

Manuscript 2415

The Czech Republic: From the Center of Christendom to the Most Atheist Nation of the 21st Century: Part II: The Martyred Church: The Clandestine Catholic Church (Ecclesia Silentii) in Czechoslovakia After Communism 1991-2021)

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**THE CZECH REPUBLIC:
FROM THE CENTER OF CHRISTENDOM
TO THE MOST ATHEIST NATION OF THE 21st CENTURY**

PART II.

**THE MARTYRED CHURCH:
THE CLANDESTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH (*ECCLESIA SILENTII*)
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER COMMUNISM 1991 – 2021**

By Scott Vitkovic

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This manuscript consists of two parts, Part I. and Part II. Part I., written by the same author and titled "THE PERSECUTED CHURCH: THE CLANDESTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH (*ECCLESIA SILENTII*) IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA DURING COMMUNISM 1948 – 1991," was published in the January issue of the *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* (OPREE), ISSN: 2693-2148.² It includes a brief historical overview and introduces the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) in Czechoslovakia during Communism from 1948 to 1991. Part II. directly follows Part I. and continues with the following sections: Results, Discussion, Conclusion, and References. Part II considers the collapse of the Czech Roman Catholic Church and the end destruction of the Clandestine Catholic Church by the Holy See, along with the process of secularization after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia from 1991 to 2021.

¹ The author utilized scholarly knowledge and personal experience as a member of the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) during communism in former Czechoslovakia. The author was secretly educated and served in the Clandestine Roman Catholic Church from 1984 to 1991. Additionally, he was a signatory of Charta 77, a freelance journalist from behind the Iron Curtain, the founder of the Independent Student Movement that commenced the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the youngest co-founder of the Civic Forum that formed the first post-communist government in Czechoslovakia, and advisor to the first post-communist president of Czechoslovakia. Since the fall of communism in 1989, it took the Czech Republic some 30 years to recognize him formally as a resistance fighter against the communist dictatorship. However, when he turned 18, it took the Czechoslovak communist government and its Military Counterintelligence only weeks to accuse him of 'high treason' and 'espionage' and to nearly murder him. Moreover, it took the Czechoslovak State Secret Police (StB) only 48 hours to accuse him of 'writing, producing, and distributing religious press (samizdat) and raid his study room.' What is more, most of those who sacrificed everything and were murdered by the Czechoslovak government agents and informants before the 1989 collapse of communism, as well as those who survived this persecution but were left medically disabled in extreme poverty and met their untimely death after the 1989 collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia, are conveniently forgotten today. Since they cannot bear witness to the brutal crimes perpetrated against humanity and God, this study is dedicated to their memory.

² Scott Vitkovic, (2023) "The Czech Republic: From the Center of Christendom to the Most Atheist Nation of the 21st Century. Part I. The Persecuted Church: The Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) in Czechoslovakia during Communism 1948-1991." *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 43: Issue 1, Art. 3, pp. 18 -58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2400> Available: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol43/iss1/3>

RESULTS

The Czechoslovak and the Czech Government Census Office data collected during each decade between 1920-1991 and 1991-2021, respectively, entered in Table 1. are accompanied by statistical analysis in Table 2. Based on these data, Graph 1. was constructed with SPSS. It models the following groups as a percentage of Czechoslovak, and later Czech, total population: Christianity, Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, Non-Christian and Unaffiliated Religions, and Atheist or not religious or no religion stated. Additionally, Graph 2. and Table 3. show percent changes in these groups during the past hundred years, from 1921 to 2021, specifically before, during, and after Communism in Czechoslovakia.

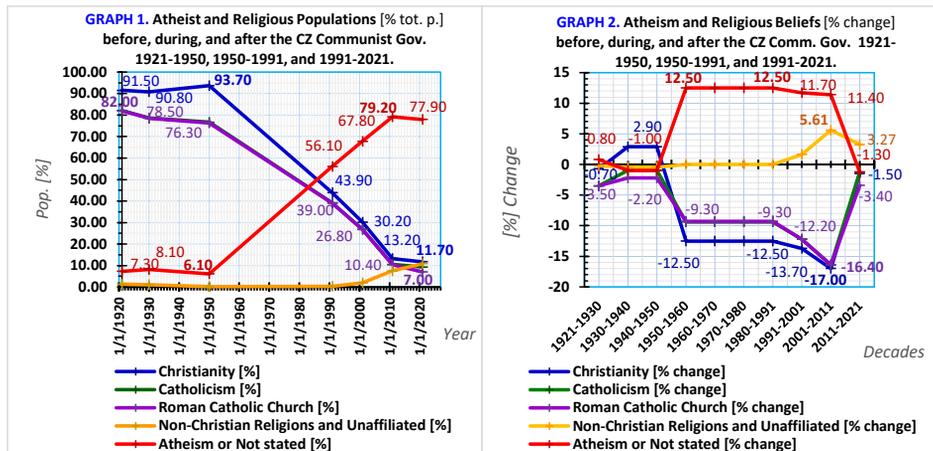


TABLE 1. Atheist and Religious Populations [% total population] before, during, and after the Czechoslovak Communist Government

Era	Before		During	After Communism			
Year	1921	1930	1950	1991	2001	2011	2021
Christianity ³ [%]	91.50	90.80	93.70	43.90	30.20	13.20	11.70
Catholicism ⁴ [%]	82.10	78.60	76.70	39.10	26.90	10.50	9.30
Roman Catholicism [%]	82.00	78.50	76.30	39.00	26.80	10.40	7.00
Non-Christian, Unaf. ⁵ [%]	1.32	1.10	0.20	0.31	1.93	7.54	10.81
Atheism, Not Stated ⁶ [%]	7.30	8.10	6.10	56.10	67.80	79.20	77.90
Population [total #] ⁷	1.00E+07	1.07E+07	8.90E+06	1.03E+07	1.02E+07	1.04E+07	1.05E+07

³ Christianity comprises all Christian religions and denominations, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and others, regardless of whether affiliated or unaffiliated with the Holy See.

⁴ Catholicism accounts for both the Byzantine and Latin Rites Catholicism.

⁵ Non-Christian and Unaffiliated groups include Judaism, Islam, and other non-Christian religions and those who profess non-Christian religious beliefs but are not affiliated with a specific religious denomination.

⁶ Atheism and Not Stated group, according to the CZ Census Office classification, contains those considering themselves atheists, non-theists, agnostics, non-believers, not religious, not spiritual, secular, and those who failed to state their religious affiliation. In the opinion of the author, it is possible that some Czechs who did not express their religious affiliation are not atheists or non-believers. However, such speculation is beyond the scope of this research.

⁷ The population of the CZ remained nearly unchanged between 1921 and 2021. The 1950 drop in population is due to the CZ government's forced summary expulsion of CZ citizens of German heritage from Czechoslovakia between 1946 and 1948. After the fall of communism in November 1989, it is estimated that more than one million Czechs left their country

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics: Atheist and Religious Populations [% tot. pop.] before, during, and after the CZ Communist Government

[%]	Christianity	Catholicism	Roman Catholicism	Non-Christian & Unaffiliated	Atheism or Not stated	Population [tot. number]
Mean	61.405454	52.357272	51.974545	2.2383636	36.461818	1.02E+07
Standard	9.6885894	8.2636471	8.3529010	1.0703814	8.9211088	2.25E+05
Median	69.4	58.36	58.11	0.65	30.49	1.03E+07
Standard	32.133416	27.407416	27.703438	3.5500537	29.587970	5.94E+05
Sample	1032.5564	751.16650	767.48050	12.602881	875.44801	3.53E+11
Kurtosis	-	-	-	3.0759948	-	4.30E+00
Skewness	-	-	-	2.0035053	0.3807388	-1.96E+00
Range	82	72.8	75	10.61	73.1	1.78E+06
Minimum	11.7	9.3	7	0.2	6.1	8.90E+06
Maximum	93.7	82.1	82	10.81	79.2	1.07E+07
Sum	675.46	575.93	571.72	24.622	401.08	7.11E+07
Count	11	11	11	11	11	7.00E+00
Confidence	21.587522	18.412553	18.611423	2.3849585	19.877469	5.50E+05

TABLE 3. Atheism and Religious Beliefs [$\Delta\%$] before, during, and after the Czechoslovak Communist Government

Year	1921	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1991	2001	2011
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1991	2001	2011	2021
Christianity [$\Delta\%$]	-0.70	2.90	2.90	-12.50	-12.50	-12.50	-12.50	-13.70	-17.00	-1.50
Catholicism [$\Delta\%$]	-3.50	-0.95	-0.95	-9.40	-9.40	-9.40	-9.40	-12.20	-16.40	-1.20
Roman Catholic [$\Delta\%$]	-3.50	-2.20	-2.20	-9.30	-9.30	-9.30	-9.30	-12.20	-16.40	-3.40
Non-Christian, Unafil [$\Delta\%$]	-0.22	-0.46	-0.46	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	1.62	5.61	3.27
Atheism, Not Stated [$\Delta\%$]	0.80	-1.00	-1.00	12.50	12.50	12.50	12.50	11.70	11.40	-1.30

Atheism or not religious or no religion stated: The above figures indicate that the Czechoslovak atheist or not religious population, as a percent of the total population, rose by 0.8% from 1920 to 1930, followed by a slight decline of 1.00% each decade between 1930 and 1950.⁸ However, the most remarkable change of 12.5% occurred in each decade between 1950 and 1991.⁹ Afterward, atheism rose 11.7% and 11.4% from 1991 to 2001 and 2001 to 2011. It experienced a slight decline of -1.30% between 2011 and 2021. As a percent of the total population, the lowest number of atheists or not religious persons was 6.10% in 1950. The highest peak was 79.2% in 2011.

westward. However, the total population remains approximately constant due to legal and illegal immigration of Ukrainian, Slovak, Vietnamese, Russian, Romanian, and other foreign citizens, mostly from countries east of the Czech Republic.

⁸ The year 1940 was extrapolated as an average using data for the years 1930 and 1950 because no statistics were available.

⁹ The years 1960, 1970, and 1980 were extrapolated as averages using data for the years 1950 and 1991 because the CZ Census Office has no available statistics for this period.

Christianity: As a percent of the total population, the Czechoslovak Christians declined by minus 0.70% from 1921 to 1930, followed by a little, and the only documented rise of 2.90% each decade between 1930 and 1950. From 1950 to 1991, Christianity declined each decade by a steep minus 12.5%, followed by a more significant decline of -13.7% from 1991 to 2001, marking the highest drop of -17.0% from 2001 to 2011. Between 2011 and 2021, this decline decreased to a -1.50% change. As a percent of the total population, the lowest number of Christians was 11.7% in 2021. The highest peak was 93.7% in 1950.

Catholicism: As a percent of the total population, the Czechoslovak Catholic population has never risen and experienced only a decline between 1920 and 2021. Between 1921 and 1930, Catholicism declined by -3.50%, followed by -0.95% each decade from 1930 to 1950. Between 1950 and 1991, Catholicism decreased each decade by a steep -9.40%, followed by a more significant decline of -12.2% from 1991 to 2001, marking the highest drop of -16.4% from 2001 to 2011. Between 2011 and 2021, this decline decreased to a -1.20% change. As a percent of the total population, the lowest number of Catholics was 9.30% in 2021. The highest peak was 82.1% in 1921.

Roman Catholicism: As a percent of the total population, the Czechoslovak Roman Catholic (RC) population has never risen and experienced only a decline between 1920 and 2021. Between 1921 and 1930, RC declined by -3.50%, followed by -2.20% each decade from 1930 to 1950. Between 1950 and 1991, RC declined each decade by a steep -9.30%, followed by a more significant decline of -12.2% from 1991 to 2001, marking the highest drop of -16.4% from 2001 to 2011. This decline continued between 2011 and 2021 but changed by -3.40%. As a percent of the total population, the lowest number of RC was 7.00% in 2021. The highest peak was 82.0% in 1921.

Non-Christian and Unaffiliated Religions: Non-Christian unaffiliated religious Czechoslovak populations did not experience much change until 1991 and 2021. Non-Christian religions and unaffiliated have slightly declined by -0.22% and -0.46% each decade, in 1921 and 1930, and 1930-1950, respectively. From 1950 to 1991, this population registered a minimal rise of 0.03% each decade, followed by a more remarkable surge of 1.62% in 1991-2001, with the most extraordinary rise of 5.61% in 2001-2011. Between 2011 and 2021, this rise continued with a 3.27% change. The lowest amount of Non-Christian religions and unaffiliated populations, as a percent of the total population, was 0.20% in 1950. The highest peak was 10.8% in 2021.

Data Summary: Except for the Non-Christian religions and unaffiliated religious populations, our data show that the increase in atheism and religious non-belief is directly proportional to the decrease in Christianity, with the most significant continuous reduction in Catholicism, and especially Roman Catholicism, in Czechoslovakia (and the Czech Republic) between the years 1920 and 2021, particularly between 1991 and 2021. The following years show substantial changes: 1921-1930, 1950, 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021.

DISCUSSION

The result section shows that the increase in atheism and religious non-belief¹⁰ is directly proportional to the decrease in Christianity in Czechoslovakia and, later, the Czech Republic, with atheism and religious non-belief replacing mainly Catholicism between 1921 and 2021. Expressly, Roman Catholicism significantly declined during the past hundred years. The steepest decline occurred between 1991 and 2021, the years *after* the *1989 Velvet Revolution* and the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia. These results surprise many Czechs who tend to blame their dwindling religious faith and rise in atheism and religious non-belief on the Czechoslovak communist government's forty years of brutal enforcement of Marxist–Leninist atheism, the official state ideology established in the mold of the Soviet Union. This statistical analysis points to essential changes during the following years: 1921-1930, 1950, 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021. The significance of these years is discussed in the relevant historical context below.

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1918)

The earliest origins of the current, ongoing, and unprecedented catastrophic decline of Christianity, particularly the Catholic faith, date to the end of WWI. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which formed one of the centers of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, and the establishment of Czechoslovakia as a newly founded multiethnic nation in 1918, the Czechoslovak Christian population predominated and totaled 91.5% in 1921. Roman Catholicism was the most prominent religious faith amounting to 82% of the total population in the same year. However, from 1921 to 1930, it commenced its decline of -3.5%. This decline continued, albeit much more steeply,

¹⁰ Please see: Footnote 6.

until today. During the same 1920s decade, the minority atheist population, influenced by leftist intellectualism and socialist idealism as a reaction to the capitalist industrial mass production, poor working conditions, and low workers' wages, increased only from 7.3% to 8.1% (Graphs 1, 2, and Tables 1. and 3). The most imperative historical background behind these statistics is as follows:

From the very beginning, for more than one millennium, the Czechs were a small ethnic group of only a few million people. However, they inhabited the most commercially advantageous region of central Europe, Bohemia, where business roads intersected and connected the East with the West and the North with the South. Thus, the Czechs always found themselves under the jurisdictional rule of large empires and struggled to preserve their roots and identity. With the 1918 establishment of Czechoslovakia on the post-WWI ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the new republic incorporated the Czech, German, Slovak, Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Hungarian peoples, with different historical, linguistic, religious, cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Ethnic minorities accounted for one-third of the total Czechoslovak population. The new republic also inherited three-quarters of all the industry of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and became one of the world's ten most industrialized countries (PBS, 2003), (Schloss Schönbrunn Kultur, 2008), (Berend, 1998).¹¹ Most of this industrial power was located in the Sudetenland and owned by ethnic Germans. These ethnic Germans numbered 3.06 million Czechoslovak citizens, forming a larger population than the state's recognized second nation, the Slovaks, with 2.98 million individuals. Each group struggled to establish and strengthen its position in the newly formed country. This struggle resulted in political, financial, social, cultural, and religious frictions, which urgently demanded solutions that the new Czechoslovak government neglected to address, and which continued to threaten the very existence of Czechoslovakia throughout much of the 20th century and finally contributed to its dissolution in 1993.

¹¹ Full Report: Czech Republic, 1919: *"The Paris Peace Conference sets borders for the new nation. The multiethnic Republic comprises Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, and Ruthenia. It inherits some 80 percent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's industry, making it one of the world's 10 most industrialized states. Most of the industry, though, is in Czechoslovakia and Moravia, in the North; Slovakia relies on agriculture and forestry."*
https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/lo/countries/cz/cz_full.html

The World of Habsburgs, The Czechoslovakian Republic as Successor State to Austria-Hungary, 4th paragraph, *"The new Czechoslovakian state was founded on excellent economic premises; prior to 1918, 70% of Austria-Hungary's industrial production was based alone on the territories of the Bohemian lands."*
<https://ww1.habsburger.net/en/chapters/czechoslovakian-republic-successor-state-austria-hungary>
Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe before World War II. pp. 21. *"Despite the consequences of the war, the new Czechoslovak state started from an economic level comparable to Western Europe. It had one-quarter of the population of the Habsburg Empire, one-fifth of its territory, and two-thirds of its industries. Fifty six percent of the total Austrian industry had been located in Czech territory, while 64 percent of iron-steel and coal mining production, 60 percent of textiles, and 90 percent of the Habsburg sugar production was to be found in Bohemia and Moravia."*

Instead, the Czech natives, influenced by the 17th and 18th-century Enlightenment and strengthened by the 19th-century industrialization, urbanization, and liberalization, sought their new national roots in symbolic historical figures, such as Jan Hus (1370-1415) and Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670). With the support of the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk,¹² the Czechs reacted by symbolically breaking from the historical influences of the Holy Roman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, which they perceived as a personification of Catholic clericalism and German authoritarianism. They established their national Czechoslovak Christian churches, independent from the Vatican, with liturgy in the Czech language. The new *Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren* (ECCB) (Czech: *Českobratrská církev evangelická*, ČCE) incorporated the Lutheran and Calvinist Protestant Churches in 1918 and the *Czechoslovak Hussite Church* (Czech: *Církev československá husitská*, ČČSH) absorbed Czech Roman Catholics,¹³ most of whom were motivated by and enthusiastic about the new nationalistic and patriotic movements. These Czechoslovak agitations ended with the *Munich Agreement* that seceded the Czechoslovak German-speaking *Sudetenland* in 1938 and the German military occupation of the Czech territories known as the *Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia*, a nominally autonomously administered region of the Greater German Reich in 1939. Lacking firmly established national roots and identity, as mentioned above, many Czechs became Nazi collaborators, while the majority looked the other way, and only a few dared resist.

2. THE YALTA CONFERENCE (1945), SUMMARY EXPULSION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS OF GERMAN ANCESTRY FROM THE SUDETENLAND (1946–1948), AND THE COMMUNIST COUP D'ÉTAT (1948)

During the two decades between 1930 and 1950, the Czechoslovak Christian population still predominated and experienced a slight rise from 90.8% of the total population in 1930 to 93.7% in 1950. Roman Catholicism remained the most significant religious faith, amounting to 78.5% of the total population in 1930 and declining to 76.3% in 1950. The slight rise in Christianity, namely Protestant Christianity, and the simultaneous decline in Roman Catholicism was due to the nationalistic and patriotic wave after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, during which the Czechs

¹² The first Czechoslovak president T. G. Masaryk became a member of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB).

¹³ See: Rudolf Urban: „Die Tschechoslowakische Hussitische Kirche,“ *Marburger Ostforschungen* Band 34, Marburg / Lahn, 1973.

founded their national Czechoslovak Christian churches independent of the Holy See, the *Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren* (ECCB) and the *Czechoslovak Hussite Church* (CČH) and abandoned Roman Catholicism. In addition, Roman Catholicism declined due to the Czechoslovak government's violent summary expulsion of over three million Czechoslovak citizens of German heritage from the *Sudetenland* between 1946 and 1948, most of whom were Roman Catholics. During the same two decades, atheism declined by 2%, from 8.1% in 1930 to 6.1% in 1950, due to the *Greater German Reich* administration of Czechia as the WWII *Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia* and the Nazi's anti-leftist and anti-communist policies (Graphs 1, 2, and Tables 1. and 3). The most crucial historical events behind these statistics are as follows:

The next major factor that contributed to the catastrophic decline in Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic faith, in the Czech Republic is the Czechoslovak President Beneš' "*Final Solution of the German Question*" of October 28, 1945. Between 1946 and 1948, the Czechoslovak government, acting on this Czechoslovak president's orders, violently summarily expelled over three million Czechoslovak citizens of German heritage, mostly Roman Catholics, who amounted to about one-third of the total population of Czechoslovakia.¹⁴ Most of the deported Czechs of German heritage lived in the *Sudetenland* border areas and owned about three-quarters of the Czechoslovak industries, which were in their German-speaking families since the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, the Czech Communists, already empowered by the Yalta Conference (February 1945) that apportioned Czechoslovakia to the Soviet communist sphere of influence and aided by opportune thieves from among the local Czech population seized all these factories, farming lands, real estates, and other properties. After that, the Communists allowed those who acted as armed volunteers during the forced summary government expulsions to keep some of the loot, thereby securing 75% of the votes of the *Sudetenland* during the 1946 Czechoslovak election on behalf of the Communist Party. These votes brought the Czechoslovak Communist Party an otherwise unfeasible victory and contributed to the 1948 *Czechoslovak Communist coup d'état* success in ushering in the brutal era of Communism in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1989.

¹⁴ Other Eastern European countries, namely Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia also expelled their citizens of German heritage in retaliation for the catastrophic WWII Hitler's aggression.

3. THE ERA OF COMMUNISM: STALINISM (1948-1968), NORMALIZATION (1968-1989), AND DISSOLUTION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1993)

During the four decades of the Czechoslovak communist government dictatorship, Christianity declined from 93.7% of the total population in 1950 to 43.9% in 1991, a -12.5% average decline per decade or a -50% decline in total. Roman Catholicism declined from 76.3% in 1950 to 39% total population in 1991, a -9.3% average decline per decade or a -37.3% decline in total. During the same time, atheism recorded the highest-ever increase, from 6.1% in 1950 to 56.1% total population in 1991, a +12.5% average rise per decade or a +50% rise in total. This total percent change of the atheist population equals exactly the percent change, but in the opposite direction, of the Christian population, during the same period and shows that the increase in atheism is directly proportional to the decrease in Christianity (Graphs 1, 2, and Tables 1. and 3.). The historical events that shaped these statistics are as follows:

One of the fundamental reasons that aided in the catastrophic decline of the Roman Catholic faith was the Czechoslovak Communist Government's destruction of the Catholic Church between 1948 and 1989. In a significant part, this destruction became possible due to the Catholic Church's failure to resist the forced summary removal of one-third of its predominantly Roman Catholic population from the Sudetenland, including its clergy and theologians. The Church lost its credibility and shared responsibility for suppressing the distinction between right and wrong and undermining the precepts of morality among its people. The denial of the fundamental right to life and the Communist Party's reign of terror became implanted in the consciousness of Czechoslovak society. Thus, after the 1948 Communist coup d'état, most Czechs found no difficulty renouncing their Roman Catholic faith and at once professing communist atheism on the orders of their government in exchange for the trifling privileges that this government promised.¹⁵

Furthermore, this moral failure of the Roman Catholic Church paved the way for the Czechoslovak communist government to round up, arrest, sentence, imprison, torture, and murder countless clergy members and believers alike, extrajudicially seize church properties, and destroy the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia during the *Era of Stalinism*, and to officially wipe out all religious faith and replace it with the Marxist-Leninist materialistic atheism during the *Era of*

¹⁵ This finding underlines the lack of historic roots and identity among the Czechs described in the Part I. of this research, Introduction Section. This happened in all Eastern European countries—most of all in USSR and Albania.

Normalization in Czechoslovakia (1948-1989).¹⁶ After the 1948 Czechoslovak Communist *coup d'état*, the Catholic Church became the primary target of the Communist purges because the Communists considered the Church the last and most dangerous enemy threatening the communist monopoly on power. On April 25, 1949, the Czechoslovak Communist Party adopted the *Church Liquidation Plan*, which the IX. Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress approved for implementation on May 25-29, 1949.¹⁷ When from the 1950s on, the Czechoslovak government commenced annihilating the Catholic Church and proceeded to seize all the Church properties extrajudicially, the general public was already conditioned to not only look the other way but also to actively inform and assist, as in the previous case of the summarily deported Czechoslovak citizens of German heritage between 1946 and 1948. In 1950, the Czechoslovak State Secret Security (StB) rounded up, arrested, sentenced, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered about 2,000 priests, their bishops, and 8,264 members of religious orders and nearly destroyed the Catholic Church. Consequently, during the *Era of Stalinism* and the *Era of Normalization*, the Czechoslovak government could publicly proclaim and teach from elementary schools to universities that the purpose of the fight against the Church, the bishops, priests, religious orders, and the laity was to completely wipe out all religious faith and replace it with the atheist-based Marxist-Leninism.¹⁸

The 1968 *Prague Spring* ushered in a general amnesty for political prisoners who survived the Czechoslovak communist imprisonment, torture, and slave labor. However, this period of liberalization quickly ended with the *Warsaw Pact invasion* and *Soviet military occupation of Czechoslovakia* on the night of August 20-21, 1968, and lasted until July 1, 1991. The 1970s and

¹⁶ "Als die Nazis die Kommunisten holten, habe ich geschwiegen; ich war ja kein Kommunist. Als sie die Sozialdemokraten einsperrten, habe ich geschwiegen; ich war ja kein Sozialdemokrat. Als sie die Katholiken holten, habe ich nicht protestiert; ich war ja kein Katholik. Als sie mich holten, gab es keinen mehr, der protestieren konnte." (tr. *When the Nazis got the communists, I kept quiet; I was not a communist. When they locked up the Social Democrats, I kept quiet; I was not a social democrat. When they took the Catholics, I did not protest; I was not a Catholic. When they took me there was no one left to protest.*) Martin Niemöller (14 January 1892 – 6 March 1984).

¹⁷ "IX. sjezd KSČ ve dnech 25.-29. května 1949 stanovil generální linii výstavby socialismu v ČSR na základě deseti bodů přednesených Klementem Gottwaldem a rozhodl, že 'revoluční změny v politickém vývoji republiky' vyžadují likvidaci zbytků mocenských pozic poražené buržoazie ... V důsledku těchto tezí bylo režimem postiženo na dva milióny občanů, z politických důvodů bylo odsouzeno přes 200 000 lidí, desítky tisíc byly poslány na 'převýchovu' do táborů nucených prací nebo do pomocných technických praporů." (tr. "The IX. Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party of May 25th - 29th, 1949, established the general foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia based on the Ten Points presented by Klement Gottwald. It decided that 'revolutionary changes in the political development of the republic' required the liquidation of the defeated bourgeoisie remnants ... This liquidation affected two million citizens; over 200,000 people were sentenced for political reasons, and tens of thousands were sent to re-education slave labor camps or auxiliary forced labor battalions.") <<https://www.totalita.cz/vysvetlivky/s_ksc_06_01.php>>

¹⁸ To completely wipe out all religious faith and replace it with the atheist-based Marxist-Leninism was the espoused goal of all Communist parties in Eastern Europe, except in Poland.

1980s' *Normalization Era* sought the restoration of continuity with the pre-reform *Stalinist Era* period of the 1950s and 1960s and commenced new purges of the 1968 reformists. Although the Czechoslovak government abandoned political show trials and forced slave labor in the uranium mines of Jáchymov, it did not cease its religious persecution. Most churches were closed or in ruins, attended only by a handful of aged women. Hundreds of priests and monastics were not permitted to exercise their ecclesiastical ministries. Christian youths were denied high school and university education and forced to perform unskilled manual labor for salaries that did not cover as much as the bare necessities. Grocery windows featured communist propaganda posters and empty shelves, except those stacked with alcohol. The country stagnated in religious, economic, social, moral, and all other aspects. When the Velvet Revolution of November 17, 1989, arrived, and one million young people filled Wenceslas Square in Prague for ten days, the Czechoslovak Communist Party government resigned on November 28, 1989.

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CLANDESTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH (*ECCLESIA SILENTII*) BY THE HOLY SEE AFTER THE VELVET REVOLUTION AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1989)

Between 1991 and 2001, Christianity declined from 43.9% to 30.2% of the total population, which is a -13.7% decline. Roman Catholicism also decreased from 39.1% to 26.9% of the total population, a -12.2% decline. Between 2001 and 2011, Christianity further declined from 30.2% to 13.2% of the total population, a never-before recorded -17%. Roman Catholicism also further declined from 26.9% to 10.5% of the total population, a never-before observed -16.4% reduction. During the same period, although the communist regime no longer existed, atheism and religious non-belief grew from 56.1% to 67.8% and from 67.8% to 79.2% of the total population, a total rise of 11.7% and 11.4%, respectively. Between 2011 and 2021, the second decade after the fall of communism, atheism, and religious non-belief, slightly declined from 79.2% to 77.9% of the total population, a total -1.3% decline. In addition, Christianity and Roman Catholicism decreased more slowly than in past decades. Christianity declined from 13.2% to 11.7% of the total population, a -1.5% total decline, and Roman Catholicism fell from 10.4% to 7.00% of the total population, a -3.4% total decline. As the Czech Republic opened to the free exchange of information and migration, the official post-communist Catholic Church finally lost all its

credibility. It could not offer anything to anyone, not even to itself. Being forced to import its clergy from Poland, Asia, and Africa, the Czech population began to search for the satisfaction of their religious and spiritual needs elsewhere. Between 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021, the non-Christian religion and unaffiliated spiritual populations have risen from 0.31% in 1991 to 1.93% in 2001 to 7.54% in 2011, and then to a record 10.81% of the total population in 2022, 1.62%, to 5.61%, and 3.27% total growth, respectively (Graphs 1, 2, and Tables 1. and 3). The main historical events behind these statistics are as follows:

Pope Pius XI already recognized the threat of communism to the Catholic Church and the world's humanity in his 1937 Encyclical "*Divini Redemptoris*," in which he labeled the communist doctrines "intrinsically perverse." As the persecution of the Catholic Church intensified after the 1948 Czechoslovak Communist coup d'état and the very continuation and survival of the Catholic Church was threatened, the Holy See realized that its communication with the Czechoslovak Catholic ordinaries might soon become impossible. Thus, on June 29, 1948, Pope Pius XII. issued his Decree "*De nominatione substitutorum*," and on July 24, 1949, and August 11, 1949, with his "*Mandatum speciale de reservatione causarum et exceptione*" to Štěpán Trochta, Bishop of Litoměřice, granted special faculties, commonly reserved only for the Pope and the Curia, to the Czechoslovak Catholic ordinaries in cases of necessity.¹⁹ In turn, the Czechoslovak bishops could delegate some of their powers to their vicar generals and other ecclesiastical superiors and, in cases that did not require episcopal ordinations, to the priests. The priests then could transfer some of their authority, which did not require ordination, to the Catholic laity. Most importantly, the *Secret Pontifical Letter* of October 29, 1949, to Karel Skoupý, Bishop of Brno, and the *Secret Pontifical Letter* of March 1950 to the Local Ordinaries in Czechoslovakia, with *Instructions for maintaining*

¹⁹ These Pope Pius XII Secret Special Mandates, modeled on the 1920s Mexican Faculties, established an alternative ecclesiastical hierarchy after the Catholic Church officials' arrests and deportations and were extensions of the existing Special Faculties instituted during the Second World War in Europe.

See: MANDATUM SPECIALE de reservatione causarum et exceptione, Mons. Stephani Trochta, Th.D., Episcopi Litomericensis, Litomericii, die 24 Iulii 1949 AD, Lat. tr.: Special Measures reserved for exceptional cases, Mons. Štěpán Trochta, Th.D., Bishop of Litoměřice, July 24, 1949, and August 11, 1949; EXPOSITIO INTENTIONALIS, Mons. Stephani Trochta, Th.D., Ordinarii Litomericensis, Iulio 1949, Lat. tr. Intentional Explanation, Štěpán Trochta, Th.D., Ordinary of Litoměřice, July 1949; NORMAE IN CONCESSIONE FACULTATUM AB OMNIBUS NECESSARIO SERVANDAE, Lat. tr. Standards in the grant of facilities required to be kept all; STATUTUM DE CONSTITUTIONE ET SUCCESSIONE IN OFFICIO VICARII GENERALIS, Mons. Stephani Trochta, Th.D., Episcopi Litomericensis, Litomericii, Iulio 1949 AD, Lat. tr. Statute of the constitution and succession of the vicar general office; 11/08/1949 - PER LA DIREZIONE DELLA DIOCESI DI LITOMÈRICE /CECOSLOVACCHIA/ FU PROVVISIO DAL L'ORDINARIO IN QUESTA MANIERA. It. tr. 11 August 1949 - For the Directorate of the Diocese of Litoměřice /Czechoslovakia/, the Ordinary is established in the following manner: Source: The Pontificate of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), THE VATICAN ARCHIVES.

See also: The CZ Republic Security Services Archives (Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS), Bishops, Štěpán Trochta(V2309MV), Karel Otčenášek (V1192HK), Ladislav Hlad (V4888MV), Fr. Vojtěch Kodera (V353 Liberec).

*the continuity of diocesan governance and jurisdiction in special circumstances*²⁰ further mandated a consecration of an additional bishop (*uno nascosto, uno attivo - one hidden, one active*), and a successive line of priests, apart from the communist government dictates and control of the official Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. This additional bishop (or a priest, if a bishop could not be consecrated) would succeed the original bishop in each diocese if the Czechoslovak Communist State Secret Police (StB) arrested, imprisoned, exiled, or murdered him.

The first secret episcopal ordinations began in the fall of 1949. However, they did not escape the attention of the Czechoslovak State Secret Security (StB) officials, who quickly rounded up and imprisoned nearly all involved. The newly consecrated bishops, now imprisoned with the former official church hierarchy, thus commenced establishing the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) and its theological education and seminary formation in the prisons and forced slave labor camps where they found themselves until the mid-1960s. Due to these clandestine bishops' arrests and imprisonments, in 1967, Pope Paul VI. mandated during the secretly consecrated Bishop Bláha's visit to Rome that bishops Bláha and Davidek establish the Clandestine Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia under a much greater secrecy than so far practiced and continue their Clandestine Catholic Church ministry (Gansrigler, 1991).

Thus, Bishop Davidek became the most prolific bishop of the Clandestine Catholic Church. He established a private secondary pre-theology school, "*Athenaeum*," along with a philosophy and theology university curriculum and seminary formation. During his life, which ended in 1988, one year before the collapse of the Czechoslovak communist government, he secretly formed, educated, and ordained countless deacons, about 300 priests, and some 20 bishops, and closely worked with and became an advisor to František Cardinal Tomášek, the Archbishop of Prague, without ever making even the slightest compromise with the communist regime of Czechoslovakia.

²⁰ LITTERA SUB SECRETO PONTIFICIO, 29 Octobris 1949, Ex Mons. Octavium De Liva, Negotiorum Sanctas Sedis Gestorem, Enim Mons. Carolo Skoupý, Episcopo Brunensi, Nuntiatura Apostolica No. 7953, Lat. tr. Secret Pontifical Letter, 29 October 1949, From Mons. Octavium De Liva, Representative of the Holy See, For Mons. Carolo Skoupý, Bishop of Brno, Apostolic Nunciature [Prague] No. 7953; LITTERA SUB SECRETO PONTIFICIO, EX SEDIBUS VATICANIS, Martii 1950, Dominik Tardini, Secretaria di Stato, di Sua Santita, n. 2438/50, LOCORUM CECOSLOVACCHIAE ORDINARIIS, Lat.tr. Secret Pontifical Letter of March 1950 from the Vatican See, Dominik Tardini, Secretary of State, His Holiness, No. 2438/50, to the Local Ordinaries in Czechoslovakia; Copia allegati I. ad lit. N. 2438/50 ex Martio 1950, INSTRUCTIONES pro dioecesium regimine et potestatis jurisdictionis continuitate tuen Idis in peculiaribus adiunctis, It. tr. Copy to Letter I., No. 2438/50 of March 1950, INSTRUCTIONS for maintaining the continuity of diocesan governance and jurisdiction in special circumstances; Source: The Pontificate of Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), THE VATICAN ARCHIVES. See also: The CZ Republic Security Services Archives (Archiv bezpečnostních složek, ABS), Bishops, Štěpán Trochta (V2309MV), Karel Otčenášek (V1192HK), Ladislav Hlad (V4888MV), Fr. Vojtěch Kodera (V353 Liberec).

However, the Holy See's doctrinal defense against communism ended with the 1962 *Metz Agreement* and the *Second Vatican Council*. The Second Vatican Council, held during the same time when the communists continued to replace Christianity with atheism, brutally annihilating the Church and persecuting, exiling, imprisoning, torturing, and murdering its clergy and believers alike, furnished no mention of these atrocious crimes and instead kept silent (as per the *Metz Agreement*). What's more, Archbishop Casaroli,²¹ in the position of the State Secretary of the Holy See, and Cardinal Silvestrini, Casaroli's closest associate and successor as Secretary for the Public Relations Council of the Church, along with several other members of the Curia, started actively promoting their *Ostpolitik*, proclaiming "*a peaceful coexistence between the Holy See and the communist totalitarian regimes.*" I believe this misguided policy of the Holy See played one of the most sinister roles in the decline of the Catholic Church. In Czechoslovakia, Casaroli first manifested his "*peaceful coexistence between the Holy See and the communist regimes*" by sacrificing those bishops who still resisted the communist destruction of the Church and consecrating the Communist State Secret Police (StB) selected clergy as new bishops. However, the Pope already previously excommunicated them for their membership in the Czechoslovak Communist Party, established, managed, and controlled *Pacem in Terris* organization.

After, Casaroli attempted to destroy the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*). This Church was built with the blood and lives of thousands of theologians, clergymen, monks, nuns, and laypeople, expelled from their homes, serving life sentences, and suffering unspeakable atrocities in the communist forced slave labor camps. While these martyrs steadfastly defended the Catholic Church's foundations and teachings to their last breaths, Casaroli was spreading slander made up by the Communist State Secret Police (StB) in attempts first to discredit the *Clandestine Catholic Church* in the Vatican and then prevent its founder, Bishop Davidek, from carrying out his ecclesiastical ministry. Bishop Davidek viewed this collaboration with the Czechoslovak communist government and its Secret Police with great trepidation because it signaled to him a possibly more extensive infiltration of the Holy See by the communists.²² Indeed, Davidek's assessments proved

²¹ Agostino Casaroli (November 24, 1914 – June 09, 1998) was an Apostolic Nuncio who became *Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs* (1967–1968) and *Cardinal Secretary of State* (1979–1990). He became the most important figure concerning the Holy See relations with its Church and the Soviet bloc governments after the Second Vatican Council.

²² This is an inference of Bishop Davidek, not mine (although it is my opinion that he was correct in his assessment). The Catholic Church, as an institution, is not as holy on the inside as it presents itself on the outside. Although the Holy See was anti-communist until the Second Vatican Council, it changed its policy thereafter, and attempted to work in both directions, having anti- and pro- communist elements. Please see "The Metz Agreement."

correct. Decades later, after the communists wiped out the most pious, learned, and self-sacrificing men and women in the Czechoslovak communist prisons, Casaroli and his team at the Curia played a decisive role in finally silencing the Clandestine Catholic Church and replacing it with the church set up by communists during the *Era of Stalinism and Normalization*.

In 1990, one year after the fall of the Czechoslovak communist government, on the suggestion of Pope John Paul II, the Roman Curia moved to create a *Prelature* or *Institute of Consecrated Life* (Birtz, 2011), which aimed at uniting all the secretly ordained clergy still alive, estimated to number over 300.²³ Furthermore, the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) enjoyed unprecedented popularity and support, as it not only withstood but also triumphed over the forty years of brutal communist government persecution. The majority of the Czechoslovak population, Catholic and secular, held this Church in the highest esteem and hailed it as the victorious heroic martyr for the greatest causes of humanity and God. This Church became the symbol of hope and a potential source of healing, expected to guide the nation from its dark past to its more enlightened future. Indeed, it was the only uncompromised institution, purified and sanctified by the blood of its martyrs, with an established religious hierarchy and seminary theological education capable of rebuilding the Catholic Church, its holy orders, its philosophical and theological university curriculum, religious publications, and the larger society in Czechoslovakia.²⁴

Casaroli and his *Ostpolitik* team at the Curia, to finally destroy the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*), once again instigated their previous malevolent techniques of first spreading slander and misinformation and then contesting the validity of the *Clandestine Catholic Church* ordinations,²⁵ especially those of Bishop Davidek.²⁶ It suddenly was irrelevant that Cardinal Tomašek, Cardinal Wyszyński, Cardinal Macharski, and even Pope Paul IV and Pope John Paul II, previously personally mandated, individually participated in, and repeatedly established these

²³ The New York Times, April 12, 1992, "Vatican Rejects Secret Priests Ordained in Czechoslovakia."

²⁴ *Die verratene Prophetie* (tr. "Betrayed Foresight"), Erwin Koller, Professor Küng, and Peter Krizan, Publisher: Exodus of Lucerne.

²⁵ The Vatican's *Normae* of 1992 introduced a non-existent Canon Law term "*dubie validus*" (ordination validity doubt). For information concerning the apostolic succession of the Clandestine Catholic Church, see: Attachment, Part I.

²⁶ The Vatican only recognized and declared valid priestly and episcopal ordinations and consecrations up to and including Davidek's. However, the Holy See considers questionable the validity of some of those ordinations performed by Davidek during the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Bishop Ján Eugen Kočíš of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, Titular Bishop of Abrittum secretly ordained to the Episcopate on December 03, 1967, was re-consecrated on May 15, 2004, and Bishop Ivan Ljavinec of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, Titular Bishop of Acalissus secretly ordained to the Episcopate on March 23, 1968, was re-consecrated on March 30, 1996.

ordinations indisputably valid.²⁷ The Holy See eventually capitulated to the renewed Casaroli's demands and dissolved the Clandestine Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. It forced its clergy and bishops to either submit to re-examination and re-ordination in the now officially recognized post-communist Roman Catholic Church,²⁸ which as an institution lost its credibility by being previously directed by the Czechoslovak communist government and controlled by State Secret Police (StB) or sign an oath to 'voluntarily' abandon all clerical and ecclesiastical functions under the threat of excommunication or if unwilling to do so face excommunication. Some of the Clandestine Catholic Church clergy submitted to the mandated re-examination and re-ordination, and others, who were members of religious orders and congregations, joined their respective religious communities. Some transferred to other churches, such as the SSPX²⁹ or Eastern Orthodox Churches, while others continued to serve the faithful, sometimes with and sometimes without the agreement of the local bishop or the Holy See, who would repeatedly grant and then again withdraw its agreement several times each year, sometimes even several times each month, during the 1990s. Facing indifference, rejection, and destitution, a few left the Catholic Church and returned to their academic teaching, researching, writing, editing, and publishing works. However, most of the Clandestine Catholic Church priests and bishops, being of advanced age and ill health from the Czechoslovak communist government persecution and forced slave labor, and living in extreme poverty, began dying as the Holy See's decisions concerning the status of the Czechoslovak Clandestine Catholic Church clergy dragged on. Today, nearly all are already buried and conveniently forgotten.

The now formally recognized post-communist church in the Czech Republic, which lost its credibility already decades ago and became spiritually and morally weakened, could not offer much to anyone, not even to itself, and began importing its clergy from Poland, Asia, and Africa. The remaining Catholics began exiting this post-communist church en-masse, and the Czech population had to search for their religious and spiritual needs elsewhere. Consequently, Roman Catholicism experienced an unprecedented steep decline, not seen even during the tremendous

²⁷ See: Attachment I. Furthermore, the Council of Trent declared an anathema against those who maintained that the three sacraments that imprint an indelible mark, namely, baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, could be repeated (Session VII, Canon 9, Denzinger [Dz.] 852). This principle was already established with respect to the sacrament of baptism in the Letter of Pope St. Stephen I to St. Cyprian condemning the re-baptizing of heretics upon their return to the Church.

²⁸ The post-communist Roman Catholic Church rejected the foremost authorities of the *Clandestine Roman Catholic Church*, including these of Fr. Josef Zvěřina, S.I., Th.D. and Fr. Oto Mádr, Th.D., and forced P. Oto Madr out of the Theological Faculty and Seminary in Prague after the tragic death of P. Josef Zvěřina in Italy in 1990.

²⁹ *The Society of Saint Pius X* (SSPX) (Latin: *Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Pii X*; FSSPX) is a worldwide fraternity of Catholic priests founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers and a traditionalist during the Second Vatican Council with his *Coetus Internationalis Patrum*. In 2022, the society reached over 700 priests, with 1,135 total members, including religious brothers.

persecution of the Catholic Church during the past forty years of communism. Indeed, it is an exceedingly tragic irony that not the communist regime, throughout its forty years of brutal dictatorship and bloody persecution, but the Holy See destroyed the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*) after the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia.

5. THE IMPACT OF THE ABOVE MAJOR EVENTS ON THE CURRENT CZECH POPULATION

The whole generation responsible for establishing Czechoslovakia as an artificial multiethnic nation in 1918, formerly an Austro-Hungarian Empire's ethnic Czech minority that became Czechoslovakia's ethnic majority, passed away before the 1989 Velvet Revolution and the Czechoslovak communist government collapse. Furthermore, the current Czech population, one-third born after the *Era of Communism* (1948-1989), continues to experience severance not only from its past but also its future, which is not due to the multiethnic factors faced by the 1920s generation, but due to the destruction of social and family structures, morals ideals, and religious and spiritual values. The historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia have rich traditions and feature many preeminent leaders, scientists, writers, saints, and martyrs from ancient and recent pasts. However, due to the sustained national, social, and religious institutional failures and the incessant distortions of traditions by these decayed institutions, they lost their meaning, especially for the youngest generation of Czechs. Since the fall of communism in 1989, about 10% of Czechs, most of them in their late teens and 20s, relinquished their native tongue and birthplace, adopted a new foreign language, usually German, and resettled in a foreign country, most often across the Czech border in Germany and Austria, in yet another ironic twist of Czech history.

CONCLUSIONS

In historic Bohemia and Moravia, the grandeur of the *Enlightenment's scientific rationalism*, ushering in the *Industrial Revolution Age* in the name of 'progress' and 'modernity,' became quickly overshadowed by several cataclysmic events:

- (1) The never before experienced mass casualties of WWI (1914-1918), in which the ethnic Germans of Bohemia and Moravia bore significantly more numerous losses than the Czechs.

- (2) The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the center of the *Industrial Revolution* in Europe, and the establishment of Czechoslovakia (1918) as an artificial multiethnic nation in which the ethnic Germans owned three-quarters of Czechoslovak industrial power, putting Czechoslovakia among the ten most industrialized countries in the world. The ethnic Germans formed the second-largest majority after the Czechs, outnumbering the Slovaks, but the Czechs considered them an ethnic minority.
- (3) The post-WWII Czechoslovak government's violent summary deportations of the Czechoslovak ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland and the pilfering, nationalization, and subsequent destruction of their properties (1946-1948).
- (4) The Czechoslovak communist government, like all other communist governments, identified 'communism' with 'progress,' 'modernity,' and 'happiness,' which, in reality, brought only absurd backwardness, decline, misery, and fear.

Likewise, many Czech secular and religious institutions, such as churches, political parties, various governmental and non-governmental organizations, and interest groups, which generally afford national and religious identity, strengthen community and family cohesion, and establish one's roots, became discredited and were usually met with suspicion and apathy, even anger, abhorrence, and hate. This situation came about by:

- (1) The decay caused by the Nazi high leadership during WWII when the *Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia* as a nominally autonomous administered territory of the Greater German Reich existed between 1939 and 1945.
- (2) The *Czechoslovak Communist coup d'état* that instituted the brutal *Era of Communism* in Czechoslovakia (1948-1989).
- (3) The current Czech Republic government's artificial national, legal, economic, financial, political, social, scientific, and other structures, which are responsible for the past three decades of theft of national treasures and ongoing financial corruption at all levels. This corruption forced nearly all of the Czech population into lifelong financial servitude and many into poverty³⁰ and other social problems.

³⁰ During the *Era of Communism*, unemployment was a crime. The proverbial saying throughout the communist bloc was "The government pretended to pay their employees while the employees pretended to work." The government

- (4) The Roman Catholic Church's misguided policies, moral failures, and hypocritical posture caused most of the remaining Catholics to flee the Church and alienated the Czech population after the fall of communism, gradually bringing the Catholic Church into the position of a discredited, obscure, and marginalized sect that has little to offer and experiences difficulties maintain its hierarchies, institutions, and functions.

The most crucial finding of this research showed that the current unprecedented catastrophic decline in Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic faith, in the Czech Republic, not hitherto seen during the most extraordinary communist repression in Czechoslovakia, did not merely occur due to the Czechoslovak communist government's tyranny. Although the increase in atheism and decrease in Christianity were substantial during the *Era of Communism* between 1948 and 1989 in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic became the most atheist and non-religious nation globally, only after the collapse of the Czechoslovak communist government in November 1989. This research demonstrated that, on the one hand, even though the Holy See's grossly misguided policies and systematic, sustained, and prevalent shortcomings in moral teaching and leadership, especially those coinciding with the *Second Vatican Council* and afterward, alone and by themselves, could not account for the extreme increase of atheism³¹ and the unprecedented decline of Roman Catholicism in the Czech Republic,³² they played an essential role during the Cold War's international rivalries between the East and the West. However, on the other hand, the Holy See's indefensible moral failures that continued *after* the *Era of Communism* undoubtedly bear responsibility for the end destruction of Roman Catholicism, specifically the Clandestine Catholic Church (*Ecclesia Silentii*), in Czechoslovakia.

owned stores were empty, and the black market flourished. Today, the stores are full. The Czech workers still receive salaries in the devalued Czech currency (CZK) but can only purchase goods and services for Euro prices.

³¹ Increase of atheism: from 6.1% to 56% total population during communism in 1950-1991, and from 56% to 78% total population after the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia during 1991-2021.

³² Decline of the Catholic faith: from 77% to 39% total population in 1950-1991, and 39% to 8% total population in 1991-2021.

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