

JAKUB DOLEŽEL\*

## CATHOLIC CHARITABLE SOCIAL WORK IN THE FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA

With a Focus on the Czech Lands

(Received: 3 February 2015; accepted: 30 September 2015)

Roman Catholic Charity, an organised and community-centred form of volunteer activity in social and healthcare services exceeding the framework of individual and private benevolence, had seen years of abundant and – in many aspects – still unrivalled development between the founding of the independent state of Czechoslovakia (1918) and the onset of the totalitarian Communist regime (1948). As the Communist Party took control of the country, the entire system of charity was dissolved, in contrast to the neighbouring countries of the Soviet Bloc (East Germany, Poland and Hungary) where some forms were allowed to function. The objective of the present study is to map out those dramatic changes and highlight individual key events and dates. The opening sections outline the well-developed system of charity that existed before the Communist seizure of power. The final sections present the developing trends of charitable work after the fall of Communism in 1989.

**Keywords:** Caritas practice, church social work, civil society, communism, Czechoslovakia, diaconate, dictatorship, helping profession, history, retrospect

**Karitative soziale Arbeit in der ehemaligen Tschechoslowakei: Tschechien im Fokus:** Katholische Caritas als organisierte und gemeindebezogene Form der sozialen und gesundheitlichen Wohltätigkeit, die eine rein individuelle und private Wohltätigkeit überragt, erfreute sich in der Zeit zwischen der Gründung der souveränen Republik im Jahre 1918 und dem Antritt des totalitären kommunistischen Regimes in der Tschechoslowakei im Jahre 1948 einer Entwicklung, die bis heute in vielen Aspekten für vorbildhaft gehalten werden kann. Die Machtergreifung der Kommunisten verursachte im Vergleich zu anderen Ostblockstaaten (DDR, Polen, Ungarn) eine faktische Destruktion des ganzen karitativen Systems. Das Ziel dieser Studie liegt darin, diese dramatische Veränderung in einzelnen Schlüsselereignissen und Daten zu fassen. Einleitend wird kurz das ent-

\* Jakub Doležel, Palacký University Olomouc, Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Department of Christian Social Work, Na Hradě 5, CZ-771 11 Olomouc, Czech Republic; jakub.dolezel@upol.cz.

wickelte karitative System vor dem Antritt der kommunistischen Regierung und zum Abschluss die Richtung der Erneuerung der Caritas nach der politischen Wende im Jahre 1989 dargestellt.

**Schlüsselbegriffe:** Diakonie, Tschechoslowakei, Kommunismus, Diktatur, Geschichte, Rückblick, helfender Beruf, kirchliche Sozialarbeit, Caritaspraxis

## 1. Introduction

The charitable activity of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic has a rich and varied history, yet it is poorly covered by historiographical resources (DOLEŽEL 2010). The history of charitable activity before and during the totalitarian Communist regime is even more poorly documented. The objective of this study is to fill a gap in historiography. The central goal is to describe the key events and processes that Czech Catholic Charity (Charita) went through after the Communists seized power in February 1948. The history of the Charity should be seen in the context of the studies on Catholic and non-Catholic charitable work in the neighbouring countries of the former Soviet Bloc that have been published on the pages of this journal (BIEL 2009; TÖRÖK et al. 2010; TYMKOVA 2008; PUSCHMANN 2008). By showing the impact of the Communist regime on church-based charity work in different countries, these studies provide a background for the present historical sketch.

### 1.1. Limitations of this study

First, it should be noted at the outset that the author is not a historian by profession. The methodology used for this study is a consequence of this fact. The author has reconstructed the subject matter largely from secondary literature; no primary sources have been used. The historical image outlined here is a preliminary sketch and should be substantiated by more detailed historiographical research.

Another factor that has significantly influenced the content, extent and quality of this study is the quantity of secondary literature concerning the history of Catholic charity in the era of socialist Czechoslovakia. In comparison to parallel studies on the state of Catholic charity work in Poland (BIEL 2009), Hungary (TÖRÖK et al. 2010) and East Germany (PUSCHMANN 2008), the absence of historiographical documentation of Czech origin on the Catholic Church's charitable work in the socialist era was found to be fatal.

It has been demonstrated that this lack of documented history is due to historians' marginal interest in the topic (DOLEŽEL 2010). Unlike previous contributions to the 'Common Past' section of this journal, the present study had no direct reference sources to draw on. The author had to depend on recovering relevant data from works primarily focused on other areas like the relationship between church and state before and during the socialist era (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007; KAPLAN 1993; VAŠKO 1990; VLČEK 2003; WEIS 2011). Limited data without references is provided

by two articles posted on the website of the Diocesan Charity in Brno.<sup>1</sup> More thorough data is given in the book by KUČERA and JEMELKA (2012), yet it speaks of the era under discussion only to a limited extent.

The most accurate data from an academic point of view is provided in two studies by SVOBODA (2013; and SVOBODA & HENDRYCH 2013) although these only cover the years 1946–1951 and depict only the processes of change and the termination of the professional magazine *Charita* as a consequence of the seizure of power by the Communists. The lack of literature represents, on the one hand, the limitations of research on the period, but, on the other hand, it legitimises the efforts to carry out preliminary explorations without mobilising a substantial body of primary sources.

The last limiting factor of this study is its narrow geographical focus on only half of the former Czechoslovakia, that is, Bohemia, Moravia and Czech Silesia. Even in the period of the joint state of Czechs and Slovaks, I had only limited access to data concerning the condition and development of Catholic Charity in Slovakia. Further, my descriptions of the changes that took place in the sphere of charitable work after the collapse of Communism in 1989 do not include a Slovak perspective, for both nations decided to take their separate paths to build their own autonomous states (1993) and independent Charity organisations.

## 2. Catholic Charity in Czechoslovakia before 1948

The history of Catholic Charity practice in the territory of Czechoslovakia has a long and varied past. In the first half of the 20th century, the new programme of church-organised Charity was established along the same lines as in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France and the United States, concentrating fragmented and uncoordinated individual elements into a joint organisation with a national headquarters and regional branch offices within various dioceses. In the territory of Czechoslovakia, this modernisation process took place in several stages. First, a diocesan association of Charity was established in Olomouc (February 1922), followed by the other dioceses. A Slovak counterpart was established in 1927, named *Ústředná Karita na Slovensku* (Charity Centre in Slovakia). The country-wide network was established in 1928 when the individual provincial associations (Czech, Moravian-Silesian and Slovak) joined together to form the *Říšské ústředí Svazů charity v Československu* (Empire Centre of Charity Associations in Czechoslovakia).

The modernised Charity focused on several different areas.

1. *Parish poor relief institutions and foundations*. These institutions, representing so-called outdoor relief, arranged for parish collections and for the distribution of financial support to the local poor and elderly; sometimes financing charitable

<sup>1</sup> J. Kopřiva, Z. Havrdová & D. Horáková, '*Deset let práce a směřování České katolické charity*', manuscript (undated) retrieved 24 October 2014 from [www.dchbrno.charita.cz/www/historie.htm](http://www.dchbrno.charita.cz/www/historie.htm); P. Zelinka, '*Historie charity před rokem 1990*', manuscript (undated) retrieved 5 December 2014 from <http://dchb.charita.cz/diecezni-charita-brno/historie-charity-pred-rokem-1990/>.

institutions such as shelters, workhouses, etc. The name of the parish institutions for the poor refers to the institution taking care of the poor, established by law in the Czech lands in 1783 and 1785 (D'ELVERT 1858). With the right of domicile introduced in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1863, the parish institutions lost a lot of their areas of influence, yet they continued their operations, at least to a limited degree, in many parishes.

With the lack of any comprehensive information available, this article can only offer two sets of data from different areas and periods of the Catholic Church in the Czech lands: (1) LADENBAUER (1899) depicted a precise image of social action of the Catholic Church in the diocese of České Budějovice. In the late nineteenth century, this diocese was the home for 374 foundations of outdoor and indoor poor relief. (2) The conditions in both Moravian-Silesian dioceses (Olomouc and Brno) were mapped by BREJCHA in 1930. According to his account, there were only 18 Catholic parishes not providing parish institutions for the poor.

2. *Ludmila*,<sup>2</sup> *parish charitable departments*. These local institutions represented the smallest organisational units of charitable networks within individual dioceses. They conjoined the local charitable Catholic societies, coordinated charitable activities, arranged for promotion and implementation of charitable work 'in all areas of human misery and poverty, particularly where the other humanitarian institutions have failed to intervene' (BREJCHA 1930, 54, my trans.).<sup>3</sup> There is no comprehensive data available, but there is evidence that there were 308 charitable units operating within the Catholic parishes in Moravia and Silesia as of 1930, and 16,144 people were engaged in the provision of help to an estimated 5,000 poor, vulnerable and needy people (BREJCHA 1930).
3. *Benevolent Catholic societies*. These societies were a follow-up to the popular medieval and baroque brotherhoods,<sup>4</sup> which were disbanded collectively as a result of the reforms in the era of Enlightenment (1783) and eventually reinstated in 1856. Again, data is scant, but LADENBAUER (1899) mentions fourteen charitable societies in the diocese of České Budějovice towards the end of the nineteenth century, whereas BREJCHA (1930) documented seven in Moravia and Silesia. A popular charitable form was the so-called 'conferences', that is, local branches of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, founded in France by Frederic Ozanam (1813–1853). In Slovakia, RAŠLOVÁ (2006) identified a total of 422 charitable societies of a similar nature in 1922.
4. *Social-medical institutions*. This classic form of implementing charitable activities was provided mainly by monks and nuns. According to BREJCHA's typology (1930, 373), these institutions include: orphanages; workhouses;

<sup>2</sup> Named after St. Ludmila, one of four Czech patrons and grandmother of Saint Wenceslaus, traditionally considered a willing helper of the poor.

<sup>3</sup> Original text: 've všech oborech lidské bídý a utrpení, hlavně v těch, v nichž ostatní humánní instituce dosud nezakročily'.

<sup>4</sup> The area of Bohemia (exclusive of Moravia and Silesia) was served by a total of 652 brotherhoods over the years 1620–1780 (MIKULEC 2000, 23).

infirmaries; care homes for children; day nurseries; institutions for the disabled, epileptics, intellectually disabled; shelters for au-pairs, domestic workers and students; sanatoriums; hospitals; home care stations, and homes for the visually impaired. Data from 1935 mentions 328 institutions in the Czech lands (FORMÁNEK 1935, 67). In 1938, the number slightly increased to 338.<sup>5</sup> Information concerning Slovakia is provided by RAŠLOVÁ (2006, 11), who claims that there were 26 social, medical and teaching facilities formed by the year 1946.

### 3. Charity between 1945–1948

The period between the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Communist regime is an important aspect of the present study. Czechoslovakian society after the Second World War was made up of a predominantly Catholic population as it had been since the end of Hapsburg rule (1918). Based on the country-wide censuses, the proportion of people who registered as Roman Catholics in the years 1921, 1930 and 1950 was consistently around 75% of the entire population. This fact was by no means affected by the expulsion of nearly three million German nationals after the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> The Eastern Catholic Church, which had existed in Eastern Slovakia and remained activity until 1950, was forcibly disbanded by the Communist regime. (Strictly speaking, it was ‘incorporated’ into the Orthodox Church.) The percentage of the population affiliated with the Eastern Catholic Church (Greek rite) stabilised slightly below 4%. In 1948, the Catholic Church of both rites (Roman and Greek) had 7,042 clergymen, 2,856 monks and 12,095 nuns (KAPLAN 1993).

With the end of the war Charity work was allowed to return to its full pre-war scope and develop further. Petr Zelinka (cf. n.1) categorises the activities during this period in four areas:

1. Supportive care activities, aimed at relieving the consequences of war. This mainly involved the distribution of material aid. An important source of this support was the international aid of the Catholics in the USA,<sup>7</sup> United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) aid, rations provided by the Red Cross and donations by the French government. Thus, between the years 1946–1949, Charity was able to work as a mediator of food distribution, infant nutrition, distributor of blankets, clothes, boots, medicine and even cigarettes (KUČERA & JEMELKA 2012).

<sup>5</sup> See Kopřiva et al. (cf. n.1).

<sup>6</sup> In 1950, Protestant churches of various denominations had slightly over one million members. The third most populous denomination was the Czechoslovak Hussite Church with nearly one million members (KAPLAN 1993, 225).

<sup>7</sup> War Relief Services – National Catholic Welfare Conference.

2. Activities of institutional care continued old traditions of care in the medical-social institutions. Before the war, Charity ran 338 of these institutions. By 1948 the number had increased to 379.<sup>8</sup>
3. Activities of recreational care for children and youth with dangerous and declining health conditions were carried out using a network of their own<sup>9</sup> or foreign sanatoriums.<sup>10</sup>
4. Activities of home care services, referred to as ‘nursing and medical service in families’. Charity considered this model of services to be the most productive. In Bohemia and Moravia, this service was managed and performed by 125 agencies, employing 125 nuns and 105 nurses. As evidence of the strategic importance of this service, Charity administered a network of eleven nursing schools in 1947, of which seven were based in Moravia, three in Bohemia and one in Slovakia (VAŠKO 1990, 190).

In this context it is necessary to mention the brief, though not negligible, existence of the Eastern Catholic Church Charity with its registered office in Prešov, Slovakia. This constituent part of *Ústredna Karita na Slovensku* was established as late as November 1947 on the initiative of Bishop Pavel Gojdič (1888–1960) of the Eastern Catholic Diocese in Prešov, who was beatified in 2011. During its short existence, permitted under the contemporary political conditions, this charitable organisation succeeded in building a network of local branch offices, to organise urgent material aid to the people living in the war-torn areas (POTÁŠ 2001) and to carry on the running of the diocesan orphanage established in 1935 (ŠTURÁK 2007). Bishop Gojdič was a living example of a profound charitable mentality and played a key role in the short life of the Eastern Catholic Church’s charitable work. In May 1950, the existence of the Eastern Catholic Church Charity was terminated along with the disbandment of the entire Diocese of Prešov.

#### 4. The destruction of Charity between the years 1948–1968

The events that paved the way for the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia have been extensively documented, even in the context of the relationship between church and state (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007; KAPLAN 1993; VAŠKO 1990). In summary, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia won the largest mandate in legitimate elections in 1946. After a while the Party succeeded in inducing a governmental crisis, which led to the resignation of non-Communist ministers. President Beneš, pressed by the circumstances, approved the resignations on 25 February 1948 and appointed a new

<sup>8</sup> See Koptiva et al. (cf. n.1).

<sup>9</sup> In Moravia, there were three institutions of this kind (BREJCHA 1930). After 1930, the national central office of Charity also owned a sanatorium on the island of Veli Lošinj in Italian territory on the Adriatic. After the Second World War, the territory passed over to the control of Yugoslavia, and the building of the sanatorium was nationalised without any compensation (KUČERA & JEMELKA 2012).

<sup>10</sup> In 1947, twelve children threatened with tuberculosis spent their recovery course in Switzerland (Zelinka, cf. n.1).

government in line with the proposals of the leader of the Communists, Klement Gottwald. The Communists' seizure and consolidation of power also required that the Party take control of church institutions, primarily those managed by the Roman Catholic Church, which the Communists regarded as one of their key ideological enemies (SVOBODA & HENDRYCH 2013). Part and parcel of this political strategy was the ideological 'domestication' and the effective control of Catholic Charity work, the side effect of which was a material liquidation of church-organised activities. The liquidation strategy thus included both qualitative (ideological) processes and processes that were (at least partially) reflected in quantitative data. This differentiation provides a framework for arranging the available data.

Although the process of the Catholic Charity's liquidation ran effectively for the first few years following the change of the political regime, it should be mentioned that this short period was also characterised by several different stages in the relationship between the Communist Party and the church. KAPLAN (1993) suggested a three-stage periodisation. At first, the Communists attempted to subdue the Catholic Church through agreements with the hierarchy. As this attempt ended in failure, they tried to exclude the church from public life using power politics (after April 1949). The last stage (after 1953) was dominated by an all-out offensive against religion as a false worldview.

In order to set the events of February 1948 in Czechoslovakia in a wider context, it should be pointed out that the repressive policy of the Communist Party was used in this country probably 'more consistently and steadily' (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007, 8, my trans.)<sup>11</sup> than in other Central and Eastern European countries – with the exception of Albania.

#### 4.1. Ideological liquidation of Charity

After the February coup d'état, the events noticeably quickened in pace. Early on, the Communists – despite protests – terminated the publication of the majority of 133 Czech and Slovak Catholic-oriented periodicals (SVOBODA 2013). One of the few magazines that were allowed to enjoy their (rather short) life was *Charita*.<sup>12</sup> By installing the so-called 'National Administration of the Headquarters of Charity Associations' in April 1948, the clergy loyal to the Communist Party started their ideological purge of personnel. After a short period of hesitancy, caused by the protests of the Inter-Nunciature in Prague, the infiltration was finished in 1951 with the appointment of apparatchiks to the management positions of all (remaining) charitable institutions.<sup>13</sup> This change also affected the content of the magazine *Charita*. It only took three years for the collaborators to transform the magazine into a pure Communist

<sup>11</sup> Original text: 'nejdůsledněji a nejvytrvaleji'.

<sup>12</sup> Its full name, adopted in the first edition (1946) translates as *Charity: Magazine for Medical and Social Work* (SVOBODA & HENDRYCH 2013, 35).

<sup>13</sup> See Koptíva et al. (cf. n.1).

propaganda tool. Subsequently, as there was no further reason to keep the magazine in existence, it was disbanded in late 1951 (SVOBODA & HENDRYCH 2013).

#### 4.2. Liquidation of Charity's activities

'Political domestication of Charity', the term used for the aforementioned processes, was also confirmed by (1) gradual restriction of the range of services provided, and (2) the elimination of the principal agents of charitable services, that is, monks and nuns.

Initially, in 1950, the government nationalised all the institutions of Charity that specialised in children and youth work and supportive care for civilians. Simultaneously, the government transferred the network of home care services to the Czechoslovak Red Cross. Charity was still allowed to operate the institutions that provided for the elderly, the physically and mentally disabled, clergy, nuns and parson's cooks and charladies. The number of those institutions was, however, rapidly declining, as illustrated in *Table 1*. Before 1948, Charity operated a total of 379 institutions.<sup>14</sup> The beginning of 1949 saw a slight decrease to 370 institutions with a total capacity of approximately 15,000. From these 370 institutions, 84 are children shelters and care homes; 83 children's homes; 28 homes for the physically and intellectually disabled, hearing-impaired, visually impaired, encephalitic; 94 homes for seniors and people unable to work; 59 student dormitories; 14 hospitals and medical institutions; 13 recreation centres, and 14 youth institutions (VAŠKO 1990, 190). Nevertheless, as early as 1950, the number of Charity-operated institutions was drastically reduced to 268 (KAPLAN 1993, 6), and towards the end of the same year to only 108 institutions for seniors and people with physical and mental disability, with a total capacity of 7,500 beds, employing about 1,000 nuns (VAŠKO 1990, 191). LARISCH (2012, 42) recorded a total of 105 institutions between the years 1952 and 1959.<sup>15</sup>

*Table 1*  
Reduction in the number of Charity-operated social-medical facilities  
after the Communist coup

	<i>Number of Charity-operated institutions</i>
<i>Until 1948</i>	379
<i>1949</i>	370
<i>1950</i>	268
<i>End of 1950</i>	108
<i>End of the years 1952–1959</i>	105

<sup>14</sup> See Koptiva et al. (cf. n.1).

<sup>15</sup> Of this number, forty-three institutions were located in the Archdiocese of Olomouc (KUČERA & JEMELKA 2012, 29) and twenty in the Archdiocese of Brno (Zelinka, cf. n.1).



A definite extinction of the original spectrum of helping activities took place on 1 January 1960, when the remaining charitable institutions were transferred to the local authorities (known as ‘people’s committees’) (KUČERA & JEMELKA 2012).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the diocesan centres of Charity were disbanded, with only the headquarters in Prague preserved. Regulations coming into force in 1963 restricted the activities of Charity, which were divided into the following three areas: (1) social charity, that is, care for superannuated clergy, nuns, parson’s cooks and charladies, (2) sanctuary-related services, that is, production and distribution of devotional articles and liturgical objects, and (3) editing and distribution of religious literature for the Roman Catholic Church (MÁRA 1989).

Catholic charitable societies constituted an important form of Charity practice in the interwar and post-war periods. As mentioned above, their significance was predominantly local or regional. A new act on the right of association, issued in July 1951, stipulated that all societies without a national headquarters should either merge with the Czech Catholic Charity<sup>17</sup> (currently under the control of the Communists) or disband (KUČERA & JEMELKA 2012; LARISCH 2012).

A significant moment and tool in the liquidation of Charity was the isolation of monks and, even more importantly, nuns. For centuries, members of religious orders had been a distinctive and often predominating element of any charitable institution and service. The disconnection of Charity from the regular clergy would probably have led to the collapse of charity work even if the church had been allowed to exist undisturbed and still enjoyed all freedoms. In a situation when the proclaimed aim of the regime was to liquidate both of those elements, the prospects were so much the darker.

The security forces led by the Communist regime plotted two actions which actually paralysed Czech and Slovak monasteries and convents. As regards the monasteries, the hostile action of the regime was called Operation K (from a Czech word *klášter* for monastery). During this hostility, which took place on two nights in April 1950, 2,376 monks were interned into camps<sup>18</sup> (VLČEK 2003, 75), where they were unlawfully retained until 1955, being exposed to forced labour and ideological indoctrination.<sup>19</sup> Operation K also affected the Brothers of Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, who, as indispensable caregivers, were allowed to continue their charitable work in hospitals. Eventually those hospitals were also nationalised and the monasteries disestablished (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007, 167).

Monasteries were followed by convents. The action against them was called Operation Ř (from a Czech word *řeholnice* for nun), which took a similar course to Operation K, that is, it progressed through several stages from July to September 1950. As suggested by data in *Table 2*, this time the number of internees was

<sup>16</sup> These regulations were set out in the governmental decree of 9 December 1959 (LARISCH 2012).

<sup>17</sup> The new name effective by virtue of the Ministry of the Interior decree of 27 January 1949 (Zelinka, cf. n.1).

<sup>18</sup> These were often large monasteries. In the Czech lands they were located in sparsely populated areas of Sudetenland (where the original German population had been expelled from).

<sup>19</sup> This way, the state seized 219 monasteries (VLČEK 2003, 75).

considerably higher than in the case of monasteries. A total of 4,362 nuns were interned (KAPLAN 1993, 121), two thousand of whom were forced to work in the textile industry and agriculture (VLČEK 2003). Members of the Apostolate of St. Francis<sup>20</sup> were saved from the labour camps as they were allowed to return to civil life in order to pursue their practical apostolate. They joined the Czechoslovak Red Cross and worked as caregivers and nurses in hospitals. From the religious orders, the Red Cross also adopted the outreach nursing service in households (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007, 179).

*Table 2*  
Number of nuns in Czechoslovakia before 1950

	<i>Religious orders</i>	<i>Convents</i>	<i>Nuns</i>
<i>Czech lands</i>	32	502	7,643
<i>Slovakia</i>	24	168	4,253
<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	56	670	11,896

Source: BALÍK & HANUŠ (2007) 177.

As the main goal of the oppressive actions was to force the nuns to leave the convent for civil life, the high number of nuns working in hospitals and social institutions posed an obstacle to the regime's intention. It is well known that in 1950 there were 9,748 nuns working in Czechoslovak hospitals (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007, 179, 188). Early in 1953, the state registered 10,169 nuns, of whom 6,471 served in hospitals and surviving charitable institutions (KAPLAN 1993, 154).

Elimination of nuns from the social-medical sector could not be made on a one-off basis. Thus the regime decided to pursue a strategy of their gradual dismissal and replacement by civil workers. This personnel replacement took place in the late 1950s and was completed in 1962. Nuns were allowed to stay in several areas of public service where the atheistic state found them indispensable to carry out its own social policy. The types of participating institutions were defined by the 26 August 1967 decree of the government, and they included care facilities for children with learning disability and for people with intellectual disabilities, retirement homes, charitable facilities for the clergy, and places for the manufacture of devotional articles and liturgical objects. The fate of nuns has been aptly described by BALÍK and HANUŠ, who stated that 'nuns were sent to the least whom no one had shown any interest in. Paradoxically, the atheist state enabled them to show the utmost love to God through their service to the sick, elderly and disabled' (2007, 189, my trans.).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Apostolatus III. Ordinis S. Francisci, founded in Prague in 1927.

<sup>21</sup> Original text: 'sestry byly poslány k nejposlednějším, o něž nikdo jiný nestál. Ateistický stát jim tak paradoxně umožnil až do krajnosti projevovat lásku k Bohu skrze nemocné, staré a postižené'.

## 5. Attempted revival of Charity in 1968–1970

The years 1968 to 1970 saw an attempt to revive the activity of Charity. For a short period in 1968, also known as ‘the Prague Spring’, the ruling Communist Party experimented with liberalisation and democratisation. This attempt created a temporary opportunity for the churches in Czechoslovakia. While the very reforms of the Communist Party were halted as early as on 20 August of the same year, when the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact invaded the country, practical benefits faded away with some delay. The number of Charity-operated facilities increased slightly. In late 1968, there existed twenty-two charitable homes with a capacity of 2,880 beds, two recreational centres and one housing facility. An attempt was also made to re-establish the diocesan headquarters and international contacts. Even the national management changed for a short period, yet in August 1970 all these changes went up in smoke (cf. n.1).

## 6. Charity on the eve of the Velvet Revolution (1989)

Although only after the political transformation was it possible to resurrect Charity fully, the foundations of a revival were laid shortly before 1989.

The cornerstone was laid by the project ‘Decade of the spiritual restoration of the nation’ promulgated by the pastoral letter of Cardinal Tomášek in 1987. The adherents of the Roman Catholic Church were encouraged to prepare themselves spiritually – following ten central ideas – for the millennium of St. Vojtěch (Adalbert), the first Czech Bishop of Prague. The whole initiative gave believers a impulse to prayer and reflection, study of the Bible and tradition, sermons, lectures, publication activities and discussions but above all – what is most relevant for this study – ‘to participate in initiatives focused primarily on the service to the needy’ (BALÍK & HANUŠ 2007, 100, my trans.).<sup>22</sup>

The first fruits of this spiritual preparation were tested towards the end of 1988, when on 7 December Armenia was affected by a disastrous earthquake. Cardinal Tomášek immediately founded an initiative called *Výbor křesťanské pomoci* (Christian Help Council), whose branches were soon established in local parishes throughout the country. Here, people enthusiastically participated in organising the collection of material help for the earthquake-affected communities. Although the existence of the councils was not approved by the Communist authorities,<sup>23</sup> they generated the very first experience of regime-independent charity practice. Further, they also became a place to train the first generation of the future staff of a renewed Charity.

<sup>22</sup> Original text: ‘k iniciativám zejména ve službě potřebným’.

<sup>23</sup> See Zelinka (cf. n.1).

## 7. Charity after the restoration of freedom

The closing chapter of this study presents a brief survey of the processes and events that have characterised the development of Charity and its activities since 1989.

### 7.1. Building organisational structures<sup>24</sup>

Immediately in 1990, state control was removed from the Christian Help Councils, and they were incorporated in Charity. Charity was given new statutes which returned it under the auspices of the Czech Catholic Bishops' Conference. Beginning in the year 1991, the network of diocesan headquarters, local and regional centres of Charity was renewed. In 1993, new statutes had to be adopted. Due to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two independent countries, the Slovak Charity separated itself and became independent. Since 1995 the Czech Charity has been a member of Caritas Europa and Caritas Internationalis. Today Caritas Czech Republic includes the headquarters in Prague and eight diocesan centres, supported by an association of 15 Charity homes for clergy and nuns, and the Eastern Catholic Church Charity with a country-wide competence. In 2013, individual entities within Charity administered resources amounting to nearly CZK 3 billion (Charita Česká republika 2013).

### 7.2. Building a portfolio of charitable services<sup>25</sup>

Following the massive presidential amnesty of January 1990, Charity had to react to a range of social problems previously unknown to Czech society. The first homeless shelters were founded along with advice bureaus, clothing banks and food dispensing facilities. After a while, some charitable facilities – which have since become common – started to appear for the first time, such as homeless shelters, homes for seniors, homes and day care centres for the disabled. Later preventive services were also developed. Emerging new facilities included advice bureaus for women, refugees and homeless; drug prevention programs at schools, and low-threshold clubs for youth. Since 1994, work with asylum seekers and migrants has been increasing. With the introduction of a new Social Services Act in 2006, the portfolio of existing charitable services had to be adapted to the catalogue of services defined by the law such as social activation services for families with children, seniors or the disabled.

In several segments, Charity performs pioneering work on a par with the competitive service providers. Above all, it is necessary to mention the outreach care service in households, where Charity was able to revive its long tradition and thus become the initiator of home care throughout the country. Medical services have

<sup>24</sup> For data used in this section, See Kopriva et al. (cf. n.1).

<sup>25</sup> See Kopriva et al. (cf. n.1).

gradually been supplemented with the household assistance, and for a long time these services accounted for one third of all charitable services. The same pioneering role was played by Charity in the programs for Roma children and hospice care.

Another important segment of charitable services is humanitarian help. It was initially generated by the situation in the former Yugoslavia (1991). Charity centres provided aid to children in Bosnia, medical care to the wounded and help for refugees. Since 1992, humanitarian help has also been focused on the Ukraine. Since then, international programs have been steadily growing and now extend to 29 countries where humanitarian help as well as development aid is provided. The program called *Adopce dětí na dálku* (Sponsorship of children) is very popular among donors, who cover the school cost for an individual child. Another strong impulse for the further development of humanitarian help was the experience of massive floods in 1997 and 2002.

The number of charitable facilities and agencies providing individual social and medical services has dramatically increased over the last 25 years according to the last annual report of the Charity National Headquarter. Whereas Kopriva and colleagues, shortly after 2000 registered approximately 300 charitable projects, in 2013 the number increased to 1198 (Charita Česká republika 2013), with the largest services as follows: outreach care service (164), personal assistance (62), respite services (47), homes for seniors (38), shelter houses for the homeless (64), low-threshold facilities for children and youth (58), social activation services for families with children (60) and home care service (81).

### 7.3. Development of the quality of services provided

While at the beginning Charity predominantly adopted the ‘learning by doing’ model, contacts with charity organisations in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands and France supported the implementation of new services as well as enhanced professional competence and quality. In 1994 German Caritas helped to found *Ústav sociálních studií* (Institute of Social Studies) at the University of Hradec Králové, which provided undergraduate study programs in social services management. A graduate program at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University, Prague, was added to the study options in this field in 2011. A similar educational facility was established in Olomouc, Moravia, in 1996 when *CARITAS – Výchovná škola sociální* (CARITAS – College of Social Work) started to provide tertiary education in the field of social and humanitarian work.<sup>26</sup> Thanks to collaboration with the local theological faculty, college students can study both at the undergraduate (bachelor’s) level and, since 2009, at the graduate (master) level.

Yet, the development of service quality is related not only to the infrastructure of the professional education of social workers. The critical moment was the intro-

<sup>26</sup> See Kopriva et al. (cf. n.1).

duction of the Social Services Act of 2006, mentioned above, which defined a wide range of quality standards inspired by the British model which the charitable services should strive to adhere to. The process of implementing these quality standards is one of the greatest challenges charitable services have had to face. The field of quality development and management is expected to make further progress in the future as the legally defined standards should ensure a common level of quality across the entire range of social service providers. The creation and development of corporate identity and corporate culture as well as the selection of tools used to that end are left to the discretion of each particular organisation. Today, charitable organisations can choose from secular-based (BENDÁŘ 2012) as well as charity-tailored tools (BOPP & NEUHAUSER 2001; JÜNEMANN & KILZ 2009).

#### 7.4. Personnel and career development

After the restoration of Charity, its personnel first formed a relatively homogeneous group coming from the Roman Catholic Church. With the number of services provided by charitable agencies growing, organisations were forced to employ new staff who were professionally qualified but had no connection with the church. This development did not cause any significant tension for a long time. However, the situation changed in early 2006 as the Magisterium of the Catholic Church had repeatedly drawn attention to the specific character of Catholic charity. Partial quantitative research among Charity staff demonstrated that more than half of them lack any meaningful connection to the Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, in comparison with the general Czech population, charitable facilities staff exhibit a prevalence of proclaimed religious faith,<sup>28</sup> and the proportion of Christians with church affiliation is also considerably higher among them than in the Czech majority population.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the sector of charitable work represents an important potential for evangelisation and a reduction of the resentment against the Catholic Church within the Czech population.

In this way the management of charitable facilities are exposed to a certain degree of pressure in their attempt to ensure consensus over targets, means and the importance of Charity activities. The tool to achieve consensus was supposed to be the 'Code of Caritas Czech Republic' (Charita Česká republika 2009) – the first document to specify the central parameters of an 'identity of Charity'. Its actual im-

<sup>27</sup> A survey carried out by OPATRŇÝ (2010) among the diocesan Charity in Plzeň (N = 153) showed that only 36% of respondents considered themselves practising Catholics.

<sup>28</sup> MIŠOVIČ (2011) carried out quantitative research on a sample of 258 social workers of Christianity-oriented charitable organisations. 71% of respondents considered themselves believing in, or at least admitting the existence of, God, while only 29% labelled themselves unbelievers. According to the latest national census only 20% of the Czech population affiliated themselves with any religious group whereas 34% completely rejected religious faith (Czech Statistical Office 2013).

<sup>29</sup> In OPATRŇÝ's study (2010), 62% of respondents affiliated themselves with Christianity.

plementation, however, has fallen short of expectations. Challenges Charity has to face over the next years include how to deepen corporate identity and how to handle the consequences at the level of individual services.

Personnel development within Charity involves not only professional workers but also volunteers. The strategy of expanding charitable services has, for the past twenty-five years, unilaterally given preference to professional workers. It remains an open question whether this phenomenon can be ascribed to the influence of the professional-oriented model of charity practice in Germany. Nonetheless, it is tempting to make a comparison that shows these two national Charity organisations as having an almost equal proportion of professionals and volunteers (DOLEŽEL 2012). Actual data (Charita Česká Republica 2013) even shows that Czech Catholic Charity employs a prevailing number of professionals (7,273) over volunteers (4,068). The maintenance or enhancement of this personnel structure of Charity professionals seems unfeasible for the future and indefensible in view of its global uniqueness.

### **7.5. Bridging the gap between Charity and the parishes**

All the features discussed above come together in the latest trend observed in the restored Charity. It is the construction of bridges between the services of professional charitable agencies and facilities on the one hand and the pastoral environment of parish communities on the other. Whereas in its early days the restored Charity was organically linked to parishes, the Czech Charity – due to its expansion and professionalisation – has retreated from this original position unlike its counterparts in the neighbouring and Western European countries. This alienation had the side effect of distrust or, on the contrary, unreal expectations on both sides. In terms of theology, this phenomenon has been repeatedly described by German theologians and called a ‘pastoral schism’ (e.g. LECHNER 2000).

Finally, thanks to an emphasis put on the issue by the Magisterium’s kerygma (BENEDICT XVI 2005; 2012), the parish community as the fundamental and irreplaceable focus of service to the needy in their natural environment has experienced a renaissance (DOLEŽEL 2008). The imperative to overcome the alienation and find a model of mutual synergy for the operation of charitable agencies and parish communities, as previously defined exclusively by practical theology, was confirmed by the authority of canon law in ‘*Motu Proprio Intima Ecclesiae Natura*’ (BENEDICT XVI 2012, esp. Art. 9. §1). The success of this charitable renaissance is to a large extent the responsibility of the charitable facilities, central offices and their managements. It is surely a process with an enormous potential for change, in all of the aspects discussed above, even in professional Charity services. An explication of this potential, however, would go beyond the limits of this study.

## 8. Conclusion

From the data, collected and analysed above, on the development of the Czech Charity over the last nine decades, and the information on a corresponding topic in the neighbouring post-Communist countries (BIEL 2009; PUSCHMANN 2008; TÖRÖK et al. 2010), it is possible to draw three essential conclusions. First, charitable engagement is a highly complex phenomenon. It can adapt and take on various forms, the interpretation of which requires the combination of a variety of perspectives. Second, the context of charitable engagement is always a particular society with its specific (political) conditions. This feature helps to understand why the development of the Czech Charity was so different from its counterparts in neighbouring countries within the same geopolitical area after the Second World War. Third, the phenomenon of Charity must be explored both extensively and intensively, especially with respect to the similarities and differences in its practical operation and functioning in an international context. The context of post-Communist countries of Central Europe establishes optimum conditions for such research.

## References

- BALÍK, S. & J. HANUŠ (2007) *Katolická církev v Československu 1945–1989* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury).
- BEDNÁŘ, M. (2012) *Kvalita v sociálních službách* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého).
- BENEDICT XVI (2005) ‘Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* . . . On Christian Love’, retrieved 15 January 2015 from [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html).
- BENEDICT XVI (2012) ‘Apostolic Letter Issued “Motu Proprio” *Intima Ecclesia Natura* . . . On the Service of Charity’, retrieved 12 December 2014 from [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_motu-proprio\\_20121111\\_caritas.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20121111_caritas.html).
- BIEL, R.J. (2009) ‘Die karitative Tätigkeit der katholischen Kirche im Schatten des Kommunismus in der VR Polen’, *European Journal of Mental Health* 4, 221–46.
- BOPP, K. & P. NEUHAUSER, eds., (2001) *Theologie der Qualität – Qualität der Theologie: Theorie-Praxis-Dialog über die christliche Qualität moderner Diakonie* (Freiburg: Lambertus).
- BREJCHA, L. (1930) *Pamětní spis o katolické charitě (milosrdné lásce) v zemi moravsko-slezské* (Olomouc & Brno: Diecézní svaz charity).
- Charita Česká republika (2013) *Výroční zpráva 2013* (Praha: Charita Česká republika) retrieved 5 Dec 2014 from [www.charita.cz/res/data/016/001794.pdf?seek=1404990829](http://www.charita.cz/res/data/016/001794.pdf?seek=1404990829).
- Charita Česká republika (2009) *Kodex Charity Česká republika* (Praha: Charita Česká republika) retrieved 5 Dec 2014 from [www.charita.cz/res/data/000077.pdf](http://www.charita.cz/res/data/000077.pdf).
- Czech Statistical Office (2013) *Obyvatelstvo, domy, byty a domácnosti podle Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů: ČR, kraje, okresy, SO ORP, správní obvody Prahy a města (sídlá SO ORP) 2011*, retrieved 5 Dec 2014 from [www.czso.cz/staticke/data/2000013/CR/SPCR156.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/staticke/data/2000013/CR/SPCR156.pdf).
- D’ELVERT, C. (1858) *Geschichte der Heil- und Humanitätsanstalten in Mähren und Österreich* (Brno: Rohrer).



- DOLEŽEL, J. (2008) 'Farnost jako místo sociální práce církve: Novozákonní východiska a příklady praxe' in J. DOLEŽEL, ed., *Spravedlnost a služba II. Sborník odborných příspěvků a studijních textů CARITAS-VOŠ sociální Olomouc* (Olomouc: CARITAS-VOŠ sociální) 57–76.
- DOLEŽEL, J. (2010) 'Ke stavu zpracování dějin církevní sociální práce: poznámky k jednomu zapomenutému tématu' in P. MAČALA, P. MAREK & J. HANUŠ, eds., *Církev 19. a 20. století ve slovenské a české historiografii* (Brno: CDK) 24–34.
- DOLEŽEL, J. (2012) *Církevní sociální práce na pozadí encykliky Deus caritas est* (Olomouc: Vydavatelství Univerzity Palackého).
- FORMÁNEK, F., ed. (1935) *Katolický almanach 1935* (Praha: Universum).
- JÜNEMANN, E. & G. KILZ (2009) *Die Zehn Gebote: Orientierung für gerechte Strukturen* (Paderborn: Bonifatius).
- KAPLAN, K. (1993) *Stát a církev v Československu 1948–1953* (Brno: Doplněk).
- KUČERA, M. & F. JEMELKA (2012) *Charita v Olomouci 1922–2012: dějiny, osobnosti, současnost* (Olomouc: Charita Olomouc).
- LADENBAUER, W. (1899) *Das sociale Wirken der katholischen Kirche in der Diöcese Budweis* (Vienna: Mayer).
- LARISCH, J. (2012) *P. Rudolf Nejezchleba, zakladatel charitního díla na Ostravsku v první polovině 20. století* (Ostrava: Diecézní charita ostravsko-opavská).
- LECHNER, M. (2000) *Theologie in der Sozialen Arbeit: Begründung und Konzeption einer Theologie an Fachhochschulen für Soziale Arbeit* (München: Don Bosco).
- MÁRA, J. (1989) *Práce a poslání České katolické charity* (Praha: Česká katolická Charita).
- MIKULEC, J. (2000) *Barokní náboženská bratrstva v Čechách* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny).
- MIŠOVIČ, J. (2011) *Zpráva z výzkumu Názory sociálních pracovníků v církevních charitativních zařízeních* (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita).
- OPATRŇÝ, M. (2010) *Charita jako místo evangelizace* (České Budějovice: Jihočeská univerzita).
- POTÁŠ, M. (2001) *Dar lásky: Spomienky na biskupa Pavla Gojdiča, OSBM* (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška).
- PUSCHMANN, H. (2008) 'Es muss zusammenkommen, was zusammengehört: Caritasarbeit im real existierenden Sozialismus in der ehemaligen DDR', *European Journal of Mental Health* 3, 69–78.
- RAŠLOVÁ, K. (2006). *Teória a metódy charitatívnej práce* (Trnava: Trnavská Univerzita).
- ŠTURÁK P. (2007) 'Blahoslavený biskup Pavol Peter Gojdič, OSBM a jeho činnosť v období rokov 1927–1960' in V. BOHÁČ, ed., *Blahoslavený biskup Pavol Peter Gojdič (1888 – 1960) v súradniciach času a doby* (Prešov: Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, Gréckokatolícka teologická fakulta) 10–32.
- SVOBODA, R. (2013) 'Zneužití tématu bohatství komunistickým režimem na příkladu časopisu Charita', *Charita et Veritas* 3, 81–90.
- SVOBODA, R. & J. HENDRYCH (2013) 'Časopis Charita a jeho proměny v letech 1946–1951', *Studia theologica* 15:4 (Winter) 35–46.
- TÖRÖK, P., NAGY, I. & M. JOÓB (2010) 'Die karitative Tätigkeit der traditionellen christlichen Kirchen in Ungarn während des Kommunismus und ihre Wirkung auf die kirchliche Wohltätigkeit im Postkommunismus' (in two parts), *European Journal of Mental Health* 5, 77–97 ('Teil 1') and 257–72 ('Teil 2').
- TYMKOVA, I. (2008) '“Charitas Christi urget nos”: Kirchliche Diakonie in Russland unter dem Aspekt der kirchlich-staatlichen Beziehung', *European Journal of Mental Health* 3, 79–104.

- VAŠKO, V. (1990) *Neumlčená: Kronika katolické církve v Československu po druhé světové válce II.* (Praha: Zvon).
- VLČEK, V. (2003) *Perzekuce mužských řádů a kongregací komunistickým režimem 1948–1964* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská).
- WEISS, M. (2011) 'Katolická církev ve světle *Věstníku katolického duchovenstva*', *Studia theologica* 13:1 (Spring) 80–98.