

we have descended to this? Where are you leading us? To what trial of obedience are you exposing your priests and believers? Who is your counsellor? Is this also according to the Gospel? Your Grace, I charge you not to listen to anybody—not even to me—except Jesus Christ! Have the strength to live according to truth! Take the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, and the preparedness of the Gospel (Eph.6). Take

into your care those who are helpless to whom you gave a bad example, those half-broken characters who have given in to false promises, threats, pressure, weakness and cowardice! Take into your care the slandered and persecuted, take the last opportunity given to you by our Constitution and international obligations to save the Church from shame and slow disintegration.

We are praying fervently *pro episcopo nostro Francisco!*
JOSEF ZVĚŘINA, SJ

Religious Values and Czechoslovak Society

In the following extract from a longer document (entitled "Diagnosis 301.7") about psychiatric repression in Czechoslovakia, Jan Tesař tries to analyse the effect of totalitarianism on Czechoslovak society. Manipulation of children's minds in schools, "education" of the population, and the destruction of religious values which have been replaced by cynicism and materialism, have all contributed to the creation of a subservient society composed of people who have been persuaded that they should not, and are unable to have any influence over their rulers and the development of their society.

Augustin Navratil, a 45-year-old Catholic from Kroměříž in Moravia (who is mentioned in this document), was interned in a psychiatric hospital after being charged in January 1978 with "incitement against the socialist order" (see RCL Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 197). He had received from Prague a petition calling for religious freedom. After revising the petition and adding some stronger demands, he with Jan Pavlíček collected 11 signatures. They then sent the petition to Cardinal Tomášek, who forwarded it to the authorities as requested.

Jan Tesař is a prominent Czech historian and Charter 77 signatory. He is one of the members of the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted.

There is one more equally significant practical precondition for psychiatric methods of repression, which is common to all the "fraternal countries", but which, it seems, carries especial weight in our particular circumstances. This is the general state of the society's morals. In order to illustrate this point accurately and convincingly, I should like to cite the

concrete facts of a case recently publicized by our friend Pachman.* I must just say, however, that when I talk either about the "demented" Navratil, or, more generally, about the situation of the Church and believers in our country, I shall in both cases consider what I say to be only *pars pro toto*. I shall be describing a few fragments in order to give some idea of the whole.

Luděk Pachman (to judge from the radio reports) said nothing about the fact that the persecution of Augustin Navratil began only when the latter wanted to manifest his faith publicly and actually live according to Christian standards. Nor did he mention that the Catholic hierarchy kept quiet about this repression, and so much so that it could even be said that some of the hierarchy's members co-operated indirectly with the persecutors. I think this was also true of certain believers and it is even possible that some Catholic psychiatrists were secretly involved. Finally, Navratil was expelled from the People's Party, which is supposedly a Catholic party, for getting into trouble with the state security forces.

It would indeed be one-sided and untrue to say that the Church or believers are persecuted in our country. On the contrary, I think that some priests and bishops have a better life here than the *rentier*-priests had before the Council of Trent, and that they are telling the truth

*Luděk Pachman is a former communist, recently converted to Catholicism, who was exiled in 1974 and whose reports are often broadcast on Radio Free Europe (Munich).

when they praise their situation in official declarations. The advantages of their position over that of the clergy in pre-Tridentine times are due, on the one hand, to the benefits of modern civilization and, on the other, to the fact that they have no need to fear Canon Law or Rome. There is, however, one precondition: they have to co-operate by carrying out their "assignment". In the system known as "real socialism" everything and everyone is given an "assignment". What is the "assignment" of the state-protégé clergymen? The answer may be found in current practice: a priest must become a civil servant in order to follow his calling and is financially rewarded for negligent performance of religious duties, whereas one who carries out his religious duties more conscientiously than the State might wish has his pay docked, or else is completely banned from exercising his ministry.¹⁸

The manifestations of religious belief which are guaranteed by the Constitution are, of course, understood (and declared) to be *vestiges* of the past in people's minds, which, for tactical as well as humane reasons, it is not convenient to eliminate immediately or by force. It is always being emphasized, however, that these vestiges are bound to die out in time and that the actual position of the Church and believers must conform to this presupposition. The whole network of institutions engaged in the state supervision of the churches works to ensure that this happens: this is the openly declared purpose of the State's ideological struggle. The churches and believers *permitted* by the State play an indispensable role in a communist totalitarian dictatorship, since against the background of their spiritual and moral crisis the struggle against religious obscurantism is that much easier.

The persecution of Augustin Navratil (and before him, of course, other and more brutal forms of persecution inflicted on thousands of other believers) came about because he refused to accept his state "assignment", and also because the ruled and the servants of the rulers co-operated in carrying out *their* state "assignment" to persecute him. Without this general conspiracy of crime, cowardice and indifference, such persecution would be totally impossible.

One may well ask just why the anti-religious struggle is being fought so painstakingly, and at such great cost, when universal indifference to ideology clearly permeates the ruling class, and is even characteristic of the militants of official atheism themselves. The answer lies in the *results* of the anti-religious struggle, which, we should note, is not the only attempt of this type to "educate" people. The fundamental totalitarian concept of the individual as the property of the State also finds expression in other sectors of the life of Czechoslovak society where the individual can be easily manipulated, for example, in the prisons¹⁷ and in the schools.¹⁸ Such intensive violation of the individual takes place within a society which is absolutely indifferent to ideology, but this indifference is itself a part of the tacit social contract between the totalitarian government and society. Neither party objects to the afore-mentioned violation, because the primary motivation of both lies not in ideology, but in their "philosophy of life" under the totalitarian system.

Thirty years of anti-religious struggle have almost eliminated religion from public life. It has been replaced by general reverence for material possessions and by a passion for obtaining them. This inversion of society's scale of values has, paradoxically, been brought about by the state ideology (which for a long time now, and particularly since the beginning of the period of normalization,* has openly and cynically placed material values above all else) and by the failure of the centralized economy, which makes material goods scarce and therefore more precious than in a true consumer society. Thirty years of "real socialism" (30 steps towards affluence, to use a phrase coined in the era of the presidents Gottwald and Zapotocky) have left their mark. Yearning for "affluence" has taken the place of the old "piety". And if the old "piety" was, in its mass form, undoubtedly superficial and not a little hypocritical, today's yearning for "affluence" is openly cynical. Thus finally the longed-for "new man" was born.

This situation did not, I think, arise by

*The author refers to the so-called "consolidation process" introduced in the wake of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. *Tr.*

chance, or through some unexpected deviation from the intended course, although this is how it may, and no doubt does, appear to some of the original communist idealists. The truth is, however, that this "new man" is the result of a 30-year struggle with religion, 30 years of manipulating schoolchildren, 30 years of systematically "educating" people at every step and persuading them how inadvisable and quite unnecessary it is to meddle with the machinations of the powerful. And while this result is drastically at variance with Marx's original intentions, *it is the perfect fulfilment of the totalitarian idea implicit in the Marxist system. The "new man" is the product of this system; he is derived from its most fundamental principles and the system would break down immediately if it did not have vassals like him.*

JAN TESAR

¹⁶ I am alluding here to the numerous instances, which have been publicized abroad in recent years, of priests being persecuted because, for example, they insisted on their right to teach religion, or they persuaded parents not to give up their

lawful right to religious education for their children, or else because their attempts to satisfy people's spiritual needs went beyond performing the liturgy.

¹⁷ Everyone who has been a prisoner under a communist regime and who has reflected deeply on his experiences has come to the conclusion that the worst aspect of his imprisonment was not the external living conditions, but the dreadful humiliation resulting from the totalitarian claims made upon the individual prisoner; to put it briefly, under dictatorships of a different type imprisonment can be equally bad as regards the external conditions, but only this system, only its prisons assume the right not only to the prisoner's body, but also to his soul; only they imprison his soul and try to crush it and remould it.

¹⁸ It is difficult to give full evidence of this process, because it is a "professional secret" of servile educators. Take, for example, the *apparently* senseless military training, which was established after 1968 in all types of school with the clear aim not so much of preparing the children for the eventuality of war as of distorting their personalities. Also a part of this process is the State's interference in family life.

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