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

The Christian democratic campaign entitled the *Right to Life* resumed the Prague Spring Christian democratic contestation of the 1957 decriminalization of abortion and arguably the first serious attempt to contest a Communist bioethical policy. The campaign strove to redescribe the official discourse centered on women's autonomy and health to the "killing" of "unborn person" and "conscience" of women and men and health workers. The campaign was supported by both the underground and the official Church. After the communist breakdown in 1989, anti-abortion activists who participated in the *Right to Life* assumed key positions in Christian democratic parties and pressure groups (e.g., the Pro-Life Movement) and promoted the constitutional and legal formalization of the anti-abortion principles.

The anti-abortion campaign manifested the ability of the Christian democratic political opposition, samizdat journals, and the secret Church networks to aggregate resources and mobilize on short notice. *The Right to Life* was the first female-driven campaign in the history of the Czechoslovak dissent, as the counter-elite activism was mainly reserved for men.⁸⁵² This transnational (Czech and Slovak) and inter-confessional (Catholic and Protestant) campaign entailed analyses, appeals, and open letters from the lay and clerical activists and the official Church episcopacy directed at MPs of the Czechoslovak People's Party, government, or the

abortion Activism in Poland and the Republic of Ireland c.1970s–1990s. *Journal of Religious History* 46, 526–551.

⁸⁵² Avanza, M. (2020). Using a Feminist Paradigm (Intersectionality) to Study Conservative Women: The Case of Pro-Life Activists in Italy. *Politics & Gender* 16, n. 2, 552–80.

priest association *Pacem in Terris*. The petition campaign was widely published in samizdat and exiled journals and gained around fifteen thousand signatures.⁸⁵³ However, the organizers were arrested, and many petition documents were destroyed.

The Catholics constructed the anti-abortion canon via the 1968 papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, John Finnis' *Abortion and Legal Rationality* (1970),⁸⁵⁴ and Alphonse de Valk's *Abortion: Christianity, reason and human rights* (1982), amongst others.⁸⁵⁵ Furthermore, the activists framed the anti-abortion campaign through international agreements signed by Czechoslovakia, including the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* from 1959, but also through the Church canonical law and Magisterium official documents.⁸⁵⁶

The *Right to Life* introduced the human rights talk centered on the (i) fetus and (ii) the conscience of women, men, and healthcare workers. Christian democrats attempted to convert the public debate centered on women's emancipation and health into a moral-political discussion in which Christian norms were considered non-fungible.⁸⁵⁷ Hence, Christian democrats rebuffed abortion as a health issue and rearticulated it as "killing" to both moralize and politicize it.

First, Christian democrats used alternative language to the official medical expert language that described abortion as the "removal of fetus egg."⁸⁵⁸ The "fetus-centered"

⁸⁵³ Pohunková (1988). *Právo na život*.

⁸⁵⁴ Finnis, J., M. (1967-1970). *Abortion and Legal Rationality*. *Adel. L. Rev.*, 431.

⁸⁵⁵ The anti-abortion ideological resources included materials diffused by American transnational anti-abortion activists. The primary resource was the work of Alphonse de Valk, co-founder of the Catholic Civil Rights League (1985). See, for instance, Valk, A. (1986) *Potrat z hlediska křesťanství, rozumu a lidských práv*. See also Häring, B. (1983). *Bioetika*. Prague: Duch a život. The activists' repertoire also newly included audio-visual materials, including the 1984 *Silent Scream* by Bernard Nathanson.

⁸⁵⁶ *The Right to Life* also referred to populational concerns. It showed that after the law's enactment the natality rates decreased as the year 1987 was the lowest in the seventy-year history of Czechoslovakia. Pohunková (1988). *Právo na život*, 42.

⁸⁵⁷ Zvěřina, J. (1986). *Josef Zvěřina píše Františku Vymetálovi*. In: *Právo na život*, 10-11.

⁸⁵⁸ Pohunková, *Právo na život*, 1.

discourse referred to “unborn personhood” and “killing of the developing human life” to attribute humanness and agency to the unborn and deprive women of agency to decide over the fetus’ destiny. For Christian democratic activists, life begins at the moment of conception, when the fetus becomes a “person.” They also argued through scientific findings that ascribed certain human elements to the fetus in the very early stage of development and conceptualized it as an autonomous human being within the female body. Hence, the Christian democrats in the late 1980s innovated the personalist discourse through the “unborn personhood,” extending the discourse of human dignity and rights but curtailing those of women.

Christian democrats coupled the conscience talk with the dissent buzzword of “compassion” and “solidarity with the powerless” – until then, reserved for the protection of unjustly prosecuted regime’s enemies. The ideologues argued that if society cannot protect its weakest and most “powerless” members, it loses its meaning as a “human community” and approves the still-expanding state-institutionalized violence.⁸⁵⁹

To counter the abortion liberalization, the anti-abortion activists painted a historical comparison between the consequences of the abortion law and Nazi practices through rekindling Karl Jasper’s concept of metaphysical guilt.⁸⁶⁰ Furthermore, they articulated their anti-abortion positions through Holocaust parallels: “Hitler’s extermination of the race he did not consider fully human.”⁸⁶¹

Furthermore, the anti-abortion demands led Christian democrats to accept the interventionist and potentially positive role of the autocratic state to protect the human dignity and rights of the unborn. In their view, the state had a duty to intervene as a “guarantor of the

⁸⁵⁹ (1986). Petice českých a moravských katolíků České národní radě. In: *Právo na život*, 187-8.

⁸⁶⁰ (1986). Zamyšlení nad petici České národní radě, 189-190.

⁸⁶¹ Kaplanová, M. (1986). Marie Kaplanová odpovídá. In: *Právo na život*: 60-61.

social and personal safety of its citizens.”⁸⁶² Thus, the state is not only “entitled but directly obliged to prohibit abortion.”⁸⁶³

Second, the *Right to Life* activists centered on the “numbed conscience,” “selfish interest,” and “irresponsibility” of women and men. To counter the repertoire of female emancipation present in the official argumentation, Christian democrats represented women as victims of state population strategy, economic interest, consumerist culture, and irresponsible men. Hence, Christian democrats combined fetal and women-centered anti-abortion strategies, portraying women as passive agents of the pro-abortion state “propaganda” and the pressure from their partners. They disputed the “inalienable freedom of a woman to dispose of her body” as “human rights have universal and inviolable character.”⁸⁶⁴ Hence, female human rights must be constrained when it comes to abortion. Abortion is morally permissible only when a woman faces life-threatening conditions.⁸⁶⁵

The anti-abortion female activists argued that liberal abortion rules lead to a weakening of women's social status. Using the Mariological archetype, they argued that Christianity endowed women with dignity, unprecedented in other cultures. However, the legalization of abortion destroyed “women’s authenticity” and nature that dwells in “motherhood” and reduced the female body to a mere object of men’s sexual satisfaction. Hence, the issue of female “dignity” became problematized by Christian democrats only by women and in the context of anti-abortion campaigning in the 1980s.⁸⁶⁶ Additionally, in this context, the activists summoned the old Christian democratic ideal of the procreative, heteronormative family, whose prestige must also be renewed by uplifting the socio-economic conditions.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶² Benda, V. (1985). O problémech nejen morálních. In: *Noční kádrový*, 156.

⁸⁶³ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁴ Benda (1985). O problémech, 153-154.

⁸⁶⁵ Susa, Z. (1986). Interupce. In: *Právo na život*, 96-7.

⁸⁶⁶ Šerých, A. (1987). O účtě k ženě a mateřství. In: *Právo na život*, 53.

⁸⁶⁷ (1986). *Dopis slovenských katolíků předsedovi vlády SSR*. In *Právo na život*, 186-7.

Third, the Christian democratic ideologues articulated the “co-responsibility” of health professionals for the “moral crisis” and the necessity to legislate the “objection of conscience.” During the campaign, activists documented the harassment of health workers who had applied the objection of conscience in the workplace but had been silenced or dismissed.⁸⁶⁸

After the Federal Assembly passed the abortion amendment, the pro-life activists commenced a new wave of letter campaigns directed at the Czechoslovak People’s Party MPs, accusing them of failing to strike down the law and highlighting their “co-responsibility” for the abortions.⁸⁶⁹ They referred to the Church *Canon Law*, according to which those who would enable the realization of abortion are excommunicated as abortion is considered a “homicide.” They argued that abortion “kills” not only unborn persons but also “morality, paternal responsibility, maternal emotions, and human dignity.” They called for responsibility through “humanness” and “Christian conscience.”⁸⁷⁰

The reform Marxists within the democratic opposition countered the anti-abortion campaign. They assumed a “liberal” stance and saw in the 1986 shutdown of abortion commissions a “progress of human rights.” These pro-choice intellectuals held that neither the petition campaign nor the new abortion law could change the moral climate of society that approved abortions in the first place. The reform Marxists used the abortion issue to counter the growing force of Catholicism, contending that Catholics can hardly be seen as protectors of human rights.⁸⁷¹ They described the anti-abortion campaign as a sign of a potential retreat of progressive Catholicism, pointing out Catholic “neo-conservatism and integralism” and the possible revival of the Church’s “brutal” repression of human rights as witnessed by the past “thousand years.”

⁸⁶⁸ See (1988 [1986]). Výhrado svědomí zdravotníků. In: *Právo na život*, 43.

⁸⁶⁹ Zvěřina, J. (1986). *Josef Zvěřina píše zástupcům strany lidové*. In *Právo na život*, 205-7.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., 207.

⁸⁷¹ Uhl, P. (1986). Vyjádření Petra Uhla. In *Právo na život*, 59-61.

In response⁸⁷² in the official Charter 77 bulletin, Josef Zvěřina and others ridiculed the Marxist appeal to morality, claiming that Marxism has no moral grounds because it follows Marxist-Leninist assertion that morality is “dictated by the interest of the class struggle and any means of this struggle is allowed.”⁸⁷³ To convert Marxists to the anti-abortion perspective, Zvěřina drew a parallel between the past and present persecution of reform Marxists and Catholics by the Communist regime and highlighted the similarity in how the regime enemies and the and had been treated as “undesirable elements to be killed,” framed by the Communist rule as the “most progressive solution.”

Religious Rights and Liberty

Alongside the memory and anti-abortion campaigns, the Christian democratic activists mobilized around religious liberty and rights by organizing pilgrimages, petition campaigns, and anti-regime protests.

One of the central Catholic idioms of the present, religious liberty, underwent an intricate trajectory in the post-1945 Catholic social and political theory. Historically, Catholics considered the notion of religious liberty a Protestant innovation, a tool to fragment the role of the Catholic Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consider, for instance, the German *Kulturkampf*. Only during the critical moment of Catholic modernization in the 1930s and 1940s did the leading intellectuals (Jacques Maritain or Yves Congar) spearhead the idea of religious liberty in conjunction with “ecumenism.” The postwar Christian democratic partisan cross-confessional electoral strategy topped up these efforts. However, this cross-denominational moment was overshadowed by Pius XII’s exclusionary anti-communist agenda

⁸⁷² Zvěřina, J. (1986). Úcta k životu. *Infoch* 9, n. 14, 4-11.

⁸⁷³ Ibid., 10.

that prevailed in the 1950s. The religious liberty talk regained currency with the papacy of John XXIII and in the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, the *Decree on Ecumenism* (1964), and *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965).⁸⁷⁴ Besides ecumenism, the religious liberty idiom included the norm of the religious neutrality of modern states and the individual's negative right to practice one's religion without constraints.

In Czechoslovakia, the grassroots ecumenism has existed since the 1960s. Protestantism was no longer understood as heresy or the root cause of secularization. Protestants were newly considered Catholic allies in combating or democratizing socialism.⁸⁷⁵ Conceptually, Christian democratic activists drew a kinship between “religious freedom” and “freedom of conscience.” In line with Thomist epistemology, they defined conscience as the “highest level of knowledge” that bore a higher status than rationality. Conscience allows for moral reasoning and represents a “criterium of human cognition and social relations.”⁸⁷⁶ For the ideologues, conscience was not only a mechanism; it was filled with a concrete “content” that defines what is “good” and what is “sinful” according to the religious doctrine. The self-described role of Christian democrats under the authoritarian regime was to “liberate conscience as the only optimal criterium of practice.” Freedom of conscience, the ideologues argued, is, however, impossible without access to a moral system supplied through “religious freedom,” i.e., through organized religion, including religious instruction. Hence, the Christian democratic campaigns focused on disrupting the confinement of religious rights and freedoms by building parallel religious infrastructure.

⁸⁷⁴ Greenberg, U. (2018). Catholics, Protestants, and the Tortured Path to Religious Liberty. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79, n. 3, 461–479.

⁸⁷⁵ In the Third Republic, there were signs of ecumenical and interreligious initiatives, however, quickly suffocated by the Stalinist regime that considered cross-confessional cooperation a threat.

⁸⁷⁶ Čarnogurský, J. (1989). Svedomie, náboženstvo a komunismus v Československu. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 87

The leading lay Slovak Christian democratic ideologue, Ján Čarnogurský, pushed this agenda through the Charter 77 statements in the early 1980s.⁸⁷⁷ He contended that the 1949 Church Laws were intertwined in the legal system with the Penal Law that effectively curbed the constitutionally protected individual religious freedom. The penal law allowed religious practice to be defined as “obstruction of the state control over churches and religious organizations” and punished with up to two years of incarceration. He pointed out that the state administration could interpret any communication between religious members as “theistic communication” and launch prosecution.⁸⁷⁸

Furthermore, the New Orientation activists appealed to international law to re-grant constitutional protection for religious organizations, which was missing in the 1960 Socialist Constitution, which only protected the practice of individual faith.⁸⁷⁹ They sent open letters to the Federal Assembly, pointing out the weak legal protection of churches that isolates congregations and seniorities and disrupts transnational connections.⁸⁸⁰ The letters underlined the violation of the “Presbyterian principle” as the laics are prevented from participating in the life of the church. In other words, the New Orientation highlighted that the one-party state can legally control only the organized churches, but the laic apostolate represents an ongoing threat to the regime.

The first major campaign for religious freedom co-organized by the underground Church was the 1980 hunger strike at the theological seminary in Bratislava. The immediate reason was the attempt of *Pacem in Terris* to manipulate the interpretation of John Paul II’s anti-communist encyclical *Redemptor hominis*.⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁷ (1982). O takzvanom marení dozoru nad cirkvami. *Dokument Charty 77*, n. 23.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁸⁰ (1980 [1978]). 31 prisluniku ceskobr. In: *Křesťané a Charta*, 122.

⁸⁸¹ Šimulčík, J. (2000). *Zápas o nádej*. Prešov: VMV, 44-45.

The mass campaigns began only in the mid-1980s when religious pilgrimages started to boom. The Christian democratic ideologues conceptualized the pilgrimages as a Catholic *active response* to the normalization aimed at demobilizing and imposing social *passivity*.⁸⁸² They showed that the pilgrimages entailed not only community-building but also offered a sense of emancipation.⁸⁸³ Incrementally, the pilgrimage rallies raised political demands, including releasing political and religious prisoners and terminating the 1949 Church laws. This period was marked by a rapid shift in the role of pilgrimages from purely religious activities to acts of political protest.⁸⁸⁴

In 1985, the Czech and Slovak underground Church organized the Velehrad pilgrimage for religious liberty, which gained support from the official episcopacy and was attended by over one hundred thousand faithful.⁸⁸⁵ It was the largest non-communist rally in Czechoslovakia during the communist era. The ideologues pointed out that the religious liberty pilgrimage demonstrated a “rebirth of community” that had been silent since the protests against the Warsaw Pact invasion. The pilgrims, the ideologues argued, established an “authentic community” and contributed to the “renewal of society” and its transformation to “civil society” and “polis.”⁸⁸⁶ This rally was followed by the March 1988 largest Slovak rally for religious liberty in Bratislava on Good Friday, organized by the underground Church, with around twenty-five thousand protestors.⁸⁸⁷ Police violently suppressed the demonstration and arrested the organizers.

⁸⁸² Benda (1980). Katolicismus. In: *Noční kádrový*, 83.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 84

⁸⁸⁴ Čarnogurský, J. (1989). O putiach a o inom. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 53-65.

⁸⁸⁵ Velehrad was the bulk of the ninth-century Christianization of the territory that coincided with what is today known as Moravia and western Slovakia.

⁸⁸⁶ Benda, V. (1985) Znovu křesťanství a politika: Jak dál po Velehradě. In: *Noční kádrový*, 194.

⁸⁸⁷ Benda, V. (1988). Církev bojující, In. *Noční kádrový*, 40-44.

Since the early 1980s, apart from religious freedom rallies and pilgrimages, Christian democrats have organized religious rights petition campaigns that have gradually intensified. The petition campaigns demonstrated the underground Church's vitality, culminating in the 1988 thirty-one-point petition entitled *Impulses of Catholics to Solve the Situation of Faithful Citizens*.⁸⁸⁸ It advocated the renewal of religious rights and freedoms, state secularization, and restitution of the Church property. It mustered the support of over six hundred thousand signatures, making it the biggest campaign in the Soviet bloc, capitalizing on the mature secret Church networks, pro-democratic Church representatives, samizdat journals, and political oppositional movements, including the support of Charter 77.⁸⁸⁹

The visible strength of underground Church activism led Christian democrats to frame the Church as the “last island of freedom” in the “totalitarian state” that, in the Church's orbit, creates “sprouts of civil society.”⁸⁹⁰ Christian democrats (but also secular currents of the democratic opposition) began to assert that the fundamental social force in Czechoslovakia was in the hands of Catholics, not Communists, who only possessed the oppressive power of the security apparatus.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁸ The author of the petition, Augustin Navrátil, was a Catholic activist and editor of the samizdat journal *Křesťanské obzory*. He published over a hundred public letters in the 1970s and 1980 addressed to state institutions, reprinted in exile and samizdat journals. See Doellinger (2013). *Turning Prayers*, 146.

⁸⁹⁰ See for instance Mikloško (1990). *Vznili ich*, 135-6.

⁸⁹¹ Hejránek, L. (1988). *Potřebujeme majestát*. *Lidové noviny* 1, n. 4, 3.

Table 9: Late Socialist Ideological Morphology (*signalizes a conceptual innovation)

Core	Adjacent	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral
Person	Human dignity, human rights, conscience, *(co)responsibility, *citizenship	Memory politics: <i>Patria</i> , *(Central) Europe, *hagiography, Church victimization, German ousting, Holocaust	Unborn personhood	Religious liberty, *Church autonomy
Anti- Totalitaria nism	*Post-totalitarianism, *Gnostic totalitarianism, natural order, <i>agape</i> , subsidiarity, organic communities, small state	*Non-Conformist Church, *Parallel Polis, *Non- Political Politics	Re- Christianisation, Lay apostolate	*(Transnational) civil society, international human rights regime

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the evolution and influence of Christian democratic ideology in late socialist Czechoslovakia. I went beyond the usual focus on Charter 77 to highlight the significance of Christian human rights discourse. I also moved beyond the Polish example, often used as the standard reference for Catholicism in Eastern Europe. By examining the relationship between theological principles and political activism, I analyzed how the Christian democratic movement navigated the challenges of the local authoritarian regime, ultimately contributing to the broader discussion on human rights and democratization.

If the bottom line of Catholic modernization in the 1930s and 1940s was the conceptual transit from anti-modernism to anti-totalitarianism through the language of human dignity and rights and recognition and new demarcation of the private domain, the Czechoslovak Christian democrats responded to the post-modern challenges of the 1980s through the language of individual conscience, co-responsibility, and memory. The Czechoslovak Christian democratic campaigns highlighted how the paternal Catholic issue agenda successfully incorporated

fraternal Catholic strategies, i.e., how the activists channeled their agenda through the reconsolidating (conservative) civil society.

The growing conflicts within the ideological currents in the democratic opposition in the 1980s and the Charter 77 strategy to sustain the apolitical role gave birth to new platforms, journals, and organizations, first and foremost the Movement for Civic Freedom (HOS) in 1988. HOS announced an explicit political program as the first oppositional organization, demanding a regime change and a new constitutional order. HOS comprised a pell-mell of Christian democrats (Czechs, Slovaks, Catholics, and Protestants), parallel culture activists, and Social Democrats.⁸⁹² During the fall and winter of 1989, the HOS platform became a ferment for the umbrella oppositional organizations Civic Forum and Public Against Violence and three post-communist Christian democratic parties that played a decisive role in establishing the post-communist conservative order. How the Christian democrats shaped the post-1989 transformation is the subject of the next chapter.

⁸⁹² Otáhal (2011). *Opoziční proudy*, 406.

The Neoliberal Challenge

Introduction

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I focus on the early post-communist years. I explore how ideologues shaped the profiles of the five Christian democratic parties that emerged after 1989 in the newly established pluralist party system, which had been absent in the country for over five decades.

The Eastern European *annus mirabilis* was marked by one of the twentieth century's major political, social, and economic transformations. It was a great surprise for renowned political scientists as almost no one could predict the staggering social upheaval and the erosion of the seemingly stable Soviet dictatorship.⁸⁹³ This epochal historical turning point also stunned the communist era counter-elites and opposition movements that rushed to organize political parties and forge ideological profiles to shape post-1989 politics.

Comparative politics offered many explanations for the triple transition to pluralist democracy, free market capitalism, and state-building in Eastern Europe. In the early 1990s, the literature predominantly followed five main directions in explaining the Communist collapse and what came after. One slice of the literature centered on the endogenous causes that fuelled the transition. It studied the role of the local Communist elites that orchestrated the regime's collapse through a voluntary surrender to secure positions in future political regimes.⁸⁹⁴ Alternatively, it underlined the communist legitimacy crisis and the unsuccessful

⁸⁹³ Tarrow, S (1991). Aiming at a Moving Target: Social Science and the Recent Rebellions in Eastern Europe. *Political Science and Politics* 24, n. 1, 12–20; Bermeo, N. (1992). Introduction. In: *Liberalization and Democratization: Change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Edited by Bermeo, N. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Revel, J-F. (1993). *Democracy Against Itself: The Future of the Democratic Impulse*. N.Y.: Free Press.

⁸⁹⁴ These explanations saw the root cause of the authoritarian breakdown the internal split in the Communist parties. See Przeworski, A. (1991). *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: CUP.

attempt of the Communist elite to switch to the “legal-rational mode of legitimation,”⁸⁹⁵ or the series of the mistakes that led to the regime’s collapse.⁸⁹⁶

The second body of literature zoomed out from the incumbent Communist elite. It explained the transition by the faulty and contradictory systemic setup that, in the long run, determined the regime’s fate, exposing its too many “bottlenecks.”⁸⁹⁷ The third branch underlined that the communist breakdown was an outside defeat. The Communist regimes simply lost the Cold War, failing to sustain the arms race and economic growth and satisfy local populations’ consumerist demands and living standards.⁸⁹⁸

The fourth strand of the literature studied the role of the democratic opposition exemplified by cycles of contentious protests that dismantled the regimes from below. Comparativists newly applied the concept of (insurgent) “civil society” to transition research with an eye on Poland’s Solidarity Movement. This literature theorized the critical role of popular resistance that boosted the limited power of intellectual dissidence lingering from the 1970s.⁸⁹⁹ It considered nascent civil society as the key variable for the implosion of autocratic rule⁹⁰⁰ and conceptualized the democratization processes in Eastern Europe through the “avalanche effect.”⁹⁰¹ This debate was followed by academic exchange over whether civil

⁸⁹⁵ Holmes, L. (1993). *The End of Communist Power: Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Legitimation Crisis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁹⁶ Treisman, D. (2017). Democracy by Mistake. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Working Paper.

⁸⁹⁷ Kornai, J. (1992). *The Socialist System*. N. J.: Princeton University Press.

⁸⁹⁸ Ackerman, B. (1992). *The Future of Liberal Revolution*. Yale: YUP; Ekiert, G. (2010). The end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe: The last middle-class revolution?. In: *Political Power and Social Theory*. Edited by Go, J., 99-123. Leeds: Emerald.

⁸⁹⁹ Bernhard, M. (2020). What do we know about civil society and regime change thirty years after 1989? *East European Politics* 36, n. 3, 341-362.

⁹⁰⁰ See Bozóki, A. (1990). Post-Communist Transition: Political Tendencies in Hungary. *East European Politics and Societies* 4, n. 2, 211–230; Ekiert, G. (1996). *Society against the state*. N.J.: Princeton University Press; Ekiert, G., Kubik, J. (2001). *Rebellious Civil Society*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

⁹⁰¹ Ost, D. (2010). *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

society's weakness or strength can indicate successful democratization.⁹⁰² A parallel discussion took off over dissent's salient or marginal role in shaping the post-communist order.⁹⁰³

The last body of literature has provided competing predictions of post-communist political trajectories⁹⁰⁴ and introduced optimistic and pessimistic views on the prospects of democratization and democratic "consolidation."⁹⁰⁵ The former underlined the role of Western hegemony, low social and economic inequalities, high levels of education,⁹⁰⁶ and economic development. The latter emphasized pocket-sized democratic traditions, civil society weakness, the problem of simultaneous transitions to democracy and free market economy, and the uneasy path to state building.⁹⁰⁷

With the benefit of hindsight, both optimists and pessimists were right, as Eastern Europe swiftly returned to diversity from a seemingly homogenous "Leninist legacy."⁹⁰⁸ Although there were several textbook transitions (the ahead-of-the-pack Poland, the Czech Republic, or Hungary) where the authoritarian breakdown led to "full-scale" democracy, scholars drew overblown lessons for the whole region anchored in these few success stories. They equated authoritarian breakdown (the "rotten door transition") with democratic transition,⁹⁰⁹ which actually amounted to "authoritarian reconsolidation."⁹¹⁰ Scholars of

⁹⁰² Howard, M. (2002). The Weakness of Post-Communist Civil Society. *Journal of Democracy* 13, n. 1, 157-169, Ekiert, G., Kubik, J. (2014). Myths and Realities of Civil Society. *Journal of Democracy* 25, n. 1, 46-58.

⁹⁰³ Kotkin (2009). *Uncivil Society*; Falk (2011). Resistance and dissent.

⁹⁰⁴ The area experts predicted the onset of political capitalism, see Staniszkis, J. (1991). *The Dynamics of Breakthrough in Eastern Europe*. LA: University of California Press; traditional authoritarianism, see Jowitt (1992). *New World Disorder*; neo-feudalism, see Verdery, K. (1996). *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹⁰⁵ Elster, J., Offe, C., Preuss, U. (1998). *Institutional Design of Post-Communist Societies*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁹⁰⁶ Darden, K., Grzymala Busse, A. (2004). The Great Divide: Literacy, Nationalism, and Communist Collapse. *World Politics* 59, n. 1, 83-115.

⁹⁰⁷ Armijo, L., Biersteker, T., and Lowenthal, A. (1994). The Problems of Simultaneous Transitions. *Journal of Democracy* 5, n. 4, 161-175.

⁹⁰⁸ Jowitt (1993). *The New World Disorder*.

⁹⁰⁹ McFaul, M. (2002). The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in Postcommunist World. *World Politics* 54, n. 2, 212-244.

⁹¹⁰ See Way and Levitsky work on "competitive authoritarianism." Such a regime is likely to emerge when a weak domestic push for democratization is combined with strong external pressure for democracy. Competitive

Eastern Europe came up with various variables that explain the different trajectories of post-communist states (and sub-regions): the mode of transition,⁹¹¹ constitutionalism,⁹¹² varied character of transitional justice,⁹¹³ exhaustion of liberal democratic paradigm,⁹¹⁴ or reconsolidation of conservative civil society.⁹¹⁵

In this chapter, I examine one aspect of the broad problem of Eastern European transitions and focus on the ideational dimension of regime change. With the example of Christian democracy, I study how the ideologues (re)invented the Right, adjusted to post-communist circumstances, navigated the transformation, and contributed to the foundations of the new political order.⁹¹⁶

As I explained in the *Introduction*, comparativists largely neglected the ideological and religious factors⁹¹⁷ that fuelled the formation of the post-communist parties and structured party system competition. At the expense of the Right, the scholarship privileged the study of the role of local communist parties and their splinter groups. Such an omission is striking if we consider that the mainstream right, of which Christian democratic parties were an important component, governed the first decade of the post-communist era in Czechia and the early years and the second decade in Slovakia.

authoritarianism is not a single-party autocracy. Although the election is unfair, incumbents must “sweat.” Way, L., Levitsky, S. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: CUP.

⁹¹¹ Linz, J., J. (1997). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁹¹² Halmai, G. (2018). Transitional Justice, Transitional Constitutionalism and Constitutional Culture. In: *Comparative Constitutional Theory*. Edited by Jacobsohn, L., Schor, M. London: Edward Elgar.

⁹¹³ O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P., C. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁹¹⁴ Krastev, I. (2017). *After Europe*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press.

⁹¹⁵ Buzogány, Varga (2018). The ideational foundations of the illiberal backlash.

⁹¹⁶ Ishiyama, J., T. (1995). Communist Parties in Transition. *Comparative Politics* 27, n. 2, 147-166.

⁹¹⁷ Paul Betts recently noted that the commentators of 1989 underestimated the religious factor. The rise of hard-right parties in recent years has placed the issue of Christian identity back at the center of discussion, especially during the 2014 refugee crisis. For many Europeans, the defense of Christian identity has become a way of articulating their country's place and mission in the world beyond domestic politics. Betts, P. (2019). 1989 at thirty: A recast legacy. *Past & Present* 244, n. 1, 271-305.

What concepts, canons, and legacies did Christian democratic ideologues rekindle, and which did they leave dormant in coming up with a distinctive response to the challenges of transition politics? I argue that the transition, christened by Western commentators as a “Gentle Revolution,” was far from gentle due to the Christian democratic interventions. It was the underground and exiled ideologues who began to operate in political parties and party-related think tanks who bore the key responsibility for developing the strictest transitional justice and decommunization schemes in the region and installing the new political order. Although Christian democrats used many liberal scripts, they encased them in anti-liberal messaging, leaving ambivalent legacies for present-day politics.

The chapter is organized as follows. I open with the case narrative and identify the old and new Christian democratic protagonists and their self-descriptions in the context of the first two free nationwide elections held in 1990 and 1992. In turn, I reconstruct the canon re-articulation and conceptual innovations in Christian democratic ideology and specify how the ideologues applied the ideological commitments in concrete policies.

Historical Context

In the 1980s, the Czechoslovak Communist Party standpatters were snubbing Moscow’s introduced reforms of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, making Czechoslovakia a latecomer to the “carnival” of Eastern European revolutions.⁹¹⁸ In November and December 1989, the regime was torn down within a few weeks, prompted by the command economy crisis, the Communist Party gerontocratic freeze, an incapability to deliver the social contract promises lingering from the 1970s, and popular mobilization.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁸ Kenney, P. (2003). *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989*. N.J.: Princeton University Press.

⁹¹⁹ Rothschild (1999). *The Return to Diversity*, 211.

Soon after the state's violent crackdown on the student march in mid-November 1989, the counter-elites founded two umbrella movements, the Czech Civic Forum (OF) and the Slovak Public Against Violence (VPN). Importantly, the Christian democratic communist era counter-elite held key positions in the OF and VPN governing bodies. In December, the “Government of National Understanding” was formed, with a Communist majority, but newly included the representatives of other National Front parties, OF, VPN, and economic Forecasting Bureau experts. In January and February 1990, the round tables adopted the “small law on political parties” that automatically recognized the OF, VPN, and all the National Front parties as legitimate. Other new political subjects had to undergo a relatively rigid party registration process. In February 1990, the round tables renewed parliamentary democracy based on a proportional electoral system and a temporal co-optation of non-National Front MPs to the Federal Assembly. The Communist Party lost the majority and incrementally transformed into a standard party, acknowledged plural democracy and the status of private property, terminated the party-related military units, and apologized for the past Communist Party-induced injustices.

The continuity of the party system between the pre-communist and post-communist eras was weak due to the long autocratic interruption. The only remarkable institutional continuity was on the level of political parties.⁹²⁰ After 1989, three types of political parties emerged: National Front splinter parties (including the Czechoslovak People’s Party), renewed parties (e.g., Social Democratic Party), and new parties founded by the communist era counter-elites and movements (including Christian Democratic Movement, or Christian Democratic Party) and by diverse political entrepreneurs.

⁹²⁰ Fiala, P., Strmiska, M. (2001). Kontinuita a diskontinuita českých stranicko-politických systémů. *Central European Political Studies Review* 3, n. 1, 93-115.

The first two nationwide parliamentary elections prompted party system crystallization and established a new political order, while the Czech Republic witnessed only a little party and governmental alternation for almost a decade.⁹²¹ Despite failing to integrate and develop a parallel project to German CDU/CSU, Christian democratic parties in Czechoslovakia attracted broader support in contrast to Social democrats, who did not make it past the electoral threshold in the 1990 election⁹²² and polled poorly in 1992.

In the 1990 election, on the federal level, the OF polled 36% and VPN 10%, while the Communist Party secured 13%. The Christian democratic coalition KDU (see below) won only 9% of the votes despite much higher expectations. KDU was crushed not only by the OF but also by the Communists and a Moravian regional party.

After the election, the OF and VPN gradually disintegrated. The fragmentation, fuelled by the Right, was structured around the rift over the shape of the Czechoslovak Federation, economic transformation, and de-communization. In October 1990, the OF right-wing candidate, Václav Klaus, was elected as OF chairman, shifting the movement towards neoliberalism.⁹²³ In turn, the OF's left-leaning components were kicked out of the OF structures,⁹²⁴ and the centrists and social democrats established independent parliamentary clubs. In turn, in February 1991, several OF splinter parties were formed: Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA) and Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS). In Slovakia, VPN crumbled when Vladimír Mečiar was recalled from the Slovak PM position in the Spring of 1991 and established the Movement for

⁹²¹ In the Czech Republic, the first (partial) alternation of power between right and left emerged in 1998. Unlike in Poland or Hungary, where the splinter Communist parties took over in the early years of the transition.

⁹²² The only social democratic faction (the communist era social democratic counter-elite) got into the parliament through the OF.

⁹²³ Martin Palouš, dissent-era Catholic activist and translator of Hannah Arendt, as the candidate of the OF founding fathers, lost by large margin.

⁹²⁴ Cabada, L., Šanc, D. (2005). *Český stranický systém ve 20. století*. Prague: Aleš Čeněk, 121.

Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). In turn, VPN was marginalized and did not even get into the parliament in the 1992 election.

The second parliamentary election was even more polarized.⁹²⁵ The ODS, in coalition with the Christian Democratic Party, polled 30%, and the other two Czech Christian democratic parties (the KDU-ČSL and ODA) won 6% each and formed the Czech government.⁹²⁶ In Slovakia, the HZDS won 37% of the vote with a nationalist and an anti-shock therapy program and embarked on an authoritarian path, forming a governmental coalition with the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS). The Slovak Christian Democratic Movement received only nine percent and remained in opposition.

Protagonists and Canon Re-Articulation

In the early transition years, several self-described Christian democratic parties emerged.⁹²⁷ The party ideologues conditioned the transformation through hard de-communization and transitional justice programs, underpinned by demands for a “small state.” They re-iterated the anti-totalitarian theory that became the primary framework to eliminate the *ancien régime*,⁹²⁸ deal with the past, forge the new memory regime, and “re-educate post-communist societies.”⁹²⁹ The inter-ideological struggle concerned the future of the Czechoslovak Federation, the breadth and speed of economic transition, and the preferred welfare type. The Christian democratic parties initially positioned themselves against the neo-communist party (the Czech KSČM), the communist splinter party (the Slovak SDL), and the Slovak

⁹²⁵ Ibid., 137.

⁹²⁶ The Left Block (former Communist Party) received 14%, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party polled 7%, and the far-right Rally for the Republic 6%.

⁹²⁷ (1990). Volební program československé strany lidové. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 17, 2.

⁹²⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹²⁹ Mark, J. (2010). *The Unfinished Revolution*. New Haven: YUP, xii.

ethnonationalist parties.⁹³⁰ After the 1992 election, Christian democrats began to contest the Czech neoliberal ODS and Slovak autocratic and nationalist HZDS.

Table 10: Post-Communist Christian Democratic Parties

Political Party	Periodicals	National Elections	Incumbency
KDU-ČSL (<i>Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party</i>)	<i>Lidová demokracie, Zpravodaj, Obzory</i>	1990: 8,4% (KDU) 1992: 6,2% (KDU-ČSL)	1990-1998: National Gov
Křesťansko-demokratická strana, KDS (<i>Christian Democratic Party</i>)	<i>Křesťanský demokrat, Bulletin KDS, Informace o KDS, Zpravodaj KDS, Zprávy KDS, Hlas</i>	1990: 8,4% (KDU) 1992: 29,7% (ODS-KDS)	1990-1998: National Gov
Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA (<i>Civic Democratic Alliance</i>)	x	1990: 49,5% (part of the OF) 1992: 5,9 % (ODA)	1990-1998: Federal and National Gov
Křesťanské demokratické hnutí, KDH (<i>Christian Democratic Movement</i>)	<i>Bratislavské listy, Náboženstvo a súčasnosť, Slovenský denník</i>	1990: 19,2% 1992: 8,9%	1990-1992; 1998-2006: Federal and National Gov
Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom (<i>Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement</i>)	x	1990: 8,6% 1992: 7,4%	1990-present: In Opposition

The Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL) was a perennial of the Czechoslovak party system since 1919. I tracked the party ideologues' impact on Christian democratic innovations in the Third Republic and the Prague Spring. In 1987, the ČSL produced the *Renewal Stream* (*Obrodný proud*), emerging from the party instruction school. The *Renewal Stream* established relations with the underground church and counter-elite networks and demanded a return to

⁹³⁰ Pekník, M. (eds.). (2016). *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku po roku 1989*. Bratislava: SAV, 88.

pre-communist traditions.⁹³¹ In November 1989, the *Renewal Stream* co-established the OF, took over the ČSL leadership,⁹³² became part of the Government of Understanding, and controlled the powerful Ministry of Interior.

At the end of 1989, party membership doubled to almost one hundred thousand.⁹³³ In early 1990, the ČSL joined the European Christian democratic transnational platforms and commenced bilateral cooperation, especially with the German CDU/CSU and its foundations. These partners supplied resources for party modernization and professionalization and helped the ČSL to penetrate European institutional structures. Additionally, Czech Christian democratic émigrés re-joined the party and acted as high-profile advisors to the party leadership.⁹³⁴ However, this organizational strength did not transform itself into a clear electoral victory.

The first party convention in 1990 approved the coalition with the other Christian democratic parties – Christian Democratic Party (KDS) and Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) – and devised a new label: Christian Democratic Union (KDU). Before the 1990 June election, the ČSL came up with a fully developed Christian democratic ideology with a robust member base,⁹³⁵ political experience, solid party infrastructure, and a powerful electoral coalition.

After the 1990 electoral failure, in the second party convention in September 1990, the incumbent board strove to push the party towards the left in opposition to the OF Right and the

⁹³¹ (1989). Deklarace Obrodného proudu v Československé straně lidové, Obrodný proud 1987-1989, *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40.

⁹³² (1989). Programové prohlášení ČSL, 28.11.1989. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 40.

⁹³³ Linek, L., Pecháček, Š. (2006). *Základní charakteristiky členské základny KDU-ČSL*. Prague: SoÚ 2006.

⁹³⁴ For instance, the chairman's advisor, Luděk Pachman, drafted the key strategy to build a modern Christian democratic party; the chair of the ČSL foreign office. Jan Jeník, active during the communist era in Rome, mediated support of the Italian Democrazia Cristiana. For instance, the newly created Czechoslovak-Italian Society printed over a half million electoral posters for the 1990 electoral race, as Czechoslovakia suffered from a shortage of printers and paper.

⁹³⁵ Compared to CDU/CSU, ČSL had a similar member base relative to the size of the country population.

government.⁹³⁶ However, the convention elected a newcomer, Josef Lux, a representative of the right-wing strategy who pushed for full-scale participation in the government. Lux ensured that not a single figure of the *Renewal Stream* got into the new party leadership.⁹³⁷ The party ideologues crafted an identity aligned with the European Christian democratic profile with a flagship “social market economy” project that stood for the “central European alternative” to Anglo-Saxon neoliberal capitalism.

The KDS's institutional roots lay in the Christian Democratic Club, a component of the Movement of Civic Freedom (HOS), an umbrella organization of non-socialist opposition groups established in 1988. In the founding convention in December 1989, the Club declared itself an autonomous political party but remained an integral component of the OF. It comprised intellectuals from Charter 77 and secret Church activists.⁹³⁸ The party underlined their “dissent experiences,” the support by the Pan-European Movement, and the patronage of Western European Christian democratic parties.⁹³⁹ Initially, the KDS positioned itself against “confessional” and “social-populist” ČSL and the “overly nationalist” Slovak KDH.⁹⁴⁰

The KDS had roughly one thousand members, growing to four thousand in 1991.⁹⁴¹ Nevertheless, it could not form an independent candidacy list for the 1990 election because the electoral law demanded ten thousand party members. Therefore, it entered the KDU's pre-electoral coalition. After the 1990 election, KDS gained political power that far outstripped its electoral support, securing two ministerial seats in the new government.⁹⁴²

⁹³⁶ See Lux, J. (1992). Zpráva předsedy ČSL mezi sjezdy o činnosti ČSL. Sjezd 1992. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 1.

⁹³⁷ Lux, J. (1998). Nejde mi o to abych sedel pevně v sedle. In: *Proč budu volit KDU-ČSL*. Edited by Lux, J. Prague: Duel, 83-6.

⁹³⁸ Putna, M. (2009). Václav Benda aneb “Václav Havel catholicus.” *Souvislosti* 20, n. 3, 250–256.

⁹³⁹ Frei, V. (1990). Proč dvě křesťanské strany? *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 17, 2.

⁹⁴⁰ Benda, V. (1990). Ustavující konference KDS. *Bulletin KDS* 1, n 1, 2.

⁹⁴¹ Benda, V. (1991). Hodnocení činnosti KDS za uplynulý rok. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 1, 1.

⁹⁴² Notably, the KDS-appointed Minister of Education was a priest formerly active in the underground Church.

During 1991 and 1992, after the conflict with the ČSL over the KDU brand, KDS cemented pre-electoral cooperation with the ODS. The ODS utilized KDS' dissent and expert faces to gain credibility and forge catch-all support. In the 1992 electoral campaign, the ODS-KDS coalition.⁹⁴³ After the 1992 election, KDS formed an autonomous parliamentary club and again secured several governmental positions despite polling around one percent. In 1995, the KDS approved an institutional merger with the ODS.

ODA was founded in December 1989 by the Catholic counter-elite active in the Christian democratic stream of the HOS. ODA subscribed to the dissent legacy and operated within the OF. As the founding father Daniel Kroupa later noted, "Politically, no one has ever been closer to ODA than KDS."⁹⁴⁴ What distinguished these two parties was that ODA wanted to build a manifestly *civic* party, albeit utilizing Christian democratic precepts.⁹⁴⁵

In 1990 and 1991, ODA created a coalition with neoliberal economists from the communist era economic Forecasting Office. ODA framed itself as a mover and founder of the "democratic right" in Czechoslovakia⁹⁴⁶ despite having only around a hundred members. In 1990, it ran on the candidacy list of the OF and secured a strong presence in parliamentary politics and government. During the summer of 1990, ODA's MPs established and led the Interparliamentary Club of the Democratic Right in the Federal Assembly and National Council⁹⁴⁷ that launched the disintegration of the OF. In the 1992 election, ODA ran independently, securing around six percent of the vote and governmental presence.

⁹⁴³ Cabada, Šanc (2005). *Český stranický systém*, 93.

⁹⁴⁴ Dimun, Hamerský (1999). *10 let na straně svobody*, 10. Notably, KDS was founded in Kroupa's apartment.

⁹⁴⁵ Kroupa (1997). *Svoboda a řád*, 69.

⁹⁴⁶ (1992). Volební program ODA 1992, 264.

⁹⁴⁷ Dimun, Hamerský (1999). *10 let na straně svobody*, 10.

The KDH was rooted in the communist-era underground Church⁹⁴⁸ and unlike the Czech parties, enjoyed official Church support in the 1990 electoral campaign.⁹⁴⁹ In the founding congress in February 1990, the KDH declared to have around half a million members and assumed a right-wing programmatic orientation,⁹⁵⁰ entering European Christian democratic structures early on.⁹⁵¹ Jan Čarnogurský and František Mikloško, both central figures of Slovak Catholic dissent, were elected chairmen of the KDH. Despite Church support, the forecasted KDH victory was not fulfilled as the KDH polled only around twenty percent. In turn, the KDH formed a national government with the VPN and the Democratic Party and, unlike the ČSL, entered the government on the federative level. After the disintegration of the VPN, the KDH became the strongest party and commenced a minority cabinet supported by the Hungarian Christian democrats.

In 1992, electoral support of the KDH fell to nine percent due to poor strategic decisions. After the 1992 election, the HZDS and the Slovak National Party formed a governmental coalition and ruled the country until 1998, where the KDH represented the only opposition to the autocratic backslide.⁹⁵² In the early post-communist era, three factions crystalized in KDH: socially conservative, nationalistic, and liberal-catch-all. In 1991, the nationalist wing broke out from KDH. In 1998, the liberal-catch-all wing created an independent Slovak Christian Democratic Union and led the government between 1998 and 2006.⁹⁵³

⁹⁴⁸ For instance, the archbishop's pastoral letter, read in May 1990 in all Catholic churches in Slovakia, was phrased as follows: "faithful should not vote for old structures but movement, that has a Christian ideology, this is a duty [of faithful]." (1990). *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 11, 3-4.

⁹⁴⁹ Čarnogurský, J. (2007[1989]). *Zakládejte kresťanskodemokratické kluby!* In: Čarnogurský, J. *Cestami KDH*. Bratislava: VMV, 12-13.

⁹⁵⁰ Pekník (2016). *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku*, 19.

⁹⁵¹ Pridham, G. (1999). Complying with the European Union's Democratic Conditionality: Transnational Party Linkages and Regime Change in Slovakia, 1993-1998. *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, n. 7, 1222.

⁹⁵² Haughton, T., Rybár, M. (2004) All Right Now? Explaining the Successes and Failures of the Slovak Centre-Right. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20, 115–32.

⁹⁵³ Cabada, Šanc (2005). *Český stranický systém ve 20. Století*, 127.

The MKDH was formed in January 1990 based on Hungarian Christian democratic clubs split from the KDH.⁹⁵⁴ The MKDH combined the Christian democratic toolbox with ethnic discourses. It had organizational structures only in southern Slovakia due to the presence of ethnic Hungarians. It joined Christian democratic internationals. In the 1990 election, MKDH received 90% of ethnic Hungarians' votes in a coalition with the liberal Hungarian party Spolužitie and scored around 9% of all votes in Slovakia. In 1992, a similar coalition received around 7%. In 1998, MKDH merged with other Hungarian parties, establishing the Hungarian Coalition Party.⁹⁵⁵

In the transition period, the Christian democratic ideologues reviewed the ideological resources from the pre-communist era and preserved the late Socialist political idioms. In the 1980s and 1990s, the canon pivoted from the French influence to the Anglo-Saxon neo-conservatism. After 1989, Christian democrats absorbed a new corpus, responding to a need to find a language that would fit the transition to market economy. On the political and cultural levels, the ideological building blocks did not transform profoundly but began to be systematically implemented in the Christian democratic decommunization strategy.

Alongside the Christian democratic political parties and their European and transnational network, the new canon was transmitted and diffused via newly established think tanks, including the European Academy for Democracy close to KDU-ČSL, the Christian Academy linked to KDS, the Czech Society of Jacques Maritain, and the Civic Institute – both related to ODA.

These platforms published works from current Catholic social and political theory. They centered on releasing the official Church doctrine, John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus*

⁹⁵⁴ Mikloško, F. (1996). *Čas stretnutí*, 127.

⁹⁵⁵ Pekník (2016). *Pohl'ady na slovenskú politiku po roku 1989 II*, 73.

Annus, reiterating the anti-communist commitment and Catholic defense of human dignity against the vices of modernity, particularly consumerism. The ideologues underlined the “pathbreaking” innovation of *Centesimus Annus*, the alleged positive appreciation of the free market economy. Furthermore, the Christian democratic publishing houses published the Second Vatican Council documents and Cold War papal encyclicals, the homegrown interwar Thomism,⁹⁵⁶ and local personalist tradition.⁹⁵⁷

In conjunction with the Church’s social teachings, a critical resource for the canon re-articulation was the work of the U.S. Catholic philosopher and public intellectual with Slovak roots, Michael Novak. Novak served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and became Ronald Regan’s advisor. He was a popular author in Eastern Europe already in the 1980s; for instance, *Solidarność* published his *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* in 1985 and he became one of the most published authors, including his *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1992) and *Confessions of a Catholic* (1995).⁹⁵⁸ In the 1990s, Novak collaborated with the Czechoslovak parties and think tanks as a board member. Local Christian democrats praised Novak for the concept of “neoliberal” Catholicism,⁹⁵⁹ which defined the blending of the free-market economy and democracy as an acceptable form of government. In my view, the key elements of Thomist personalism and Cold War liberalism, which defined the local Christian democratic tradition before and during the communist era, were revitalized through the influence of Novak’s writings. Novak’s work prominently featured the ideas of

⁹⁵⁶ Hofírek, S. (1992). *Perspektivy lidskosti: nový společenský řád ve světle papežských encyklik*. Prague: Scriptum.

⁹⁵⁷ Zvěřina, J. (2003). *Teologie agape*. Prague: Vyšehrad.

⁹⁵⁸ The translation of the *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* in 1992 was a second publication of the Civic Institute, followed by *Confession of a Catholic* (1995) and various lectures on Catholic neoliberalism.

⁹⁵⁹ Novak, M. (1995). *Význání katolika*. Brno: CDK, 29. Novak was not the first Catholic intellectual to use neoliberalism to define a political project. For instance, key German Catholic intellectual Josef Hoffner identified neoliberalism with social capitalism in his 1959 treatise *Christian Social Teaching*.

thinkers like Jacques Maritain, Eric Voegelin, and Friedrich von Hayek, central to the Catholic canon he embraced.

The neoliberal components of Novak's work were buttressed by translations of Hayek's early Cold War work.⁹⁶⁰ His *Road to Serfdom* was translated in the 1980s by key ODA politicians and was officially published in 1991 as the first publication of the ODA think tank. It was followed by Hayek's *Why I Am Not a Conservative* (1993). The ideologues appreciated Hayek for his anti-communism, the autonomy of the economic sphere, and the "spontaneous" social order created by market relations. The reception of Ludwig von Mises broadened the neoliberal canon,⁹⁶¹ while Christian democrats also returned to treatises on Catholic distributivism by Hilaire Belloc.⁹⁶²

The CDK publishing house⁹⁶³ close to the KDS focused on the official publication of Eric Voegelin's work, translated by Catholic communist era activists, including *New Science of Politics* (2000), Ellis Sandoz's biography of Voegelin (1997), and editions of Voegelin's political essays (2000).

Another essential resource for justifying the new Christian democratic memory regime was Paul Johnson's⁹⁶⁴ Catholic grand historical narrative of the twentieth century. The local Christian democrats valued Johnson, a conservative Catholic British historian and editor of the *New Statesman*, for his serious attention to the dangers of "totalitarianism" and the harmful impacts of state intervention, "social engineering," and the "relativization of moral values."⁹⁶⁵ Johnson's historical narrative aligned well with the Christian democratic view of postwar

⁹⁶⁰ Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, translated by ODA leaders, was published in 1991.

⁹⁶¹ Mises, L. (1955[1993]). *Anti-kapitalistická mentalita*. Praha: OI.

⁹⁶² Dobal, V. (1994). *Etika a vlastnictví*. Praha: OI.

⁹⁶³ CDK was created in 1993 by Brno-based Catholic samizdat activists connected with the Pan-European Movement and later KDS. It was directed by Petr Fiala, today's prime minister of the Czech Republic, and František Mikš, director of the ODS think tank the Right Coast (*Pravý břeh*).

⁹⁶⁴ In particular, the ideologues referred to Johnson's 1983 *Modern Times: A History of the World from the 1920s to the 1980s*. It was published by the London-based traditionalist Christian democratic Rozmluvy Circle. Johnson's monograph of John Paul II was already published in Catholic samizdat in 1984.

⁹⁶⁵ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1993]). Prejav na Paneurópe v Salzburgu. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 381-386, 381.

development, which they compared to present-day politics. This comparison emphasized the influential role of the European Christian democratic movement. The ideologues expanded their ideological anti-canon by drawing on Johnson's 1988 book *Intellectuals: From Marx and Tolstoy to Sartre and Chomsky*, where he discussed prominent leftist thinkers. Instead of engaging in serious conceptual critique, Johnson and the local Christian democrats focused on morally condemning these figures.⁹⁶⁶

Protagonists Line-Up

KDU-ČSL Ideologues

Josef Lux (1956-1999) was an agricultural engineer. In 1990, he was co-opted as a ČSL MP to the Federal Assembly, and after the June election, he was elected a regular MP. In September 1990, Lux was elected the leader of the ČSL (serving until 1998) and transformed the party's ideological profile into a Western European Christian democratic model. Between 1992 and 1996, he was a vice-PM in Klaus' government and a Minister of Agriculture. He died in 1999.

Luděk Pachman (1924-2003) was a chess master and a loyal communist who, after imprisonment in 1969, converted to Catholicism and emigrated to West Germany. He collaborated closely with the CSU and founded *Konservative Aktion*

(1981-1986), a fiercely anti-communist intra-party association. He also contributed to the exile Christian democratic journal *Nové obzory*. In 1989, he was appointed the central strategist and ideologue of the renewed ČSL and advisor to the party board.

Miloslav Výborný (1952-) is a lawyer. He served as the ČSL MP, chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the National Council, and a member of the governmental Constitutional Commission. Later, he served as a Minister of Defense and then a judge at the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic.

Pavel Tigrid (1917-2004) was a prominent Czech exile politician throughout the Cold

⁹⁶⁶ See, for instance Čarnogurský, J. (1993). *Stretnutie s historikom storočia a kresťanstva Paulem Johnosonem. Bratislavské listy* 6, n. 6, 6-7.

War era. After 1989, he was advisor to President Václav Havel on Czech-German relations. Between 1994 and 1996, he served as Minister of Culture as a KDU-ČSL nominee in the second Klaus's government.

KDS Ideologues

Ivan Dejmal (1946-2008) was an environmental activist active in Charter 77, samizdat, and ecological movements during the late socialist era. Between 1991 and 1992, he served as a KDS Minister of Environment and contributed to the Christian democratic discourse on ecology.

Václav Benda (1946-1999) was the leading Catholic oppositional activist of the Communist era. From 1989, he served as the chairman of the KDS. He became an MP and later a senator (beating Pavel Tigrid in the second round). In 1994, he supported the visit of Augusto Pinochet to Czechoslovakia. In 1995, he was appointed director of the Office for Documentation and the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism.

Marie Kaplanová (1928-2014) was a communist-era Catholic activist who participated in various movements, including the 1968 Conciliary Work Renewal (founded in her apartment) and the

1980s anti-abortion campaign. After 1989, she became a co-founder of the KDS and was elected an MP.

Rudolf Kučera (1947-2019) co-founded the Czech branch of the Pan-European Movement and established the Catholic journal *Střední Evropa* in the 1980s. After 1989, he was appointed president of the Pan-European Union in Bohemia and Moravia. He participated in founding the new Department of Political Science at Charles University (serving as its director).

ODA Ideologues

Daniel Kroupa (1949)

After 1989, Kroupa co-founded the ODA and became its vice-chairman. Kroupa also held prominent positions in the OF. He was one of the co-drafters of the 1991 *Charter of Human Rights* and co-founded the Czech Society of Jacques Maritain.

Pavel Bratinka (1946-) was a close friend of Kroupa, co-founded the ODA, and served as its chair and an MP. He was a crucial figure in the reception of Hayek in Czechoslovakia.

Tomáš Ježek (1940-2017) was a Protestant economic expert. He worked at the Economic Institute of the Academy of Sciences. He published in samizdat

Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* and *Law, Legislature, and Freedom*. After 1989, he co-founded the ODA and served as federative Minister of the National Property and Administration of Privatization.

KDH Ideologues

Jan Čarnogurský (1944) co-founded the KDH and was its long-time chairman, promoting the Western European model of Christian democracy. In December 1989, he was appointed as vice PM of Czechoslovakia, later a PM of Slovakia, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Rudolf Lesňák (1939-2006) was a journalist. He joined the ranks of the KDH and served as editor-in-chief of *Katolícke noviny* and a key journal of the KDH *Bratislavské listy*. He also edited a crucial book on the underground Church in Slovakia and the victimization of the church under communist rule.

Ján Letz (1936-2001) was a historian and philosopher. He was active in KDH journals and academic positions. He transmitted Thomist personalism (Jacques Maritain), the work of Teilhard de Chardin, or Maurice Blondel to the KDH milieu.

Anton Neuwirth (1921-2004) was active in Catholic Action in the pre-communist era, participated in the underground church throughout the communist regime, and spent seven years in prison. In 1989, he participated in the establishment of the KDH. He became a KDH MP and a member of the party board. In 1993, he unsuccessfully ran for the presidency as a KDH candidate. He was appointed the first Slovak Ambassador to the Vatican. During his tenure, Neuwirth co-drafted the crucial agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Vatican, signed in 2000.

Table 11: Early Post-Communist Christian Democratic Ideologues

Name	Position	Resources	Transmission
Miloslav Výborný 1952- Lawyer	The ČSL MP, member of the Constitutional Commission, Minister of Interior, Constitutional Judge	KDU-ČSL program	x
Luděk Pachman 1924-2003 Chess master	ČSL chief strategists (1990-1991)	ČSL program	CDU/CSU model
Josef Lux 1956-1999 Agricultural engineer	ČSL Chairman (1990-1998), Minister of Agriculture	KDU-ČSL program, <i>Proč budu volit KDU-ČSL (1998)</i>	CDU/CSU model
Václav Benda 1946-1999 Philosopher	KDS Chairman, MP, Senator	KDS programs, articles, and editorials in <i>Zpravodaj KDS</i>	Catholic social doctrine, CDU/CSU model
Ivan Dejmál 1946-2008 Ecologist	KDS Minister of Ecology	<i>Prostor k úvaze, Texty z let 1987–2007 (2009)</i>	x
Marie Kaplanová 1928-2014 Bohemistics	The KDS MP	Articles in <i>Zpravodaj KDS</i>	Catholic social doctrine
Rudolf Kučera 1947-2019 Historian, Political Scientist	The Pan-European Movement	Essays in <i>Central Europe</i>	Eric Voegelin, Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi
Daniel Kroupa 1949- Philosopher	The ODA vice-chairman, MP, Chairman of the Society of Jacques Maritain	<i>Svoboda a řád (1997)</i> , ODA programs	Michael Novak, Jacques Maritain, August von Hayek
Pavel Bratinka 1946- Economist	ODA Chairman, MP	ODA programs	Michael Novak, August von Hayek
Tomáš Ježek 1940-2017 Economist	ODA economic expert, Minister of Privatization	<i>Ježkovy voči, Zrození ze zkumavky: Svědectví o české privatizaci 1990–1997</i>	August von Hayek
Jiří Kabele 1946- Sociologist	The ODA ideologue	<i>Sociální práva (1993)</i>	August von Hayek, Karl Popper
Ján Čarnogurský 1944- Lawyer	KDH Chairman, vice-PM, and PM	KDH program, Articles in <i>Bratislavské listy, Videné od Dunaja (1995)</i>	CDU/CSU program, Catholic social doctrine, Paul Johnson

Anton Neuwirth 1921-2001 Philosopher	KDH chair of Ideological Committee, KDH MP, KDH presidential candidate	Essays in <i>Bratislavské listy</i> , KDH program	Jacques Maritain, CDU/CSU programs
Rudolf Lesňák 1939-2016 Editor	Editor in Chief <i>Bratislavské listy</i>	Editorials and articles in <i>Bratislavské listy</i>	x
Ján Letz 1936-2001 Philosopher	The KDH ideologue	Essays in <i>Bratislavské listy</i>	John Newman, Gabriel Marcel, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jacques Maritain

Ideological Morphology

In this section, I explore how the ideologues originally and innovatively employed key ideological concepts developed in the 1980s. First, I chart the revival of the Thomist natural rights tradition within the context of post-communist constitution-making. Next, I examine how human rights discourse, anti-communist totalitarian theory, and memory politics were integrated into the Christian democratic decommunization strategy, with a particular focus on the innovative “retrospective” use of human rights. Third, I delve into the Christian democratic commitment to a civic form of nationhood (*vlastenectví*), which, in the post-communist era, was rearticulated through the concept of *Judeo-Christian civilization* (*židovsko-křesťanská civilizace*). Finally, I analyze the adjustments and challenges Christian democrats faced in transitioning to a free-market economy, which they approached through the novel frameworks of a *social market economy* (*sociálně-tržní hospodářství*) and *democratic capitalism* (*demokratický kapitalismus*).

Human Rights Constitutionalism

The collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe marked a profound shift in European and global politics, ushering in an era of (neo)liberal internationalism characterized by a strong

emphasis on human rights.⁹⁶⁷ The local Christian democratic tradition, which had long prioritized ethics over politics, became mainstream, making moral justification a central component of political discourse. While Christian democrats advocated for value pluralism and the coexistence of diverse ethical systems, they insisted that these systems must be grounded in human dignity, freedom, and rights. These values were, however, anchored in immutable Christian norms. Paradoxically, despite their vocal opposition to “moral totalitarianism”⁹⁶⁸ and the legal imposition of moral obligations, many Christian democratic ideologues did the precisely opposite in practice.

The perennial component of Christian democratic ideology, the notion of a person retained the Thomist imaginary even in the post-communist era. A person was decontested as God-given, “unique, inviolable in its dignity, and responsible to its conscience.”⁹⁶⁹ The ideologues reiterated Christian “negative anthropology” but underlined more the human beings’ natural inclination to “selfishness and evil.”⁹⁷⁰ Therefore, individual and political power must be legally constrained, first and foremost, through the constitutional codification of the natural law and the principles of human dignity and rights. The ideologues conceptualized these principles as a precondition for “democratic stability” and “safety,” as self-defensive mechanisms of democracy, and a “guarantee of economic prosperity.”⁹⁷¹

The adjacent notion of freedom reinvigorated a similar justification as in the pre-communist era. The ideologues constructed the Christian democratic “third way” between the “abstract” anthropological notions of “individualistic liberalism”⁹⁷² and “socialist egalitarianism.” The former fails to recognize the “moral obligation of solidarity of the strong

⁹⁶⁷ Dahrendorf, R (1990). *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*. New York: Random House.

⁹⁶⁸ Malý, V. (1990). Projev. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 17, 103.

⁹⁶⁹ For instance, Lux, J. (1998 [1991]). Vytvorit prostor k dialogu. In: *Proč budu volit KDU-ČSL*, 10-16.

⁹⁷⁰ Kroupa, D. (1997). *Svoboda a řád*. Prague: EOS, 44.

⁹⁷¹ Dimun, D., Hamerský, P. (eds.) (1999). *10 let na straně svobody: Kronika ODA z let 1989–1999*. Brno, Bachnat 1999, 266.

⁹⁷² Brzek, A. (1991) Co je to liberalismus který odmitáme. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 2, 3.

with the weak,” while the latter confines individual freedom and “downgrades men’s dignity.”⁹⁷³ The ideologues highlighted that the rejection of “political liberalism,” they quintessentially equated with libertarianism, did not entail the rejection of “man’s freedom,” but it stands for the protection of persons against the “powerful and irresponsible.”⁹⁷⁴

In particular, Slovak KDH ideologues repeatedly reminded the voters that “socialism has already fallen. And liberalism is next.”⁹⁷⁵ After bringing the end to socialism, KDH chair Čarnogurský noted, Christian democrats must turn to the destruction of “atheistic” liberalism: “Liberalism and its derivatives have become the main obstacle to social development after the defeat of totalitarian systems.”⁹⁷⁶ For Čarnogurský, in the economic domain, liberalism created an “artificial demand,” and in culture, it propagated values independent of “moral criteria,” and in politics, it departed from a “utilitarian perspective.” Finally, Čarnogurský equalized liberalism with a “safe haven for communists.”⁹⁷⁷

Further, freedom remained closely tied to conscience. In the late socialist era, conscience was weaponized to combat the “inhuman” totalitarian state and promote human rights and religious liberty. In post-communism, the ideologues called for the “renaissance of conscience”⁹⁷⁸ and reiterated its individual character independent from the temporal legal order. Conscience was also newly applied to the economic domain. It was related to the Christian democratic “third-way” strategy against neoliberal governmental policies and the threat of a socialist command economy. For instance, KDU-ČSL framed itself as a “social

⁹⁷³ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro Období po sjezdu 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1.

⁹⁷⁴ See (1992). *Vivat KDU. Zpravodaj* 2, n. 1, 2.

⁹⁷⁵ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1991]). Socializmus už padol, na rade je liberalizmus. In *Videné od Dunaja*, 141-157, 141.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁷⁷ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1991]). Dvë stë let u Lucifera?. In *Videné od Dunaja*, 276-278.

⁹⁷⁸ Gombala, E. (1990). Renesance svedomia? *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 5, 1.

conscience of the [ODS-led] government” to underline the salience of the “social capitalist” model and “solidarity” in economic relations Christian democrats advocate for.⁹⁷⁹

The last adjacent notion was *responsibility*. It was newly related to “social rights.” It denoted a commitment to pro-welfare transfers and redistributive “duties” of the state. Besides, all Christian democratic parties also underlined individual responsibility in building the common good and realizing solidarity with the less well-off. Only ODA ideologues promoted the nightwatchman state. They argued that the welfare state turns a person to passivity (selfishness) and destroys the sense of “moral and social responsibility.” Thus, responsibility was employed as a communitarian, but at the same time, a neoliberal argument that reduced duties to individual obligations and rejected state participation in economic redistribution.

In the early transition years, the Christian democratic right talk was articulated primarily in two issue agendas: constitutionalism and decommunization programs. In this chapter, I trace the former while taking stock of the latter in the next chapter. The constitutional formalization of fundamental human rights in Czechoslovakia followed the regional trend of “new constitutionalism” pushed not only by the dissent legacies (fears of the too-powerful state) but also by the present challenge of minority rights (e.g., the Hungarian minority in Slovakia or the multi-ethnic Yugoslav conflict) and the accession requirements to the Council of Europe and the EU.⁹⁸⁰ Unlike in Hungary or Poland,⁹⁸¹ the Czech and Slovak 1992 Constitutions were not amendments to the communist constitutions but were anchored in the 1920 First Czechoslovak Republic *Constitution* – a symbol of Czechoslovak stateness from which the new elite inferred the post-communist order legitimation – and the German 1949

⁹⁷⁹ Lux, J. (2006 [1995]). Plnit závazky není zásluha, ale povinnost. In: *Historii si neodmyslíme, ta tady je*. Choceln: Nadační fond Josefa Luxe, 40.

⁹⁸⁰ Sadurski, W. (2002). *Constitutional justice, east and west: Democratic legitimacy and constitutional courts in post-communist Europe in a comparative perspective*. Springer Science & Business Media; Ackerman, B. (2019). *Revolutionary Constitutions: Charismatic Leadership and the Rule of Law*. Cambridge, MA: CUP.

⁹⁸¹ Poland passed the new constitution in 1997, excluding the center-right forces. In Hungary, Fidesz adopted the new conservative constitution only in 2011.

Grundgesetz.⁹⁸² Additionally, the creation of the new national constitutions was not driven by democratization but by the Czechoslovak federative split in 1992.

I argue that Christian democrats, in the “Hour of the Lawyers,” formalized personalist principles into the *Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Charter)* and national *Constitutions*.⁹⁸³ The *Charter* was passed in 1991 as one of the first post-communist constitutional documents. It listed “natural human dignity,” “human rights,” and the “rule of law” as the new fundamental principles of Czechoslovak constitutionalism.⁹⁸⁴ The natural law theory, imitating fundamental human rights dogmatics of *Grundgesetz*, was built into Czechoslovak constitutionalism, asserting supra-positive origins of human rights. Christian democrats incorporated a reference to natural rights and human dignity in the preamble to the *Czech Constitution*; in the *Slovak Constitution*, it appears in article twelve.

Another constitutional innovation was “freedom of conscience”⁹⁸⁵ motivated by Christian democratic anti-abortion commitments, i.e., the possibility for health workers to opt out from participating in abortion procedures. Furthermore, the newly defined constitutional religious liberty expanded the religious rights of religious organizations.

In the chapter devoted to the Third Republic, I showed the failed Christian democratic attempt to renew the interwar Constitutional Court in the Third Republic. The post-communist Christian democrats revived this legacy. The idea of the constitutional court was anchored in the positivist conception of the sovereignty of legal norms that check political power. Christian democrats equalized the positive constitutional law with the Thomist *ius naturale* and

⁹⁸² See (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro Období po sjezdu 1992, 5. As we have seen in the first chapter, the post-war constitution-making in Germany, France, and Italy was decisively shaped by the postwar Christian democratic forces.

⁹⁸³ Cf. Filip, J. (2001). Listina deset let poté. In: *Deset let Listiny základních práv a svobod v právním řádu České republiky a Slovenské republiky*. Edited by Dančák, B.; Šimíček, V. Brno: Masarykova Univerzita,

⁹⁸⁴ Mikloško, F. (1991). Speech at a joint meeting of the Federal Assembly. Retrieved 07.04.2024 from <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990fs/slsn/stenprot/011schuz/s011002.htm>

⁹⁸⁵ See Virsik, J. (1990). Sloboda svedomia v medicíne. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 11, 22-23.

advocated the creation of the constitutional court to oversee the body politics. Eventually, the Constitutional Court was established in 1991 and imitated the German constitutional judiciary⁹⁸⁶ with an extensive review authority to interrogate and overturn any law based on procedural and substantive grounds.

The following two sections will examine two key areas of Christian democratic constitutional activism during the early transition years: rights of the unborn person and social rights.

“The Anti-Abortion Clause”

Christian democratic actors extended the late Socialist anti-abortion campaigning to the constitution-making process. For KDH, KDU-ČSL, and KDS, anti-abortion was a pivotal topic.⁹⁸⁷ Christian democratic actors, leveraging the constitutional amendment, successfully narrowed the entire debate in the Federal Assembly about the *Charter* to focus solely on the “abortion clause.” However, eventually, the *Charter* only refers to unborn life in Article 6, stating that: “Human life is worth protection before *birth*.”⁹⁸⁸ Hence, the final formulation was a compromise that neither banned nor liberalized abortion.⁹⁸⁹

In the discussion, Christian democrats continued the fetus- and women-based argumentation from the 1980s *Right to Life* campaign. These included the “personalization” of the fetus and the necessity to protect the “weak” and “powerless” while constraining women’s agency and bodily autonomy. The women-centered discourse was deeply intertwined with the language of dignity and motherhood: “A woman can attain the dignity she deeply desires only

⁹⁸⁶ Invernizzi-Accetti (2019). *What is Christian Democracy*, 105-7.

⁹⁸⁷ Cigánek, V. (1990). Pro lidský život. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 1, 1-2.

⁹⁸⁸ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992, 19.

⁹⁸⁹ Filip (2001). *Listina deset let poté*, 12.

when the principle of respecting life from its very beginning is upheld.”⁹⁹⁰ This time, the anti-abortion argumentation put more emphasis on the “drastic” nature of the abortion procedure and the populational threat (“national extinction”).⁹⁹¹ The Christian democratic proposal aimed to supplement the article with the sentence, “Human life is worthy of protection from conception.”⁹⁹²

Another Christian democratic strategy to constitutionalize anti-abortion rules was the effort to reformulate the *Charter*’s Article 32, which stated that “Parenthood and family are under the protection of the law” by adding “... and human fetus from inception” to the sentence, but to no avail.⁹⁹³ Christian democrats newly linked anti-abortion commitments to the anti-euthanasia agenda, arguing that “Human life must be protected for the entire duration, i.e., from inception to natural death.” The ideologues argued that only such an ethical perspective towards human beings can create “social bonds, solidarity, and responsibility.”⁹⁹⁴

Following the Constitutional “anti-abortion clause” debate between 1991 and 1993, the Czech Christian democratic parties and the newly formalized pro-life organizations⁹⁹⁵ unsuccessfully attempted to reformulate the 1986 abortion law.⁹⁹⁶ The argumentation was constrained by the Christian democratic commitment to anti-statism and the impermissibility of state intervention in ethical decision-making. The Czech Christian democrats accepted the twelve-week rule, and the drafts focused only on banning the “commercial exploitation of

⁹⁹⁰ Nagyová, O. (1990). *Materstvo volá o pomoc. Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 9, 2; (1991). *Miluj a nechaj žít. Bratislavské listy* 4, n. 1.

⁹⁹¹ Michálek, F. (1991). Speech at a joint meeting of the Federal Assembly. Retrieved 07.04.2024 from <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990fs/slsn/stenprot/011schuz/s011007.htm>

⁹⁹² Čičmanec, P. (1991). Speech at a joint meeting of the Federal Assembly. Retrieved 07.04.2024 from <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990fs/slsn/stenprot/011schuz/s011011.htm>

⁹⁹³ Lux, J. (1991). Speech at a joint meeting of the Federal Assembly. Retrieved 07.04.2024 from <https://www.psp.cz/eknih/1990fs/slsn/stenprot/011schuz/s011007.htm>

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Hnutí pro život (*Pro-Life Movement*), established already in 1989, as a movement attached to the local ČSL organizations, grew into the largest pro-life movement in the Czech Republic.

⁹⁹⁶ For instance, Poland criminalized abortion in 1993. See Kuzma-Markowska, S., Kelly, L. (2022). Anti-abortion Activism in Poland and the Republic of Ireland c.1970s–1990s. *Journal of Religious History*. 46, No. 3.

embryos,” protection of the “conscience” of the health workers, and access to information about abortion and its consequences. However, Christian democrats stood against a complete prohibition of abortions that would, in their view, open space for high-risk illegal abortions. The ideologues demanded that abortion be offered only in the public health care system due to the “threat” of privatization and “pro-abortion propaganda.”⁹⁹⁷ In the end, Christian democrats managed to legally formalize only the self-financialization of abortion procedures, except when the procedure is necessary for health reasons. During the 1990s, Christian democratic parties, despite their institutional access, did not attempt to modify the abortion law.⁹⁹⁸

In Slovakia, the KDH managed to pass the bill (419/1991) that constrained reproductive rights. The anti-abortion legislation was part of KDH’s cultural policies that included the introduction of religious schooling,⁹⁹⁹ the limitation of stem cell research, and the crackdown on pornography. Based on the bill, the twelve-week rule was cut down to eight weeks, and abortion was limited only to Slovak nationals to limit “abortion tourism.” Nonetheless, these two policies were reverted in 1995 by the Mečiar administration.

Social Rights

The 1991 *Charter* entailed a list of fundamental social rights. In the Czech context, Christian democrats pushed the incorporation of the *Charter* into the new *Constitution* against neoliberal ODS experts, who battled for excluding “social rights.” Christian democrats contended that the state has a duty to actively promote social rights (right to work, education, or social assistance) and secure conditions for their realization. The ideologues communicated social rights through

⁹⁹⁷ Freiová, M. (1991). Nad další novelou potratového zákona aneb Jak dál, KDS? *Zpravodaj KDS* I, n. 15, 1-2.

⁹⁹⁸ Only in 2001 did Hnutí pro život push through the Funeral Services Act a provision that the foetus after abortion is considered as human remains and must be officially buried.

⁹⁹⁹ For instance, the KDH repeatedly contested the *Charter*’s Article 42, which assumed the unequal position of Church elementary and high schools compared to state schools.

the notion of “social security” (see chapter on social market economy) and backed their arguments with the *European Social Charter* (1961).¹⁰⁰⁰

Amongst the Christian democrats, only ODA’s ideologues held that social rights should not be part of fundamental human rights, stating that social inequalities can be addressed only through the appeal of individual duties.¹⁰⁰¹ They explicitly rejected T. H. Marshall’s conception of the “second generation of rights,” arguing that constitutional social rights are redundant because entrepreneurs are sufficiently protected by “property rights” and employees by legal contracts and autonomous unions. The ideologues held that replacing social responsibility with state responsibility “leads to bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, and social alienation as citizens transfer their obligations to the state and focus only on themselves.” In their argumentation, “social=distributive justice” destroys individual responsibility, a kernel of freedom, in the name of “illusionary social securities provided by the assistant state that are clandestinely traded for the loss of individual freedom.”¹⁰⁰²

According to ODA ideologues, state intervention is justified only when intermediary social units – such as families, municipalities, or the “third sector” – are weak or insufficient. However, this intervention should not take the form of “market interventions or the blanket provision of social benefits.” ODA underlined the threat of the welfare state by arguing that various social groups will exploit social provisions and distort social programs: “The political struggle would shift into conflicts over state budget allocations, with the stronger and less needy exploiting resources at the expense of the weaker and more vulnerable.”¹⁰⁰³ For ODA ideologues, social rights stood for a “perilous philosophy.” They referred to Karl Popper’s early Cold War seminal *Open Society and Its Enemies* and interpreted recent history as a political

¹⁰⁰⁰ However, the Czech Republic only ratified the *European Social Charter* in 1999 during the social democratic government.

¹⁰⁰¹ (1989). Cesta ke svobodné společnosti. In: *Deset let na straně*, 259.

¹⁰⁰² Kabele, J. (1993). *Sociální práva*. Prague: OI, 7-8

¹⁰⁰³ (1989). Cesta ke svobodné společnosti, 262.

struggle in which the dream of social rights justified crimes against humanity. ODA thinkers also used Hayek's *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* (1973) to pin down social justice and equality as a utopia in which "the assistant state incrementally expropriates the legal state."

Nevertheless, ODA activists acknowledged the importance of "solidarity," rooted in the "Judeo-Christian tradition," along with the guiding principle of "conscience" as the foundation for "coexistence with others." As one of the advisors contended, solidarity represents "a humanistic translation of the highest principle of Christianity, *agape*." However, solidarity has been co-opted by "liberation ideologies" that overshadow the importance of "individual sacrifice and passion." As a result, solidarity has become de-individualized and imposed on society, leading to "collective irresponsibility manifested through the codification of collective positive rights."¹⁰⁰⁴

To solve the "negative externalities" of the market, ODA returned to the interwar Catholic concept of "charity" as a personal duty and reformulated the dissent era civil society model of "parallel polis" into a self-organized "third sector." The third sector should address social issues through "self-help, private foundations, and individual initiatives." Hence, social solidarity must be carried out primarily in society.¹⁰⁰⁵

The final version of the *Czech Constitution* did not include the *Charter* and, by implication, the list of social rights and the abortion clause. However, Christian democratic activists managed to inject into the text of the *Constitution* a reference to the *Charter* through "constitutional order" (*ústavní pořádek*). Constitutional order was a new term in the Czech context invented by one of the KDU-ČSL legal experts. Notwithstanding, the *Charter* was "de-constitutionalized" (see *Constitution* Article 112) and redefined as a regular law.¹⁰⁰⁶ In the

¹⁰⁰⁴ Kabele (1993). *Sociální práva*, p. 10

¹⁰⁰⁵ Benda, V. (1990) Očima předsedy. *Bulletin KDS* 1, n. 2., 2.

¹⁰⁰⁶ The Czech Republic transferred the *Charter* not as a constitutional law but as a regular law, even if it was defined as a supra-constitutional in imitating some of the *Grundgesetz* articles. Filip (2001). *Deset let poté*, 13.

Slovak case, the *Charter* remained a Constitutional document, and a list of fundamental human and social rights became a part of the Slovak *Constitution*.

Natural Communities and the Third Sector

The notion of “communities” and the “third” or “independent sector” nominally replaced in the Christian democratic morphology the pre-communist concepts of “organic pluralism” and late Socialist “parallel polis” as a space of societal autonomy and self-organization.

Christian democrats conceptualized society differently from the liberal democratic concept that dominated the 1990s democratization discourse.¹⁰⁰⁷ The (neo)liberal theory assumed civil society as a “support structure,” a mechanism through which political representatives are elected, and as a “watchdog” of professional politicians and representatives. Christian democratic ideologues remained faithful to the Thomist social ontology. Christian democrats privileged society organized by the principle of subsidiarity and multiple instances of legitimacy formed by “natural communities” (families, municipalities, churches). Christian democratic ideologues assigned to intermediaries an “irreplaceable status” in a democratic society¹⁰⁰⁸ and argued for the privileged status of these communities regarding welfare transfers, municipal autonomy, or church-state relationships.

The ideologues re-stated that the heteronormative family represents a “primary form of human mutuality, more fundamental than political, economic, social, and other institutions.”¹⁰⁰⁹ This discourse centered on civic virtue learning within the family, particularly “practical solidarity” and “charity.” Christian democrats accentuated the autonomous status of municipal and regional administration conceptualized as “polis” or “community,” the core unit of political

¹⁰⁰⁷ Tismaneanu (1992). *Reinventing Politics*; Baker (2002). *Civil Society and Democratic Theory*.

¹⁰⁰⁸ (1989). *Cesta ke svobodné společnosti*, 262.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid.

life,¹⁰¹⁰ and emphasized the principle of state decentralization. Apart from Thomistic commitment, the reason why Christian democratic parties stressed the municipal level of government was their electoral dominance. The last outpost of Christian democratic ideology was the demand for institutional autonomy of Churches, i.e., thorough secularization of the state. The state-church policies reiterated the Christian democratic demands lingering from the 1940s: church autonomy and legitimate interference of religious worldview in the political and public space.¹⁰¹¹ The notion of the “third sector” promoted by ODA, tasked society with dealing with the negative consequences of the free-market economy, to keep the “bureaucratic state” at bay concerning economic redistribution.¹⁰¹²

Democratization as Decommunization

Christian democratic ideologues reiterated the pre-communist intransigence concerning defects of “procedural” or “formal” democracy and the dangers of the majoritarian principle. They blended several longstanding Christian democratic ideological principles to shape the transition agenda. They revived features of militant democracy and messaged them through transitional and historical justice frameworks¹⁰¹³ underlined by steadfast decommunization reinforced by the alleged lingering threat of the “crypto-communist left”¹⁰¹⁴ and “totalitarian revival.” In this chapter, I examine how the longstanding Christian democratic principle of exclusionary anti-communism was translated into post-communist memory politics and how it was formalized into policy preferences and legislative schemes.

¹⁰¹⁰ (1990). Volební program KDH. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, Box 17, 4.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰¹² Bratinka, P. (1992). Prohlášení ODA k budoucnosti Československa. In: *Deset let na straně svobody*, 377.

¹⁰¹³ Stan, L. (ed.) (2009). *Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. N.Y.: Routledge Press; David, R. (2011). *Lustration and Transitional Justice: Personnel Systems in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

¹⁰¹⁴ Benda, V. (1992). Kořeny a souvislosti. *Křesťanský demokrat* 1, n. 25, 2.

I contend that Christian democratic ideologues crafted a new memory regime—a legitimizing framework—to advance the decommunization agenda. The incumbent political parties, wielding disproportionate influence over memory politics, drew heavily from the legacy of the late Socialist Christian democratic "Right for History" campaign. The post-communist mnemonic regime not only highlighted the agenda-setting power of Christian democrats but also underscored the significant impact of the dissent legacy.

Christian democrats forced the “past into the public domain”¹⁰¹⁵ by legislating the past. They reconciled with the “Western templates” of memory politics and sought to preclude any opportunity to debate the communist era. James Mark argued that the memorial practices concerning the communist regime boomed, especially in the mid-1990s, when political actors began to exploit the idiom of “unfinished revolution” that denoted the continuing power of communism. I show that the memorial practices were already present at the very beginning of the Czechoslovak transition.

The backbone of the Christian democratic anti-communist memory politics strategy amounted to what Kurt Weyland termed the “availability heuristic.”¹⁰¹⁶ The ideologues emphasized the threat of totalitarianism by focusing on historical episodes where Communists violated fundamental human rights: the postwar expulsion of ethnic Germans, the 1948 communist “coup,” the failed promises of the Prague Spring, and the crackdown on political opposition during late socialism.¹⁰¹⁷ The ideologues could newly define the communist period only as a “temporary interruption,” presupposing a transhistorical “character” of Czech and Slovak society and urged a return to “normality” and “authenticity.” Additionally, they linked the pre-communist era with post-communism to re-assert a national continuation disrupted by the Soviet colonial rule.

¹⁰¹⁵ Mark (2010). *The Unfinished Revolution*, xiii.

¹⁰¹⁶ Weyland, K. (2006). *Bounded Rationality and Policy Diffusion*. N. J.: Princeton University Press.

¹⁰¹⁷ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992, 5.

The amplification of the above-mentioned historical turning points of Czechoslovak history, the repeatedly summoned possibility of their repetition, and the construction of 1989 as a decisive moment of historical *discontinuity* were used in exclusionary anti-communist repertoires in various democratization schemes championed by Christian democrats. Additionally, the ideologues correlated successful decommunization with the speed of political and economic transformation. They framed it as a “race against time” in the context of the 1991 coup in the Soviet Union and heated Yugoslav ethnic conflicts.¹⁰¹⁸

Christian democrats argued that the transformation could not be complete without addressing past injustices committed against fundamental human rights during the “totalitarian regime” and without establishing legal safeguards for the present and future. Memory politics became a crucial aspect of transitional justice, serving as the basis for institutionalizing tools of militant democracy. In Czechoslovakia, the memory regime was shaped not through anniversaries or commemorations but through transitional justice, conceptualized as historical justice. The ideologues developed a four-pronged decommunization legislative strategy, focusing on (i) rehabilitation, (ii) the criminalization of communism, (iii) lustration, and (iv) restitution.

Rehabilitation

In the Federal Assembly, Christian democratic parties advocated from day one for the rehabilitation of the “unjustly prosecuted” during the communist regime. They demanded “historical justice,” combated the moderate positions of the OF centrists and the left, and pushed for the inspection and condemnation of the past fundamental human rights violations.

¹⁰¹⁸ Benda, V. (1991). Prohlášení Václava Bendy, předsedy Křesťanskodemokratické strany, k převratu v Sovětském svazu. *Zpravodaj KDS* I, n. 30-31, 1.

In the summer of 1990, the *Act on Judicial Rehabilitation* (119/1990) was passed in the Federal Assembly (vehemently opposed by the Left) based on the ODA initiative to redeem past injustices through vindication or financial compensation. Importantly, the *Act on Judicial Rehabilitation* included a delegitimizing clause of the communist period, stating “a factual condemnation of the era between February 1948 and November 1989 as an era of illegality.”¹⁰¹⁹ The Christian democratic rehabilitation scheme expanded the meaning of human rights as it pressed for *retrospective* human rights protection and adjudication.

The Christian democratic parties did not require the prosecution of everyone involved with the Communist Party as some fierce anti-communist pressure groups did. They sought to hold accountable only those individuals who could be proven to have committed human rights violations. However, due to the Communist era statute of limitations, those who committed such crimes could not be prosecuted under post-communist legal conditions.¹⁰²⁰ Therefore, the rationale of the *Act on Judicial Rehabilitation* was to condemn any juridical decisions that contradicted the principles of *ius naturale* embedded in the then-existing human rights *international law*.

The KDU coalition proposed an amendment to the *Act on Judicial Rehabilitation* that concerned recognizing the *third resistance* (*třetí odboj*). The concept of the third resistance acknowledged the personal struggles of individuals persecuted by the Communist regime in the Czech lands (beginning in 1948) and in Slovakia (beginning in 1947). According to the proposal, the third resistance spanned more than forty years. Unlike previous resistance movements, it was not represented by an exiled government or army, nor was it supported by any superpowers. During Stalinism, the struggle was waged by a “lonesome, unarmed, and defenseless population against the communist government.” In the 1970s, the kernel of

¹⁰¹⁹ Benda, M. (1991). Zprávy z pralmanetu *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 8, 1.

¹⁰²⁰ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992, 7.

resistance shifted to “moral and intellectual resistance.”¹⁰²¹ Through the third resistance, Christian democrats aimed to codify a particular interpretation of the past, highlighting the society's struggle against the state.¹⁰²² Eventually, the third resistance amendment obtained only a proclamatory character, becoming a component of the legislated condemnation of the communist era (see next section).

Crackdown Communism

The commemorative events of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1990 catalyzed a new push for legislating a ban of communism. The OF Christian democratic wing, the primary mover of decommunization policies and legislative reconciliation with the past, prepared a “symbolic trial,” a “moral tribunal” against the “totalitarian system” and the “totalitarian continuum” to legislate 1989 as a moment of discontinuity.¹⁰²³ The OF center and left currents were against such a measure, underlying the need to de-polarize society in turbulent times of economic transformation and rising social insecurity.

The Christian democratic discourse and advocacy for ushering in tools of militant democracy was underlined by standard Cold War anti-totalitarian theory that emphasized the kinship between Communism and Nazism.¹⁰²⁴ The ideologues urged to apply the theoretical “analogy between Communism and Nazism. Meaning: declare communism a criminal ideology. Declare that anyone who advocates the nationalization of all means of production and a class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the like threaten democracy and thus the state, and as such, must be excluded from the democratic competition. The people who

¹⁰²¹ Michálek, F. (1991). K třetímu odboji. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 6, 1.

¹⁰²² (1999 [1991]). I. CK Praha 20. 10.1991. In: *Deset let na straně svobody*, 22; (1991). *Zprávy. Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 7, 1.

¹⁰²³ Bratinka (1999 [1991]). I. CK Praha 20. 10.1991, 22.

¹⁰²⁴ Klíma, M. (1991). Dokud to neuděláme svět se nepoučí. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 36. See also Trizuljaková, E. (1993). Úvaha posttotalitná. *Bratislavské listy* 6, n. 4, 5.

ordered and carried out these atrocities must be hunted down and prosecuted. Similar to Nazi perpetrators, who are in Germany still on trial.” Additionally, KDU-ČSL proposed to ban and criminalize communist ideology as such to “punish evil” and rule out “non-pluralist” worldview from the new democracy.¹⁰²⁵

The Christian democratic decommunization campaign resulted in the Federal Assembly’s one-sentence resolution from 1990 on the Communist era as “the age of unfreedom” that included the Christian democratic language and defined the communist regime as “illegitimate and worthy of condemnation.” In 1993, decommunization in the Czech Republic was followed by the passing of the *Act Concerning the Lawlessness of the Communist Regime* (198/1993). The law stated that Communist ideology was similar to Nazi ideology and that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was a “criminal organization.” Therefore, the “third resistance” was “legitimate, just, morally justified, and respectable.”¹⁰²⁶ The act was formulated as a resolution and made the Czech Republic the first former Eastern Bloc country to officially condemn the former Communist regime. However, the law had zero sanction force.¹⁰²⁷

The strategy to legislate history and “govern memory making” led post-communist countries to create National Memory Institutes. In 1995, the Czech Republic founded the Office for the Documentation and the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism with Václav Benda, KDS leader, as its chair. It investigated historical crimes “against humanity” that were legally considered crimes already during the communist regime but were not punished. The Office was bolstered with law enforcement powers as the only memory institute in Eastern Europe.

¹⁰²⁵ See (1992). Programové teze kdu-čsl pro období po sjezdu 1992.

¹⁰²⁶ Lux (1998 [1991]). Vytvorit prostor k dialogu, 12.

¹⁰²⁷ Benda, V. (1992). Z hlavního politického projevu předsedy KDS Václava Bendy. *Křesťanský demokrat* 1, n. 0, 9

However, since 1995, the Office has sentenced only a few dozen individuals, most of whom received only suspended punishments.

Alongside human rights talk in the decommunization schemes, Christian democrats attempted to dismantle the key pillar of the Communist regime, the Communist Party itself.¹⁰²⁸ Christian democratic actors tried to capitalize on this issue from the beginning. They suggested confiscating the party's property and prosecuting former party leaders, secret service agents, and border guards for violations of human rights during the communist period.¹⁰²⁹ To legitimize these measures, Christian democratic ideologues articulated the threat of the Communist Party's professional organizations, large member base, endless financial resources, and positions in the state structure. The ČSL put forward the most radical theses against the Communist Party amongst the political actors, partly to shake off its reputation as a loyal Communist Party satellite,¹⁰³⁰ vigorously demanding the ban of the Communist Party before the 1990 June election. However, the OF (including its right wing) preferred to kill off the Communist Party through the parliamentary election. The OF strategy did not work out, as the Communist Party received the third-largest number of votes. In the end, Christian democrats only succeeded in confiscating the Communist Party's property.¹⁰³¹

Lustration

Alongside rehabilitation and communist criminalization, the third "democratization" program co-developed by the Christian democratic ideologues was "lustration" (alternatively "purges,"

¹⁰²⁸ For example, the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly passed Law 260/1990 that would punish the supporters of communism or fascism with one to five years in prison. The Constitutional Court overturned the law, noting that the successor communist party was acting within the legal confines of democracy.

¹⁰²⁹ Appel, H. (2005). Anti-Communist Justice and Founding of the Post-Communist Order: Lustration and Restitution in Central Europe. *East European Politics and Societies* 19, n. 3, 379-405

¹⁰³⁰ For a detailed historical account of the 1989 revolutionary months see Suk, J. (2003) *Labyrintem revoluce*. Prague: Prostor.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid., 305.

“vetting,” or “screening”). Lustration programs took place in all the post-communist countries, with varying intensity and scale, where Czechoslovakia passed the strictest scheme. Lustration became the central political issue immediately after November 1989, but it was formalized only in 1991. The law was framed alongside other decommunization measures as a tool of militant democracy: protection of the emerging democratic order and creation of a human rights and rule of law framework. Besides, lustration was a necessary procedure for elite replacement. The lustration program made the examination of political elites’ biographies, particularly their activities during state socialism, a key focus of political discourse and aligned with the longstanding Christian democratic struggle to moralize politics.

The Czechoslovak lustration program targeted individuals who had collaborated with the Secret Service. Such collaboration was disqualifying for holding high-level positions in public offices. The disclosure of the Secret Service files was misused for political denunciations in pre-electoral campaigning, particularly in the early “wild” phase in 1990. The files also showed highly unclear information regarding the mode of cooperation between the informant and the Secret Service. During the wild phase, paradoxically, the communist-era Secret Service agents lustrated the new post-communist political elite.¹⁰³²

The Federal Assembly’s incumbent parties assumed three positions between 1989 and 1991 towards lustration. The strictest attitude was represented by Christian democrats and ODS; the moderate by the OF’s center; and opposition by (reformed) communist parties. Christian democrats argued that the mild and oppositional stance towards communism was a continuation of the inability and weakness of 1968 “reform communism” to “reconcile with the past.” In pushing forward the strict lustration format, Christian democrats referred to the 1990 resolution on the illegitimacy of the communist regime that, amongst other things, explicitly stated that the regime was “upheld by the apparatus of the secret police, its informants

¹⁰³² Cabada, Šanc (2005). *Český stranický systém ve 20. Století*, 102.

and people's militia." Hence, individuals involved in these institutions are hostile and threaten the nascent democratic order.¹⁰³³

Furthermore, Christian democratic protagonists used the language of human dignity and human rights to justify lustration and protect the new democracy.¹⁰³⁴ In a speech in the Federal Assembly, the ODA leader argued that the past "forty-one years of contempt to human rights" created a cast of people that were an enduring "threat to democracy." Everyone participating in the system lived in "a moral universe different from the one rooted in human rights." Human dignity and rights could only be safeguarded if those involved in the previous regime, which "embodied the negation of humanity," were held accountable. Additionally, the ideologues rejected the post-totalitarian notion of "co-responsibility" *tout court* and framed it as a "return of totality."¹⁰³⁵

Ultimately, it was the Christian democratic lustration scheme that became the platform for the 1991 lustration law (451/1991), the most radical lustration program enacted in Eastern Europe. It stated that all employees and informants of the Secret Service were blacklisted from public offices. Czechoslovakia opted for a nonjudicial approach, unlike Poland or Hungary.¹⁰³⁶ The law affected approximately ten thousand people. The initial screening period was set for five years. In 1995, this period was extended by an additional five years, and it has since been maintained without a specified end date. Everyone who intends to hold a public office has to undergo lustration to receive a certificate affirming that they did not collaborate with the Secret Service or hold high office in the infrastructure of the Communist Party. Importantly, in

¹⁰³³ Moreover, the ideologues leveraged the central theme of Christian democratic memory politics – Czech guilt in the expulsion of Germans—to present the lustration legislation as the only way to avoid the risk of street justice, which postwar Czechoslovakia had experienced in the form of retaliatory violence against ethnic Germans.

¹⁰³⁴ Bratinka, P. (1999 [1991]) Postoj ODA k lustračnímu zákonu. In: *Deset let na straně svobody*, 383-384.

¹⁰³⁵ Hofhanzl, Č. (1998). *Tak pravil Čestmír Hofhanzl*. Prague: Votabia, 21.

¹⁰³⁶ Lustration law in Hungary (1994–2003) was based on the exposure of compromised state officials, while lustration law in Poland (1999–2005) depended on confessing.

Slovakia, the law was not implemented. The lustration program was shut down after Mečiar ascended to power in 1992.

The OF center and left criticized the law for breaking the “principle of individual legal responsibility” and the principle of presumption of guilt and a violation of international human rights legislation. The Constitutional Court and the European Council contested the lustration law in 1992 due to the unacceptability of the collective guilt and retroactive justice principles. Hence, lustration as a tool of legislative decommunization disclosed that the Christian democratic ideologues had no scruples in violating fundamental human rights norms at the expense of establishing the new political order.

Restitution

The last decommunization measure advocated by Christian democrats involved property restitution programs. These programs were designed to return real estate and financial assets that had been seized, whether legally or illegally, and to provide compensation for property used by the state during the communist era. Christian democrats framed this issue using the language of rights, emphasizing the “inviolability” and “fundamentality” of private property rights, even “at the price of complicating the process of privatization.”¹⁰³⁷ In the view of Christian democrats, the returning property was not just about addressing past injustices but also about establishing a new socio-political order based on private property rights, which had been absent for over forty years. They believed that creating a new class of property owners would support the new regime’s legitimacy and garner support for the Right in future elections.

For Christian democrats, privatization through restitution was critical to the transition to the market economy against ODS, which pressed for a minimal restitution program (only

¹⁰³⁷ (1992). Volební program ODA 1992. In: *Deset let na straně svobody*, 273.

financial compensation). The Christian democratic parties argued for an extensive transfer of property: “restituting everything that can be restituted from 1948 onwards.”¹⁰³⁸ Christian democrats framed the return of the “stolen” property as a critical step towards moral, social, political, and economic transformation. According to the ideologues, restitution was the “best form of privatization” and entailed individual and institutional claims, including church organizations. Eventually, Czechoslovakia initiated the biggest property returns among post-communist countries.

The privatization process in Czechoslovakia comprised of so-called “small” and “large” privatization. Small privatization started in November 1990 through the infamous ODS-led “coupon privatization” of state enterprises (also applied in Poland and Russia).¹⁰³⁹ Nevertheless, Christian democrats articulated fears that ODS-promoted privatization programs would be misused by the “communist mafia,” cloaked under a new identity to sustain communist property and power.¹⁰⁴⁰

For instance, in 1990, a conflict arose between Tomáš Ježek, the ODA Minister of Privatization, and Václav Klaus over investors’ access to privatization auctions. The ODA favored an open approach to privatization, aiming to exclude the communist-era elites from the economy. In contrast, ODS preferred to restrict access to the current management of state enterprises. Ultimately, the ODA scheme prevailed and was launched in January 1991 through public retail auctions.¹⁰⁴¹

¹⁰³⁸ Benda, V. (1991). Rozhovor s Václavem s dr. Bendou, *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 5, 1.

¹⁰³⁹ See Appel, H., Orenstein, M. A. (2018). *From triumph to crisis: Neoliberal economic reform in postcommunist countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Benda, M. (1991). Zprávy z pralmanetu. *Zpravodaj KDS*, 1, n. 8, 1.

¹⁰⁴¹ Minister Ježek blended Hayek's market economy principles with Christian rhetoric. He argued that the market economy aligns with the “nature of God-created man,” whereas state planning was depicted as the work of the “devil,” obscuring the market's “divine mechanism.” In his view, privatization was not just an economic necessity but a moral imperative. Ježek, T. (2007). *Ježkovy voči: Zrození ze zkumavky: Svědectví o české privatizaci 1990–1997*. Prague: Prostor, 43.

The restitution programs, promoted by the Christian democrats, hinged upon several laws, including the already discussed 1991 rehabilitation law, the 1991 law on land and agricultural property, and the so-called “small restitution,” and restitution of the property of religious orders. At the beginning of the restitution process, only Czechoslovak residents were authorized to claim real estate confiscated after 1948. Christian democrats and other actors expanded this time frame to restitution of the Aryanized property after 1938.¹⁰⁴²

Church Restitution

Both the secular Left and Right fiercely contested the possibility of Church restitution against the Christian democratic parties’ proposals that articulated the necessity to return the “stolen” property. Christian democrats framed the legitimacy of Church restitution through victimization and heroization of the Church under communist rule.¹⁰⁴³ For instance, the KDU-ČSL 1992 electoral program stated that the churches “suffered the most in our society in the past decades by the terror of communist dictatorship.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Moreover, Christian democrats linked the Church restitution to reforming the state-church relationship against the ODS’s policy preferences.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰⁴² This law was passed by the Czech parliament in 1994 with only a few restitution claims. Many restitution claims prior to that date were, however, approved. For instance, when it came to Havel’s family property, nationalized by the Protectorate government.

¹⁰⁴³ See Clark, E. (1996). Church-State Relations in the Czech Republic: Past Turmoil and Present Transformation. *Brigham Young University Law Review* 4, 1019–85; O’Mahony, J. (2003) The Catholic church and civil society: democratic options in the post-communist Czech Republic. *West European Politics* 26, n. 1, 177–194.

¹⁰⁴⁴ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992, 5.

¹⁰⁴⁵ The post-communist states institutionalized various models of church-state relationships: the separation model (the Czech Republic), the pluralist model that treats denominations equally (Hungary, Bulgaria), and the dominant religion model where the major denomination enjoys privileges (Poland and Slovakia). See Stan, L., Turcescu, L. (2011). *Church, state, and democracy in expanding Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

From the Eastern European perspective, the Czechoslovak Church's restitution and state-church split was slow. For instance, in Poland, the restitution of church property had already begun before 1989. In Hungary, the process started in 1991, and the final settlement was passed in 1997 in the framework of an agreement with the Vatican. In Czechoslovakia, the church restitution process occurred in several phases. The 1990 "Enumeration Act" returned immovable property to religious orders and congregations. However, the first church restitution law was drafted only in 1992 by the KDU and entailed the demand to consider churches a part of the general restitution laws. The law gained a majority in the Federal Assembly but was not enacted.¹⁰⁴⁶

After the federative split, Slovakia passed a law on the restitution of church property under the KDH government in 1993 (282/1993), which concerned property confiscated after 1945. Unlike in other post-communist countries, the law also addressed Jewish property that had been seized after 1938.¹⁰⁴⁷ The church-state split was complicated by the agreement between Slovakia and the Vatican in 2000, sealed by the KDH, that mandated Slovakia to subsidize the Church, in particular, through clergy salaries and made it harder for new religious organizations to be recognized by the state.

The Czech Church restitution debate ignited in 1993. The KDU-ČSL and KDS were the main initiators. These parties proposed the Church restitution in a package that contained a law on the third resistance and the necessity to institutionalize the parliamentary upper house (the Senate) to comply with the Constitution.¹⁰⁴⁸ After months of unsuccessful negotiations, in the summer of 1993, Czech Christian democratic protagonists demanded churches' autonomy, voluntary tax for churches, the remedy of property injustice, and state-subsidized heritage care.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Minarik, P. (2017). Church-State Separation and Church Property Restitution in the Czech Republic. *Soc* 54, 459–465.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Kuti, C. (2009). *Post-communist restitution and the rule of law*. Budapest: CEU.

¹⁰⁴⁸ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992; Dimun, Hamerský (1999). Rok 1993. In: *Deset let na straně svobody*, 65.

However, church restitution was not part of transitional justice for the ODS. In turn, Christian democrats tackled the ODS's "fake liberalism." They equalized the ODS with Marxism, which considered only the economic base and downplayed the legal and social framework in the transition to a market economy.¹⁰⁴⁹

The Christian democratic anti-neoliberal rhetoric was reinforced when the ODS proclaimed in October 1993 that all the economic reforms were finished. However, in the Christian democratic view, ODS disregarded the much-needed reforms in "non-economic spheres."¹⁰⁵⁰ Eventually, Christian democratic parties could not carry out the church restitution. The government only conveyed church restitutions through the individual claims of religious organizations. The failure to pass the restitution law was one of the reasons for the governmental collapse in 1997. At the same time, the restitution agenda harmed the perception of Christian democratic parties, considered as a secular arm of the Church.¹⁰⁵¹

Patria, Europe, and Judeo-Christian Civilization

Since 1945, Christian democratic perspectives on nationalism in Czechoslovakia have undergone notable changes. Initially, these views integrated pre-communist ideas of patria with Westernism and supranational governance. During the communist era, ideologues expanded the concept of patria, radically deconstructing Czech historical identity. Czech Christian democrats offered a distinctive form of political Catholicism in Eastern Europe, characterized

¹⁰⁴⁹ For instance, ODA became to frame ODS as a platform for the Communist nomenklatura to regain power. See Kroupa (1997). *Svoboda a řád*, 27.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁵¹ Only in 2012, under the auspice of the KDU-ČSL splinter party TOP 09, was a complex legislature on "Property Settlement with Churches and Religious Societies" (428/2012) passed. It concerned the state-church split and the Church restitution that entailed the return of the property and financial compensation for the property that could not be returned, alongside the decrease of the state subsidies for the religious organizations' maintenance.

by opposition to ethnonationalism yet supported by a strong anti-communist Christian civilizationism. In contrast, Slovak Catholicism has maintained a longstanding association with ethnonationalism. After the communist period, Christian culture continued to play a central role in defining Czech and Slovak nationhood, acting as both a unifying force between the two nations and a means of reconnecting with Europe. Christian democratic conceptualizations of nationhood were evident in two key areas: the Czechoslovak federative split and the drive for Europeanization.

Federative Split

Despite the constitutional amendment that led to the federalization of Czechoslovakia in 1968, new conflicts between Czechs and Slovaks took off immediately after the communist regime breakdown. The first controversy burst over the authority of the National Councils (national legislative bodies) and the Federal Assembly, fuelled by the conflict over controlling the privatization programs.¹⁰⁵² The new political elites, including the Christian democratic actors, started to draft different constitutional designs to solve the Czech-Slovak relationship, including unitarian, federalist, “Länder,” confederative, or sovereign models.

Czech Christian democratic ideologues conceptualized nation as an “organic community,”¹⁰⁵³ claiming that the post-communist state cannot be merely built on a “nationalist principle;” it must make room for civic and regional principles based on “subsidiarity” against the “centralizing model.” The notions of “patria” and “homeland” denoted individual embeddedness in “organic communities” defined by “responsibility” and “duty.”¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵² Cabada, Šanc (2005). *Stranické systémy*, 135, 194.

¹⁰⁵³ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992, 4.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Koronthály, V. (1992). Křesťan a národ. *Křesťanský demokrat* 1, n. 28/29, 2.

Using the German *Länder* model, Christian democrats supported the creation of a Czechoslovak “multi-member federation” composed of Bohemia, Moravia-Silesia, and Slovakia with autonomous parliaments and governments. They advocated for Slovak autonomy and pushed for economic transfers to support Slovakia, which was more severely impacted by the economic transition.¹⁰⁵⁵ Furthermore, the ideologues argued that the Czechoslovak relationship could be redefined only through constitutional means and rejected the so-called “Rychetský bill”¹⁰⁵⁶ that pressed a referendum over the Czechoslovakia split. Christian democrats opposed the referendum if it took place before the 1992 election, arguing that it would potentially burden future federative split negotiations.¹⁰⁵⁷ Besides, Christian democrats rejected direct democracy tools by raising fears of the “dictatorship of the majority.”¹⁰⁵⁸

In the shadow of the Yugoslav conflict, Christian democrats began to frame the Czech and Slovak relationship as a conflict between democracy and communism, arguing that, similarly to the “Balkan path,”¹⁰⁵⁹ the Slovak communist forces were attempting to destabilize the region and the democratization process through ethnonationalist campaigns. Furthermore, they underpinned that the state split can lead to the breakdown of economic reforms because Western states and investors will re-evaluate their investment schemes as they did in the “Yugoslav scenario.” Additionally, the Christian democratic parties warned that the escalating national antagonisms could hinder Czechoslovakia's reintegration into the European community.

Among Christian democrats, the ODA ideologues played a leading role in defining the party's identity by challenging Slovak “nationalistic forces,” which they claimed hindered the

¹⁰⁵⁵ (1991). Čs. federace zárukou demokracie na Slovensku. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 38, 1-2.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Pavel Rychetský was a vice-prime minister, representant of the Left in the OF and later the Constitutional Court chair.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Brzek, A. (1992). Z usnesení 14. zasedání celostátního předsednictva KDU-ČSL 24.7.1992. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 26, 1.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Kroupa, D. (1992). Postoj ODA k referendu. In: *Deset let na straně*, 387-390

¹⁰⁵⁹ Krátký, H. (1991). K rozpadu Jugoslávie. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 14, 2.

pace of transformation.¹⁰⁶⁰ They equalized Slovak nationalists with the communist strategy to prevent democratization and market liberalization, arguing that “the former nomenclature” survival strategy held on to the “old ethnonationalist line.”¹⁰⁶¹ They argued that Slovak nationalism represented a crucial obstacle to transformation and Central European integration, aiming to destroy Czechoslovakia and restore Communist rule. The ideologues generalized the Czech-Slovak conflict in the language of the early Cold War civilisationism: as a conflict between the “collectivist East” and personalist “West,” “communism and democracy,” and “national and civic principle.”¹⁰⁶²

Only in the context of the 1992 election did the Czech Christian democratic parties abandon the *Länder* model. The new Czech right-wing governmental coalition newly promoted two levels of autonomous administration, municipal and regional, and began to push for a referendum concerning the state split.¹⁰⁶³ For the ODA, the impetus to adopt a new stance stemmed from its failure to surpass the electoral threshold at the federal level. This setback shaped the ODA's strategy to pursue the state's dissolution by any means necessary, framing the need for federative dissolution as essential for safeguarding democratic consolidation.¹⁰⁶⁴

Among the Christian democratic parties, the KDH ideologues embraced the most ethnonationalist perspective. They regarded Christianity and the nation as natural, organic communities while viewing citizenship as merely a human construct.¹⁰⁶⁵ The KDH framed itself as a platform that could glue these three elements and contest exclusionary

¹⁰⁶⁰ (1992). Volební program ODA 1992, 265.

¹⁰⁶¹ See Dimun, Hamerský (1999). *Deset let na straně svobody*, 34.

¹⁰⁶² Bratinka (1992). Prohlášení ODA k budoucnosti Československa, 377. For conceptualization of nationalism as a “new communism,” see Halík, T. (1993). Ide o věrohodnost křesťanstva a církvi. *Bratislavské listy* 6, n. 5, 6-7. See also Pavlovský, P (1992). *Chod'te vpravo*. Prague: OI.

¹⁰⁶³ Turek, O. (1991). Sny jsou pryč...O nové české ústavě s poslanci ČNR Markem Bendou a Tomášem Svobodou. *Křesťanský demokrat* 1, n. 24, 2.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Pekník (2016). *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku*, 92.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1991]). Kresťanstvo je viac než národ. In *Videné od Dunaja*, 155-159, 156-157. See also Šimko, I. (1991). Východiská, cesty a ciele, *Bratislavské listy* 4, n. 10, 11.

nationalism.¹⁰⁶⁶ The KDH articulated the trope of “national dignity” and “rights” in promoting Slovak autonomy within the federation. Furthermore, in the early transition years, the Slovak neo-popularists sought to break into the KDH structure and incorporate their historiographical accounts into the new memory regime. They zeroed in on Slovak's controversial historical moments and attempted to rehabilitate the legitimacy and innocence of the Slovak State.¹⁰⁶⁷ However, KDH resisted the temptation to revive the legacy of the Slovak State and remained strictly anti-fascist.

At the same time, the KDH remained committed to constitutionalism and moderation.¹⁰⁶⁸ In contrast to Slovak nationalist parties that pushed for immediate Slovak state autonomy, the KDH's program advocated for an “equal” but “temporary” Czechoslovak federation. Their approach aimed at gradually increasing Slovak autonomy within the federation to achieve full independence upon EU accession. A key Czech-Slovak meeting in February 1992 discussed and endorsed an agreement drafted by the KDH based on these principles. However, this consensual solution was ultimately rejected by Slovak nationalists in the Slovak National Council.¹⁰⁶⁹

In the end, the victorious parties of the 1992 parliamentary election commenced the road to state dissolution when HZDS replaced the moderate and pro-federative strategy of KDH in the government. Although public opinion was against state disintegration, HZDS and ODS elites decided to divide the state. In July 1992, the Slovak National Council enacted the *Declaration of State Sovereignty*, which claimed the superiority of the Slovak National Council legislature over the Federal one. In turn, President Havel resigned. In September 1992, the

¹⁰⁶⁶ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1992]). Prejav na konferencii vo Windsorskom paláci v Londýne. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 196-198, 197.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Gomabala, E. (1991) Aká si vlastne, historická pravda. *Bratislavské listy* 4, n. 1, 8-9; Balko, V. (1990). Slovenský a český nacionalizmus. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 11, 20; Šrámek, J. (1990). Slovenská republika 1939-1945. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 14, 12.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1992]). Vě úlohy KDH. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 221-234, 232; Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1992]). Princíp gyroskopu. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 263-276, 272

¹⁰⁶⁹ Pekník (2016). *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku*, 57.

Slovak National Council passed a new Slovak Constitution.¹⁰⁷⁰ All Christian democratic parties rejected this as unconstitutional and warned against the autocratization of Slovakia.¹⁰⁷¹ Notwithstanding, in November 1992, the Federal Assembly passed a constitutional law on the termination of the Czech-Slovak Federation (542/1992).

Europe and Judeo-Christianity

The Christian democratic parties in Czechoslovakia promoted a swift accession to the European structure and framed it through the longstanding civilizational language. They called for the “return” to “values of Christian ethics” and “democratic and cultural Europe.” The pro-European Union attitude distinguished these parties from the European skeptic party challengers: ODS,¹⁰⁷² HZDS, and the Left.

The most pro-European amongst the Christian democrats were those ideologues who were also part of the Czech, Moravian, and Slovak sections of the Pan-European movement. They promoted the 1930s Coudenhove-Kalergi project of European unification rooted in Christian (Catholic) principles. The Pan-European movement activists were also instrumental in mediating Czech-German relations. The new concept taken on board by the Christian Right was Judeo-Christianity. This hyphenation modernized Christian democratic civilizational principles and attested to the influence of U.S. Catholic neo-conservatism, particularly the work of Michael Novak.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰⁷¹ Kasal, J. (1992). Stanovisko k přijetí plné ústavy Slovenské republiky. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 29. 1.

¹⁰⁷² Lux, J. (1992). Obnovit vnitřní jendotu. In: Proč budu volit KDU-ČSL, 8-9.

¹⁰⁷³ In the Western intellectual space, the notion of Judeo-Christianity was coined in the 1930s by U.S. intellectuals. It was defined as the key source for the American democratic tradition diffused particularly after the Second World War and contrasted with Nazi Antisemitism. During the Cold War, it reinforced the totalitarian repertoire and the struggle against secular (Soviet) totalitarianism. See for instance, Preisner, R. (1990). Exercitia Voegeliniana. *Studie*, n. 107-124. Shrholec, A. (1992). Ludská prava a mravnost' lidí. *Bratislavské listy* 5, n. 2, 7. For an elegant conceptual genealogy of Judeo-Christianity, see Gaston K. H. (2019). *Imagining Judeo-Christian America: Religion, Secularism, and the Redefinition of Democracy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Despite the clear pro-European and pro-EU position, Christian democratic ideologues warned from the beginning against simplistic imitation of the West as Czechoslovakia had done in the 1940s and 1950s in “fanatically” imitating the Soviet Union. The ideologues cautioned primarily against the Western forms of “consumerism,”¹⁰⁷⁴ hyperbolically asserting that Czechoslovakia, so far, “caught up the most with the West in the area of pornography diffusion.”¹⁰⁷⁵ Also, in 1992, the ČSL MP and the future Constitutional Court judge argued that alongside the “cultivation of democracy” that percolated Czechoslovakia from Western Europe, Czechoslovakia also received “AIDS and drugs” and “moral poverty” that must be fought with the Christian democratic time-tested “resistance mechanisms”: “responsible citizenship, family, and decentralized state power.”¹⁰⁷⁶

Social Capitalism or Democratic Capitalism?

The principles of economic transformation and the shape of the welfare regime were the most contested political issues in the early transition years.¹⁰⁷⁷ Christian democratic parties saw the economic transition as *the* breaking point from the past, the moment of “discontinuity” that, alongside other forms of decommunization, would consolidate and purify the new political

¹⁰⁷⁴ Rooted in the late Cold War dissent legacy, Christian democrats began articulating environmental concerns. For the ideologues, modern materialism became expressed through a “predatory approach to nature.” The ideologues referred to the “ecological crisis” and human “exploitation” of nature, considered environmental transformation a part of economic reform, and pressed for constitutional environmental protection. Such a *green* discourse disappeared from the Czechoslovak politics right after the turbulent transformation years. See, for instance, Benda, V. (1990). *Zásady KDS. Křesťanská demokracie* 1, n. 0. KDU-ČSL Archive, Box 17; (1992). *Programové teze kdu-čsl pro období po sjezdu 1992*; Málek, J. (1990). *Právo na životné prostredie*, *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 17, 27; Pospíšil, P. (1993). *Ekologia nemá byť vecou politiky*. *Bratislavské listy* 6, n. 8, 12-13.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Jůza, P. (1991). *Náš vzor? Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 38-9, 7-8. Although Christian democrats bragged about the threat of consumerism, they justified the costs of economic transition through a future sufficient supply of consumer goods and “needs.” Vrabec, A. (1990). *Rozvoj osobne spotreby*. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 13, 29.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Janů, I. (1992). *Diskusní příspěvek Ivany Janů*. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 15, 1.

¹⁰⁷⁷ For the long-run historical account of Eastern European welfarism, see Inglot, T. (2008). *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004*. Cambridge: CUP.

order. Transit to market economy also became a source of Christian democratic inter-ideological struggle. The ideologues deployed two models: the German “social market economy” and Michael Novak’s “democratic capitalism.”

The standard political science literature predicts the negative consequences of simultaneous transitions: an unlikely consolidation of economics and politics because the governments do one thing at the expense of the other.¹⁰⁷⁸ Recently, scholars of Eastern Europe introduced a new argument as to why simultaneous transition did not induce political backlash in the post-communist countries but led to an overarching embrace of the neoliberal paradigm until the 2008 global financial crisis. Although these scholars recognize the role of international organizations in transmitting neoliberal rules to post-communist spaces and of local adaptations that resulted in a variety of the neoliberal models, they suggested a “competitive signaling” explanation that makes sense of the “mechanism of transition” and the long run acceptance of neoliberalism. They hold that because the post-communist countries must compete with other global semi-peripheries for (Western) foreign investments, they had to be outspoken about their “capitalist credentials” to beat the other transiting countries.

However, as the literature on post-socialism has shown, “neoliberalism” was not the vocabulary of the early post-communist elite or the public.¹⁰⁷⁹ It is hence necessary to detail the conceptual universe and concrete historical languages available to the Christian democratic ideologues to “signal” a clear pro-capitalist message.

From day one, the Czechoslovak government was under heavy strain due to the economic recession and social hardship following the exit from the command economy.¹⁰⁸⁰ In the regional context, Czechoslovakia was extremely economically centralized and state-controlled, with nearly zero private sector. Due to governmental policies, the Czechoslovak

¹⁰⁷⁸ Bohle, Greskovits (2012). *Capitalist Diversity*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Pehe, V., Wawrzyniak, J. (eds.). (2023). *Remembering the Neoliberal Turn: Economic Change and Collective Memory in Eastern Europe After 1989*. N.Y.: Routledge, 5.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Appel, Orenstein (2018). *From triumph to crisis*.

economy underwent a radical (albeit short-term) decrease in GDP and industrial production, loss of foreign markets, disruption of distribution chains, and rising inflation. Because of the economic restructuring and the end of employment security, unemployment in Slovakia rose to twelve percent while it remained low – around three percent – in the Czech Republic. In the short run, the transition costs were high. However, the Czech part within Czechoslovakia and among the post-communist countries was the least negatively affected by the economic transformation.

In this context, Christian democrats contested the Left's program, which upheld the compatibility between socialism and democracy.¹⁰⁸¹ Christian democrats contended that the past forty years and the breakdown of the Prague Spring showed the impossibility of democratic socialism or "convergence." They rejected the "centralized economy and bureaucratic system" and extensive state interventions in the economic domain. Besides, the ideologues framed state socialism economics as inefficient, oppressive, and socially unjust.¹⁰⁸² They argued that the "market truth" revealed communist falsification and lies.¹⁰⁸³

Furthermore, Czech Christian democratic parties aligned with the "shock therapy" precepts proposed by federal Minister of Finances Václav Klaus. The shock therapy method (also deployed in Poland through the so-called Balcerowicz Plan) comprised a mix of rapid macroeconomic reforms (stabilization of inflation and prices, trade liberalization, tax system transformation, economic decentralization, and restrictive monetary and fiscal policy) and fast privatization. Klaus' program was an alternative to the gradualist economic transit promoted by the OF left and centrist currents. Moreover, shock therapy was pushed through against most

¹⁰⁸¹ Palko, V. (1990). Mýtus o modernej Eúrospkej Lavici. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 8.

¹⁰⁸² Myant, M., Drahokoupil, J. (2014). The Road to a Distinct System? The Development of the Welfare State in the Czechia. In: *Theory and Practice of the Welfare State in Europe in 20th Century*, 525–546. Prague: AV ČR.

¹⁰⁸³ (1990). Ako proti inflácii. *Bratislavské listy* 3, n. 4, 1.

Slovak political parties, including the KDH, who feared the dire social consequences given the differencing Slovak economic structure.¹⁰⁸⁴

Klaus's economic policy lacked the necessary institutional and legal frameworks, asserting that social security concerns should only be addressed after the market transition. In contrast, Christian democratic parties considered social welfare an integral premise and component of the transformation. Hence, Christian democrats found themselves in a double-bind situation, advocating at the same time for "social security" and prompt economic liberalization as key to the survival of democracy. Ideological innovators attempted to solve this dilemma by adjusting the official Catholic economic doctrine¹⁰⁸⁵ and the German model of "social capitalism."¹⁰⁸⁶ The economic model combined old Catholic moral values: "personal responsibility," "duty," "solidarity," "charity," and "common good" with free-market economy principles – private property and economic freedom – and transfer-oriented welfare regime. The Christian democratic social market model was successfully formalized in the 1992 Slovak Constitution (Article 55) and also found its way also into the 1992 Czechoslovak-German Agreement (Article 9), which promised German aid, relief, and investments if Czechoslovakia implemented the tenets of social capitalism. The social market model helped Christian democrats distinguish themselves from the "conservative right"¹⁰⁸⁷ and sent signals to Western investors about Czechoslovak commitments.

Already in the 1990 electoral campaign, the Christian democratic ideologues framed the social market economy as the long-run component of the local ideological landscape and as "the most successful historical order." They underlined the Christian democratic Third Republic's lonesome advocacy of the "fundamental human right" of private ownership in the

¹⁰⁸⁴ Pekník (2016). *Pohľady na slovenskú politiku*, 60.

¹⁰⁸⁵ (1992). Z tiskové konferencie 23.1.1992. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 4.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Lux (1991). Vytvoriť priestor k dialogu, 10-16.

¹⁰⁸⁷ (1992). Volební strategie KDU-ČSL 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1.

context of the nascent socialist and communist hegemony.¹⁰⁸⁸ The ideologues conceptualized private property and free market relations as “natural” and the economic reform was framed as a return to the pre-communist “natural and free order of social relationship and therefore also the freedom of man.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Freedom played a salient role in the Christian democratic economic discourse, perhaps more prominently than political freedom, because private property and entrepreneurial freedom were “the main guarantees of human freedom that allow the realization of one’s potential.”¹⁰⁹⁰

The KDU-ČSL and KDH emphasized the need to establish a social welfare regime, rejecting the neoliberal economic transformation that diminished state duties. The 1990 KDU electoral program stated that the transition “cannot outdo the social question. We cannot concede that even one person would live under undignified conditions due to economic reform.”¹⁰⁹¹ The parties articulated all the social capitalism building blocks, including “solidarity,” “personalism,” “legally constrained” market, “social security,” and “social protection.”

The Christian democratic justification of social market economy reinvigorated the pre-communist “anti-liberal” (read anti-libertarian) economic positions. For instance, the 1990 ČSL electoral program stated: “Liberalism creates social unrest, wealth for a few, and grievances for many. That is why we choose a program that has success in the most developed countries, the social market economy, grounded in solidarism and personalism.” In the Christian democratic language, solidarity as a translation of *agape* was opposed to liberal “indifference” towards social obligations.¹⁰⁹² Through personalism, Christian democrats articulated the

¹⁰⁸⁸ (1992). Volební strategie KDU-ČSL 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1, 42.

¹⁰⁸⁹ (1990). Volební program československé strany lidové. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, box 17, 1; Volební program KDH. *KDU-ČSL Archive*, BOX 17, 4.

¹⁰⁹⁰ (1992). Volební strategie KDU-ČSL 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1, 22

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁹² Sokol, T. (1991). K programu KDS. *Zpravodaj KDS* 1, n. 30-31, 7.

existence of social inequalities and called for a social reintegration based on welfare transfers to remedy the negative effects of the free market. The ideologues reiterated the Catholic pre-communist concept of “family wage”¹⁰⁹³ that would secure the family’s “dignity.”¹⁰⁹⁴ Hence, Christian democratic protagonists privileged family-oriented welfare transfers, emphasizing protection for procreative families afflicted by the economic transition.¹⁰⁹⁵

The Christian democratic discourse centered on sufficiency, not equality. Only when individuals or intermediaries failed to resolve their economic issues would the state become “responsible” for social protection. Notably, “social security” talk was dominantly directed towards women, not men. Christian democrats revived a pre-communist, paternalist vision of familial relations. They reclaimed the most stereotypical gender distinctions, including “motherhood as a natural vocation” and women’s irreplaceable role in childrearing and household.¹⁰⁹⁶ They formulated the pro-family policies as a necessary step to remedy the failure of socialist childcare policies and return “dignity” to women.

By implication, the Christian democratic pro-family social policies included the longest maternal leave program in the region, subsidies for “mothers,” and family tax reliefs.¹⁰⁹⁷ For instance, the KDU-ČSL program demanded a compensatory allowance for mothers until the last child reaches six years.¹⁰⁹⁸ The ideologues argued that these pro-family policies addressed “women’s emancipation and self-fulfillment, which the socialist state boasted about, but the

¹⁰⁹³ (1991). Chceme rodinný plat. *Zpravodaj* 2, n. 30, 1.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Lux (1991). Vytvorit prostor k dialogu, 7-8.

¹⁰⁹⁵ (1992). Programové teze KDU-ČSL pro období po sjezdu 1992.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Čarnogurský, J. (1997[1992]). Prejav na sneme v Trnave 28. Marca 1992. In: *Videné od Dunaja*, 245-255, 251.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Importantly, this was also a legacy of late state socialism that invested in family provisions due to declining natality rates. See Myant, Drahokupil (2014). The Road to a Distinct System.

¹⁰⁹⁸ (1990). Volební program československé strany lidové. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, box 17, 2.

so-called emancipation was little more than a form of serfdom for women who were unable to enjoy political privileges.”¹⁰⁹⁹

In contrast, the ODA initially tried to insulate economics from politics and social justice. The ODA case deviated the most from the social market model and made ODA a neoliberal wing of the post-communist Christian democratic movement in Czechoslovakia. This was due to ODA’s canon commitments and the influence of neoliberal economic experts in the party leadership. ODA used the model of “democratic capitalism,” borrowed from Michael Novak’s seminal work of the same name. However, between 1990 and 1992, the ideologues revived Hayek’s 1944 *Road to Serfdom*. ODA’s first programmatic document from December 1989, *Road to Free Society*, stated: “The market economy is simply the application of the ideals of a free society to the economic domain.” Only the “economic demand” represents the “endless democratic vote on production,” free movement of capital and workforce, and free movement of prices concerning demand and supply.¹¹⁰⁰

Transcribing Hayek, the ODA ideologues argued that the logic of the market economy cannot entail the “distribution of wealth, but rather its creation.”¹¹⁰¹ Following the Chicago School, they claimed that interventions in the market, in principle, “always lead to a decrease in its efficiency and thus to a decrease in social funds.” Grounded in the catchphrase: “market without adjectives,”¹¹⁰² the ideologues pondered that the impact of the state must be limited only to establishing business rules and appropriate legal constraints. Any limitation of the market leads to “unfreedom” and slides back to “totalitarianism.”¹¹⁰³ The ideologues appreciated Hayek’s idea of the spontaneous emergence of social and moral orders created by

¹⁰⁹⁹ (1992). Volební strategie KDU-ČSL 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1, 32.

¹¹⁰⁰ (1989). Cesta ke svobodné společnosti. In *Deset let na straně*, 256-264

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹¹⁰² (1992). Volební program ODA 1992, 275.

¹¹⁰³ Kroupa (1997). *Svoboda a řád*, 77.

economic relations.¹¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the 1990 program stated that the welfare demands of “universal social security” amount to “civic resignation” and breakdown of moral responsibility towards others, individual dependence on the state, and growing “selfishness.”

Only in 1992 did ODA strategists withdraw from a literal translation of Hayek’s neoliberal economic model in the shadow of the negative social consequences of the economic transformation. Yet, ODA ideologues still contended that the negative market externalities were not a result of the liberalization of the market but only revealed the “legacy of the communist past.”¹¹⁰⁵ They began to claim that “our final goal is democratic capitalism.”¹¹⁰⁶ They factored in social welfare principles, urging the creation of a “universal and directed system of benefits” based on “social insurance and social security benefits.” In line with the Christian democratic economic program, the ODA strategists held that the recipients of these transfers must be procreative “families.”¹¹⁰⁷

What type of social welfare regime the post-communist Czechoslovak government eventually introduced? The post-communist Czechoslovak government initiated substantial redistributive programs, a broad social protection system, and increased social transfer expenditures as the end of employment security introduced new stark wage differentials. Cash transfers replaced the welfare protection schemes of the communist era through unemployment compensation, a generous and universal system of family allowances that kept women out of market and flattened unemployment, child assistance (although eroded by inflation), the implementation of a “guaranteed minimum” income, which provided cash transfers to families falling below a minimum threshold, early eligibility for old-age pensions (to solve the new crowd of unemployed that did not survive the economic restructuring), and expanded access to

¹¹⁰⁴ (1992). Volební strategie KDU-ČSL 1992. *Archive KDU-ČSL*, Box 1, 14.

¹¹⁰⁵ (1992). Volební program ODA 1992, 275.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹¹⁰⁷ (1999 [1991]). I. CK Praha 20. 10.1991, 21.

disability compensation. The state socialist universal public services – pensions and healthcare – shifted towards insurance schemes financed by individuals.¹¹⁰⁸

Overall, Czechoslovakia's social spending surpassed that of other post-communist countries and, in some policy areas, even exceeded that of Western European states, despite leading to significant fiscal deficits. The Czech case stood out as the most successful case from the “equity perspective,” more affluent than its Central European fellow states, with low external debt and stable macroeconomics pointers. However, as scholars have shown, the post-communist countries cannot easily fit into any of Esping-Andersen’s (1990) three ideal types of welfare regimes.¹¹⁰⁹ Czechoslovakia combined all three types of social policy-making: Christian democratic, liberal, and social democratic.

¹¹⁰⁸ Kaufman, R. (2007). Market Reform and Social Protection: Lessons from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. *East European Politics and Societies* 21, n. 1, 111–125.

¹¹⁰⁹ Myant, Drahokoupil (2014). The Road to a Distinct System. See also Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Table 12: Post-Communist Ideological Morphology (*signalizes a conceptual innovation)

Core	Adjacent	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral	Peripheral
Person	Human dignity, human rights, responsibility, conscience	Human rights constitutionalism, *small state	Unborn person	Social rights	Citizenship
Christian Democracy	*Decommunization *Historical and transitional justice	*Rehabilitation *Third resistance	*Illegality of the Communist era, ideology, and party, *lustration	*Restitution	Organic communities, subsidiarity, *Third Sector
Patria	Community, Czechoslovakia, Europe, West, *Judeo-Christianity	*State split	European integration	x	x
Social and *Democratic Capitalism	Free market, private property *economic freedom, solidarity	*Social security and *social responsibility	*State duties: redistribution and family-oriented welfare transfers	x	x

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reconstructed the formation of Christian democratic ideology and political parties in the post-communist settings. I highlighted the Christian democratic practical impact during the democratization processes in Czechoslovakia. I showed how the ideologues innovated the canon with the CDU/CSU programmatic, U.S. neo-conservatism and, by implication, early Cold War liberalism to rekindle local tradition and come up with a distinctive response to post-communist and neoliberal challenges.

On the conceptual level, Christian democrats reiterated their personalist commitments and constitutionalized the most precious related notions, including human dignity and rights and freedom of conscience. Against the neoliberals, they partially succeeded in protecting social rights against the push to reduce social justice to individual moral obligations. The late socialist notion of parallel polis was swiftly demoted and replaced by the language of the spontaneous order or third sector as a sphere of autonomy that must protect society against the state and neoliberal capitalism.

The ideologues articulated their democratic theory through transitional justice and anti-communist memory politics. The ideologues related decommunization to a set of policy preferences: rehabilitation, restitution (including church organizations), prohibition of communism, and lustration, launching the stickiest reconciliation with the past amongst the new Eastern European democracies.

The ideologues remained committed to the Catholic notion of *patria*, underlining communitarian values, citizenship, and ethnic moderation at the expense of playing the ethnonationalist card. Christian democratic parties supported the endurance of the Czechoslovak federation, proposing the *Länder* model. A conceptual innovation that gained currency in the post-communist era amongst the Czech and Slovak right-wing actors was Judeo-Christian civilisationism, adopted from the U.S. neo-conservative scripts.

The critical domain in which the Christian democratic ideologues had to develop an entirely new language was the transition to the free market economy and the welfare state's establishment. They wholeheartedly adopted the social market economy model (free market, private property, social security, and family-oriented welfare transfers), elements of which were already present in the Third Republic. The inter-ideological struggle came in through ODA's concept of "democratic capitalism," which promoted a more neoliberal vision of social and economic order.

Conclusion

With the *Christian Democratic Option*, I leave the reader with a novel portrayal of Christian democracy across modern and post-modern settings well beyond the Christian democratic “moment” of the 1940s. I explored the history of Christian democracy in Czechoslovakia, tracing its development from the fall of the Habsburg empire to the collapse of the Eastern European communist systems and the emergence of new democracies. I reconstructed diverse iterations of Christian democracy and emphasized the connection between the ideology and its organizational expression. I studied the vocabulary Christian democrats used to address post-fascist, communist, and post-communist orders. By doing so, I wrote Christian democracy back into the frame of the critical moments of Czechoslovak and Eastern European history, without which these histories would remain incomplete.

The Christian Democratic Option was primarily an exercise in historical reconstructive understanding aimed at rescuing a tradition of political thought in Eastern Europe that we are cautioned not to expect to find there. In the thesis, I offered four main arguments: First, I argued that Christian democracy should be re-evaluated as the major right-wing ideology in Czechoslovakia in the second part of the twentieth century. Second, I demonstrated that the local Christian democracy shared similar ideological canon and principles with their Western counterparts. Third, I contended that Christian democracy was a critical platform for co-articulating key liberal ideas, co-determining the oppositional strategy of the postwar anti-communist parties and the late socialist counter-elites, and co-creating the new post-communist order.

In the post-1945 political systems of continental Western Europe, the tenets of liberal democracy materialized in specific political platforms, dominantly Christian and social democratic movements, and Czechoslovakia was no exception to this rule. As a fourth argument, I showed that the key intellectual challenge for Christian democrats was not the

reconciliation with democracy but with competing political ideologies. Based on my case study, I proposed expanding and testing “Christian democracy” as an analytical concept that allows the examination of the interactions not only between Christian political theologies and liberal democracy but also between nationalism and socialism.

Besides the attempt to understand how liberal, nationalist, and socialist scripts were encased in the Christian democratic political ideology in Czechoslovakia, the key theoretical puzzle of the *Christian Democratic Option* was the problem of conceptual persistence. I approached this task through punctual history and institutionally embedded hermeneutical analysis without resorting to easy generalizations. I proceeded in four steps.

First, I reconstructed the “historical-conceptual conditions of possibility”¹¹¹⁰ of Christian democratic discourse in Czechoslovakia, demarcating the available conceptual horizons of the ideologues. Against the depoliticizing implications of the “Benedict option,”¹¹¹¹ Christian democrats continually reimagined and reinvented ways to engage in the face of dramatic historical circumstances politically and invented viable political projects to compete in modern politics.¹¹¹² Caught between two worlds of the global Cold War, the characters of the *Christian Democratic Option* represented *oppositional*, not *hegemonical* force, associated with the Western European Christian democratic parties.

Second, I focused on critical turning points in Czechoslovak history. Following standard political science literature that suggests that the ideology and agency of political actors play a salient role in moments of rapid historical change, I examined how the party ideologues innovated the Christian democratic canon and implemented its principles and values in direct political struggle. For this reason, I dived into the sources not written for theoretical or academic debate but for concrete political circumstances.

¹¹¹⁰ Palti, E., J. (2024). *Intellectual History and the Problem of Conceptual Change*. Cambridge: CUP.

¹¹¹¹ MacIntyre, A. (2007). *After Virtue*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press; Dreher, R. (2018). *The Benedict Option*. N. Y.: Sentinel.

¹¹¹² Chappel (2018). *Catholic Modern*, 7.

In the third step, I reconstructed the canon of Czechoslovak Christian democracy. I documented its origins and evolution and showed that it represented a blend of intellectual traditions. Czechoslovak Christian democracy absorbed the historical liberal scripts through official Catholic social doctrine, versions of French and German Christian democracy, early Cold War liberalism, and U.S. neo-conservatism. Against the “backwardness thesis” underpinning research on Eastern Europe, I emphasized that the Christian democratic ideologues not only followed Western intellectual developments but also enriched these intellectual trends by adjusting them to national context(s).

In the last step, I identified ideological markers that survived through thick and thin. Despite Christian democratic ideological historical expansions and reductions, I assert that the *prima facie* persistence rested in the backbone concept of divinely potentialized, intelligible, and hierarchical *natural order* – the foundation of immanent social, political, and moral orders.

I argued that the Christian democratic pathbreaking innovation was to individualize the natural order — through the concepts of *person* and notions, including *human dignity*, *human rights*, *responsibility*, and *conscience*. Extrapolating natural order subjective internalization to the political domain permitted Christian democrats to turn spirituality into politics on its own terms. This ingenious strategy allowed them to moralize politics, indeed, to turn politics into morality and authorize political interventions framed as protection of the source of moral values – natural order. In this sense, Christian democracy became one of the twentieth century's major moralizing projects. Recasting the title of the seminal monograph on social democracy by Sheri Berman, *Primacy of Politics*, Christian democrats put down the *primacy of ethics* as the dominant style of modern politics.¹¹¹³

Alongside these ideological building blocks, the persistent Christian democratic strategy dwelt in the endless justification and re-imagination of the *status quo* used against the

¹¹¹³ Compare to Lefebvre, A. (2024). *Liberalism as a Way of Life*. N. J.: Princeton University Press.

dominant political framework of the time. The Christian democratic *status quo* strategy framed the ideological principles and values as transhistorical, re-asserting them through a manifest return to sameness: “transcendence,” “nature,” “authenticity,” or “tradition.” However, as I highlighted in the empirical chapters, the rhetorical return to sameness became, for Christian democrats, the source of innovation and change.

Christian democratic ideas about order and the place of the person within it were buoyed by a distinctive theory of democracy conceptualized through anti-totalitarian theories and tools of militant democracy. The former defined democracy negatively through the threat of secularism, often coupled with exclusionary civilisationism messaged through notions such as “West,” “Europe,” “Christendom,” or “Judeo-Christianity.” The latter confined democracy by constitutionalizing the personalist principles to protect democracy against its internal and external foes.

The understanding of natural order and person also determined the enduring Christian democratic conceptualization of nationhood and curated it through *patria* and *homeland*, notions that underlined civic, not ethnonationalist, principles. Natural order and person also shaped the Christian democratic political economy that combined the free market and individual economic freedom with the subsidiarity and solidarity principles. Rather than social justice or equality, Christian democrats underscored personal responsibility and sufficiency.

I captured the origins of these Christian democratic ideological principles in unlikely historical circumstances. In the postwar era, I illustrated that the emergence of human rights talk in Czechoslovakia came from the Christian democratic partisan defense of fundamental human rights of ethnic Germans during the populational transfers. I also exemplified the inseparability of Christian human rights and totalitarian theory.

Further, I showed that Christian human rights were revived during the Prague Spring and late state socialism through anti-abortion discourse and the protection of the *unborn*

personhood. I discussed that the decisive by-product of the anti-abortion agenda was the Christian democratic formulation of women's dignity and rights, an issue the available historiography overlooked *tout court*. Another finding was that Christian human rights originated in memory politics during late socialism and early post-communism. Memory politics filtered through human rights became a central Christian democratic strategy to establish conditions for democratization and legitimation of the new post-communist order.

Christian democracy remained to play a critical role beyond the historical period I covered. In the past thirty years, they have kept the liberal democratic order alive. To evidence my claim, when transforming the dissertation into a monograph, I intend to examine two other critical moments for Christian democracy in post-communist conditions when these parties were able to cement coalitions and preclude authoritarian and illiberal relapse. In 1998, the Slovak Democratic Coalition, under Christian democratic leadership, replaced the authoritarian government of Vladimir Mečiar and set Slovakia back on track toward democratic and economic transformation together with accession to NATO and the EU. In the Czech Republic, the 2002 Four-Coalition, led by Christian democrats, destabilized the Klaus-Zeman oppositional pact that sought to rewrite the constitutional order. In the 2021 election, the coalition SPOLU, composed of Christian democratic parties, knocked out the nationalist-populist government.

Future research should look at the conceptual genealogy of Christian democracy to better grasp the ideological undercurrents of the far-right and illiberal projects that traffic with Christian democratic longstanding principles and values. Another venue for potential research focus should be how Christian democracy while making concessions to neoliberalism, lost the language of social justice and rights that allowed the far-right to capitalize on (exclusionary) welfare messaging. Another aspect that begs for exploration is the under-researched role of

Catholic Action and its twentieth-century transformations that co-defined the Christian democratic projects globally. Finally, the scholarship should go beyond studying Europe and the Americas and zoom in on Northern and Western Africa and Southeast Asia.

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