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CZECH MODERNITY AS SECULAR MODERNITY

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Abstract

When social scientists speak about religion in modern Europe, they tend to view its Western (or North-Western) part as more secular/secularized than its (Central-)Eastern part. Especially in the post-1989 era, Central and Eastern Europe have often been dealt within the context of religious revival after almost half of the century of Communist rule with its overt atheist and antireligious policy. However, in the same manner as some scholars warn against too homogenizing and/or generalizing tendencies in the sociological study of religion in Western Europe, we need to be prepared for recognizing different patterns in Central/Eastern European region too. The case of the Czech Republic might be an instructive one in this respect. As quantitative empirical data from international comparative surveys repeatedly show, Czech Republic is among the most secular societies in Europe. Its religious profile is very similar to those of France, the Netherlands or Scandinavian countries. What does this fact sociologically mean? What social factors lie behind it? Is it sufficient to look for a proper explanation in classical modernization theories? Or shall we rather take into account some specific historical and cultural circumstances? And is there something like “Czech modernity” as a special (sub)type of modernity in the sense of Eisenstadt’s “multiple modernities”? In my paper, I would like to suggest how the conceptual framework of *multiple secularities* elaborated by a German sociologist Monika Wohlrab-Sahr can help us in our efforts to understand the Czech case.

Key words: religion, Catholicism, secularity, national identity, conflict

Introduction

When discussing the Czech Republic in association with religion, we can hear very often that its population is among *the most secularized* in Europe (Need, Evans 2001, Greeley 2003). Especially, if we take into account standard empirical indicators of religiosity related to manifestations of the church/institutionalized religion. Indeed, the data from the latest wave of *European Values Study* (2008) confirm that fact persuasively.

In comparison with other European countries, the Czech Republic shows a markedly low degree of identification with *traditional religion*. The question “Do you believe in God?” has been answered positively only by 36 % of respondents, the least from all the researched countries except of Denmark (21 %). Likewise, if we look at the conception of God where traditional religion (Christianity) is characterized by the idea of a personal God, the Czech Republic represents one of the least religious countries: only 11 % of respondents accept this idea (Denmark and Latvia 9 %). Both indicators place the Czech Republic at the bottom of European religious scale. We can see a similar picture also in the situation when our interest shifts from a *cognitive* aspect (religious belief) to a *practical* aspect of religiosity (religious participation). The indicator of religious affiliation tells us that 29,0 % of Czech respondents belong to some religious group. Only in Denmark was the number lower: 23 %. If church attendance is considered, 64 % of respondents admit that they never attend church ceremonies. Again, only in Denmark is the number of “irreligious” people higher in this respect (74 %). Worth mentioning is also the topic of confidence in the Church. Here, the data displays that the Czech population have confidence in their churches only in 20 % of cases which is unambiguously the least from all the researched European countries.¹ A hypothesis that the low measure of identification with traditional Christian religiosity cannot be understood only as a distance from formal, church religion seems to be confirmed by the fact that at the question “How often do you pray to God outside the Church?” 64 % of people from the sample chose the answer “never”.² None of the other countries shows a higher number – except of Denmark (74 %).

Though I am aware of the complexity of the topic and the debatable nature of the indicators used in the surveys it is quite clear that – focusing on the area of traditional religiosity – we can qualify Czech society (together with Denmark) as the most secularized societies in contemporary Europe.³ The aim of my paper is to deal with the question why is Czech society (in comparison with other European societies) so secularized and what does it mean for its functioning. As the EVS data show, the answers in the form of the *classical secularization thesis* (the effects of

modernization) or statements about the long-term influence of the *anti-religious communist regime* are not sufficient as single explanations. The religious map of contemporary Europe in terms of traditional religiosity offers too *colourful and diversified* a picture not fitting into simplistic explanation schemes (Bogomilova 2004). Moreover, we can find significant differences in religiosity even among countries of the same cultural orbit (for example, post-Communist Central Europe). For this reason, I will follow the call for „historicizing the secularization debate“ made by Phillip Gorski and realized earlier by authors like David Martin and Hugh McLeod. Thus, I will seek to understand the secularization of Czech society through the *sociopolitical conflict model/perspective* (Gorski 2003). The special emphasis will be put on the role of the link between *religious* and *national* identity in preserving the vitality of (traditional) religion in a modern society. Finally, I would like to link this sort of analysis with a broader theoretical perspective of *multiple secularities* inspired by Eisenstadt's concept of multiple modernities (Wohlrab-Sahr, Burchardt 2011).

Religion and national identity

As many scholars point out (Martin 1978, Bruce 1996, Merdjanova 2000), the relationship between religion and national (or ethnic) identity is very important for the degree of vitality of traditional religion in contemporary European societies. Bruce writes directly: „religion diminishes in social significance, becomes increasingly privatized, and loses personal salience *except where it finds work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural*“ (Bruce 2002: 30; *italics R.V.*).

One of the most important roles that religion could play in this sense is the role of the preservation and support of national identity and national consciousness. As Martin reminds us: „a positive overlap with the national myth is a necessary condition for a lively and widespread attachment to religion“ (Martin 1978: 101). If we apply these considerations to the problem of different rates of religiosity in post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, we come to the conclusion formulated by Martin elsewhere in his seminal work:

“The pattern of secularization in the eastern countries has a considerable degree of unity derived from the fact that many of them have been Orthodox, all of them have been overprinted by the fact of Russian domination, and they have in addition been relatively undeveloped. What varies most of all is the relation of nationalism to religion, and the degree to which repressed nationalism is informed by genuinely *internal* religious culture. The areas marked by strong and vital churches are those where a religion has linked itself to the sense of identity by multiple ties” (Martin 1978: 237).

It is the relationship between *national identity* on the one hand and *religion* on the other hand, where we should look for a key to the explanation of the different measures of traditional religiosity in post-Communist countries of Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary) and, furthermore, clarification of the high degree of secularization of Czech society at the beginning of the 21st century in comparison with other countries.

The countries just mentioned have much in common. Let's cite Sabrina P. Ramet:

„Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary are all predominantly Catholic countries, although strong Protestant Churches are active in both the Czech Republic and Hungary. All three countries experienced being parts of traditional feudal empires (specifically, of tsarist Russia and Habsburg Austria). All three emerged as new states after World War I (...). All three countries⁴ in the interwar period were concerned with questions of ethnic heterogeneity (...). In fact, in the 1930s the Catholic portion of each country's population was nearly identical. And all three countries came under sway of Moscow-controlled communist parties in the late 1940s and were ruled by communist parties for more than forty years” (Ramet 1998: 90).

Despite these similarities, the religious situations and the forms of the relationship between the state and churches of the countries in the 2nd half of 20th century differed significantly. For example, in Poland, the Catholic Church played the role of the important pillar of society under Communism, and even after 1989 the vast majority of Polish society have identified with her. On the contrary, in Czech society the Church (I mean – the dominant one: Catholic) was dramatically weakened and alienated from the larger society which is, understandably, reflected in the post-1989 situation. According to Ramet, we must look for the explanation of these differences exactly in the factor of *religious-national symbiosis* that plays the crucial role as an intervening variable between past and present events.

Ramet says that „the presence or absence and the particular configuration of religio-national symbiosis cannot be presumed“ (Ramet 1998: 91). While in some countries or regions religion may represent the most important factor influencing the formation and preservation of national identity, elsewhere it may play only a secondary or a minor role. Some nations or ethnic groups, therefore, can perceive the churches as a benchmark for their own culture or cultural heritage, others not. The particular reality depends on many factors. Ramet identifies five basic elements:

1. ethnic mix (heterogeneity versus homogeneity)
2. confessional mix (monopoly versus pluralism)
3. co-optation or opposition of the Church in previous history (identification with the governing class or party versus opposition)
4. traditional class roots of the Church (upper versus lower class)
5. the specific content of the given faith (Catholic „communalism“ versus Protestant individualism)

If we concentrate on the specific situation of traditional religiosity in Czech society in trying to find its roots, a comparison with the religious situation in *Slovakia* may be a helpful strategy. Although the Czech Republic has much in common with countries like Poland or Hungary, one can imagine that the different fates of traditional religiosity in these countries could be interpreted through different paths of historical development during the 20th century – or more exactly – in the 2nd half of the century. But a comparison with Slovakia is a different case, because since 1918 on it was a part of one state – Czechoslovakia (except for a short interruption during World War II), so that the Czech Republic and Slovakia shared a common history for the most part of the century.⁵

A detailed analysis of religious differences between the Czech Republic and Slovakia has been presented by Froese (2005). He rejects the interpretations that connect low religiosity in Czech society with the operation of the Communist regime pointing to a high level of religiosity in other post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The table gives a short overview of the actual situation of *traditional religiosity* in four Eastern/Central European countries according to selected indicators:

Table 1: Central European countries by traditional religiosity indicators (in %).

Country	Belief in God	Personal God	Religious affiliation	Church attendance ⁶	Confidence in church
Czech Rep.	35,7	11,4	33,6	12,5	19,9
Slovakia	80,9	41,9	76,8	71,2	56,0
Poland	96,1	80,5	95,7	71,6	65,3
Hungary	71,2	41,2	57,1	44,2	43,0

Source: *European Values Study 2008*

Here we can see very different results revealed in the Czech Republic in comparison with the rest of the countries, especially with Slovakia and Poland.

In searching for determinants of the high level of secularization of Czech society, Froese compares the religious situations in the two parts of former Czechoslovakia.⁷ Classical secularization theories based on the modernization thesis do not offer sufficient explanations because the countries under scrutiny do not manifest significant differences in terms of the level of education, professional structure or urbanization. By contrast, basic discrepancies could be demonstrated in the sphere of *religious socialization*. While (as the EVS data from 1990 reveal) 77 % of Slovaks passed through religious education, the rate in the Czech people is only 39 %. On the basis of regression analysis, Froese claims that „religious upbringing significantly affects the likelihood that Czech or Slovak will be religious today“ (Froese 2005: 273). Additional factors significantly influencing the religiosity of the individual are gender and age. Special attention, according to Froese, should be paid to the fact that the likelihood that a person will be a believer is higher among Slovaks independently of the presence (or non-presence) of religious upbringing. In other words, the Czechs without religious education are going to be less likely believers today than the Slovaks without it. Religious socialization, thus, is not a sufficient factor for explanation. The key lies, as Froese writes, in the specific nature of the historical development in Czech (and Slovak) society.

Like Martin (1978), Froese also comes to the conclusion that the main difference between Czech and Slovak society, which is reflected in the degree of vitality and popularity of traditional religiosity in given countries, rests in the *relationship between the dominant religion (Catholicism) and national identity*.

“Czechs' relationship with Roman Catholicism has been volatile for most of their history. Unlike the Slovaks, Czechs have viewed their Roman Catholic roots in tension with their nationalist desires for most of the twentieth century. World War II sealed this difference as the Slovak government embraced both fascism and Roman Catholicism and left their Czech neighbors to bear the brunt of Nazi cruelty. The Roman Catholic Church had an opportunity following communism to re-establish itself as a proponent of Czech nationalism, but expressions of greed and insensitivity to Czech efforts to establish a free democracy destroyed any credibility the Church had established as an opponent of communism” (Froese 2005: 280).

As Froese states, the Catholic Church has not been able to establish a vital bond between the dominant religion and the nationalist movement, which resulted in a decline in identification with Catholicism. Martin remarks on the history of religious development in Czech lands that, in this case, religion was isolated from a *national myth* (Martin 1978: 48), or the myth stayed in the hands of a religious minority (Protestants) with the influence not strong enough (Martin 1978: 106). Ramet puts forth a more complex summary of the sources of the differences between religiosity in the Czech Republic and Slovakia:

“The contrasts between Czech and Slovak religiosity result from differences in national heritage, history, availability and selection of intellectual leaders in the nineteenth century (mainly secular intellectuals in the Czech lands; mainly Lutheran pastors, as well as some Catholic priests, in Slovakia), and even levels of urbanization. Taken collectively, these differences have translated into those in the Church-state relationship and in vulnerability of the Catholic Church to pressure in the Czech lands as opposed to the Slovak lands” (Ramet 1998: 119).

The problematic character of the relationship between Catholicism and Czech nationalism has, in the opinion of a number of authors, its roots in the era of Reformation and subsequent Counter-Reformation in the history of Czech lands (Martin 1978, Ramet 1989, Spousta 2002, Nešpor 2004). Ramet here speaks of the *traumatic* form of Czech nationalism whose essence lies in the fact that history is interpreted with an emphasis on a defeat in some important historical battle.⁸ In the Czech case it is the trauma from the defeat at the White Mountain (1620) which symbolizes the enslavement of the Czech Protestant tradition by German Habsburg Catholicism. Such a moment is not present in the national memory of Slovakia. And this is why the relationship between the (dominant) religion and nationalism is so different in the two given countries. The White Mountain trauma, Ramet thinks, lies in the core of the antagonism between Czech nationalism and Catholicism. “The relationship between Catholicism and nationalism is almost ‘opposite’ among Czechs from what it is among Slovaks.” (Ramet 1989: 285).

Peculiarities of Czech religious history

Nešpor analyzes in detail the fate of religion in Czech lands during the 19th century and examines its role in the national revival movement. Czech nationalism in his opinion

“legitimised itself by looking back on the historical magnificence of the Czech medieval state and its legal, social and religious institutions. What became evident is that the above mentioned institutions were not Catholic but mainly Hussite. While in the 19th century the Czechs felt themselves to be an independent and formerly great nation, they at the same time found out that this national greatness was not connected with the Catholic faith of their own times but with Hussite (or semi-Protestant) faith of their predecessors” (Nešpor 2004: 283).

However, as Nešpor suggests, the outcome of such a state was not any mass conversion to Protestantism (or Hussitism) but rather „cooling down“ of religious beliefs of the Czech population and a boom of formal Catholicism.⁹ According to Nešpor, the Czech nation has become strongly secularized since the 19th century because the *distance from Catholicism* was not compensated with an attachment to other religious (Christian) beliefs or confessions.

“In its function as a personal symbolic universe, religious identity was replaced by national identity and later by class identity, as well as by a scientific world-view. Czechs as a result became atheists, liberals, nationalists, and even socialists in the 19th century and at the same time religion ceased to play any role for them, except for its role as a relic of ‘folklore’. It became the ‘reflection of medievalism’” (Nešpor 2004: 284).

Hanuš (2005), interested in historical analysis of the secularization process in Czech lands with respect to traditional religiosity embodied in Catholicism, points to a couple of important aspects. One of them represents the phenomenon of ‘*pillarization*’, well known primarily from Dutch society:

“In Czech lands, we could (...) see in the Catholic environment peculiarities of so called process of creating of corporate ‘pillars’ in the 19th century, which had produced relatively closed social and cultural worlds with intimate link to particular political camp and also with its own system of non-political, trade-union, professional, youth, student, woman and sports organizations which were very similar to each other but, at the same time, wholly independent on parallel organizations of other political camps.”

This system operates in two ways and rather ambivalently because

“by creating Catholic political and social cultural ‘pillar’, on the one hand, the active believers got a ‘comparative’ advantage because they made a relatively integrated and their interests supporting environment. On the other hand, however, these processes led to the situation of an isolation of church institutions in society, and the status of minority opposition in social and political life within the Czech society” (Hanuš 2005: 43).

Hanuš also reflects upon the relationship of Catholicism to the evolving Czech national movement. With reference to eminent Czech historian Miroslav Hroch, he identifies two crucial factors.¹⁰ Firstly is the fact that the Catholic Church „progressively succeed in taking dominant control over religious situation while preserving a neutral relationship to a formation of local patriotism“ (Hanuš 2005: 44). The second lies in the fact that in the Czech revivalist movement religious differences did not play such an important role as elsewhere in the region (Slovakia, Hungary). But as Hanuš warns, the Catholic Church became quite discredited in the eyes of the Czech public during the 19th century due to the connection of the ‘throne and altar’, its conservatism in social issues and the reluctant attitude to its own reform. In the end, the Catholic Church found itself in the camp of ‘national enemies’, side by side with representatives of German nation.

“What appeared in 1918 during the days of genesis of the new republic in the form of rejection of ‘Vienna and Rome’, had been a result of more long-term process of creating a picture of a national enemy: Vienna as a representative of political oppression and Rome as a representative of the religious one. This, of course, found its ‘mirror effect’ in the Catholic environment – for many believers the modern state, liberalism, political party system etc. became enemies” (Hanuš 2005: 44).

These interpretations of religious development in Czech lands are criticized by Pabian who regards them as a kind of *myth*. „All the existing accounts consider Czech society very secularised already in the second half of the nineteenth century or at least before the World War II (...) They differ, however, in determining the reasons for this secularisation” (Pabian 2005: 329). Pabian sets apart three common explanations: *Counter-Reformation*, *nation-building process* and *pillarization*.¹¹

The first type of interpretation is, according to Pabian, popular predominantly in Protestant circles. Forcible re-Catholicization, says the argument, divested the Czech nation of authentic Christianity and, at once, disrupted its trust in any form of organized religion. But as Pabian adds, this explanation fails when a comparative perspective is used. First, it is not able to explain why the same strong religious decline did not occur among German-speaking Czechs, like among Czech-speaking Czechs, although re-Catholicization involved both groups. Secondly, re-Catholicization in Czech lands followed the model of Counter-reformation present in other „hereditary lands“ of the Habsburg monarchy where such a low level of traditional Catholic religiosity wasn’t registered in the second half of 19th century. The second kind of interpretation views the secularization as a corollary of national movement that had accepted the Hussite tradition characterized by intensively anti-Catholic tone. Against this, Pabian argues that the description of the Czech national movement as Hussite and anti-Catholic misses out the fact that in the 19th century, a plurality of projects of national identity (beside the secular one also the Catholic and Protestant ones). The third interpretation suggests that the secularization might be a product of the process of pillarization. According to Pabian, however, empirical data documents that the number of active and practising believers in the 1st half of 20th century surpassed the minority of those who represented the Catholic „pillar“.

Pabian offers his own interpretation of secularization in Czech lands. He draws primarily on the works of Hugh McLeod and David Martin. Martin’s concept of *total monopoly* and McLeod’s concept of *religious polarization* play the key roles here. Pabian accepts Martin’s typology of cultural complexes and subsumes Czech society under the type of total (Catholic) monopoly which is characterized by a severe conflict between religion and secularism, or – in McLeod’s words – by religious polarization between *Catholicism* and *secularism*.¹² This phenomenon, nevertheless, constitutes only one part of Pabian’s interpretation. The second one consists of strong *ameliorating (mitigative) tendencies*, which in combination with the first element gave birth to the specific pattern of religiosity typical of Czech society in the period between half of the 19th and a half of the 20th century. Pabian (2005: 237) writes:

“The situation of nineteenth-century Czech Christianity was indeed that of Catholic-secular polarisation but I assert that the ensuing conflict was quite moderate, which becomes especially discernible when the Czech case is not seen in isolation. Comparison with other countries of the “Catholic monopoly” pattern reveals that the conflict inherent to this pattern was indeed present in the Czech case but also that it was relatively mild.”

Due to the relative „peacefulness“ of the conflict, the larger society was not dramatically mobilized by any of the sides of the conflict. Most of the population was situated somewhere between the rival poles on the continuum, without any zealous „Catholicness“ or „secularity“. Simply put, it manifested signs of „cool“ religiosity, with a predominantly Catholic „flavour“. This is, according to Pabian, indicated by the fact of coexistence of the high level of church attendance on the one hand, and the low number of those voting for a Catholic political party in elections. The distribution of religiosity in the Czech population was not, naturally, distributed uniformly; religion unevenly influenced different social strata, geographical areas and gender groups. In this context, Pabian stresses gender differences particularly. Higher female religiosity, he explicates, by their exclusion from public space and, as a consequence, from the Catholic-secular conflict. In patriarchal conditions, women showed lower irreligiosity because less opportunities to take their own stand and pronounce their world-view were given to them (Pabian 2005: 333).

Concerning the position of Protestants in this constellation, we can trace a tendency to incline to the anti-Catholic side of the conflict. But this could not be done fully because the Protestant-oriented public rejected liberal secularism as well. Due to its marginalized social position and small proportion in Czech population, the Protestant camp was neither able to „protestantize“ the anti-Catholic bloc, nor influence in other way the pattern of existing conflict between Catholicism and secularism.

These facts provide, as Pabian claims, a good background for clarifying the trends that could be read from the available data about religiosity of the Czech population in the given era. A level of religiosity during the 19th century (until 1918) displays stability which may be understood with reference to the „mildness“ of the religious conflict in Czech society. The main factor contributing to „cooling down“ the polarization could be found in persisting the *external threat* concerning national existence and security.¹³ The described situation is changing with the establishment of an autonomous Czechoslovak state. It meant consolidation of the Czech nation which opened the door to the weakening of the moderating tendencies of the religious conflict, resulting in a strong anti-Catholic wave after 1918.¹⁴ One of the expressions of this fact was the establishment of the Czech-Brethren Evangelic Church and Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church where a lot of Roman Catholic believers had moved (especially to the latter one).¹⁵ However, this trend was quite short for the First Republic society had to face ethnic and class conflicts that, again, activated ameliorating tendencies: „National concord proved more important than the Catholic-secular conflict“ (Pabian 2005: 334). As a consequence, the reduction of Catholic believers in the population almost stopped. The important events in this context represented the international economic crisis and, later, the beginning of the Nazi occupation that brought with themselves a decrease in the number of people without religious affiliation. The post-war era and the start of the Communist era in 1948 is the final phase of religious polarization in the form of decisive victory for the secular bloc:

“In a situation of both external and internal security, the communists opted for a head-on confrontation with Catholicism. Because they faced in Czechia a non-militant and only a loosely mobilised Catholicism and because they succeeded in appropriating the Hussite national traditions in their anti-Catholic form, their anti-religious policies succeeded to a considerable degree” (Pabian 2005: 334).

The situation in Slovakia was dissimilar because here Catholicism was operating in different circumstances and the relationship of the Slovak population to it was different from the Czech case. In a sense, Slovakia was close the „Polish model“ of a strong bond between Catholicism and national identity (Kepel 1996: 81, Lytle 1998: 313).

Conclusion

As we have seen, the roots of the secularization of Czech society should be looked for in the distant past, before the start of the Communist regime, when the relationship between religion and national identity of the Czech population was being created. This does not rule out the effects of other factors, namely those which present a standard part of explanations of classical secularization theories. For that matter, even Martin who has inspired the „historicizing“ of the secularization debate and has pointed to the key role of nationalism and the national element in the attempt to understand a religious development in modern industrial societies. He departed from the assumption that the main theses of the classical secularization paradigm which are based on a complex of socio-economical and cultural processes called *modernization* are valid and empirically well-founded (Martin 1978: 2-3). Therefore, my outline was intended only to identify those specific cultural conditions under which – for modern European industrial societies, in principle, universal – the process of secularization understood in terms of decline of social significance of traditional religiosity occurred, and which shaped the particular form and contribute to the particular degree of intensity of that process.¹⁶

Although the *modernization process* has ceased to be understood by sociologists as incompatible with religion (Casanova 1994, Berger 1999, Davie 2002), we can still think of it as an important secularizing factor under certain conditions. Davie says this aptly when contemplating the specificity of European space as a secularized space (in comparison with other parts of the world, even the Christian world). According to her, socio-cultural transformations like modernization always represent a challenge for existing religious organizations. However, the results may vary – for some of them it may pose a serious problem, for some of them it may function as a positive impulse. The way a particular religious organization adapts itself to the transition between the stages of social and cultural development depends heavily on „the manner in which the institution is embedded in its host society“ (Davie 2002: 141). No doubt, we can associate this formulation also to the dimension of cultural memory of a nation or society (Hervieu-Léger 2000, Davie 2000), though Davie’s words are primarily directed to the area of power relations between state and churches and/or organizational arrangement of churches. And it is just in this sense, as has been demonstrated earlier, that traditional religion in Czech lands was markedly disadvantaged. This fact was later reflected in its (in)ability to

face the pressures of modernization process on the one hand, and anti-religious campaign of the totalitarian state after 1948 on the other hand.

The fates of religion in the Communist (and then post-Communist) societies of Eastern and Central Europe were largely determined by a degree of autonomy of the given society (socio-cultural system) and the ability of independent action in society. Religiosity had a chance to survive as something vital only in a strong society: a society capable of preserving its autonomy in opposition to ruling (and from society alienated) authorities (Tomka 1991).¹⁷ Tomka identifies two categories of countries in the region of Eastern Europe – with East Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia on the western side, and Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and the Ukraine on the eastern side (Tomka 1998a, 1998b). It was the latter ones where a high level of religiosity had survived in spite of 40 years of Communist hegemony. The reason lies in Tomka's opinion in the fact that all these countries were characterized by pre-modern social arrangement, with economical backwardness, agricultural orientation, communal types of social organization and a strong role of tradition. Their societies manifested the great ability of preserving its social self-determination as well as sustaining its uninterrupted continuity with previous socio-cultural development. Communist rule was unable to transform their inner social structure in any important measure. The first bloc of countries – including the Czech Republic – represented, on the contrary, a place affected – more or less – by the modernization process. There, the operation of a communist regime had very different and significantly deeper consequences which had manifested itself also in the sphere of religion.

In such a context, the contemporary Czech *secularity* must be viewed as a product of the mutual influence of many various factors (Lužný, Navrátilová 2001) of which the analyzed unsuccessful overlap of a dominant religion (Catholicism) and a national myth and religious polarization represent important parts of the story. Here I join with Monika Wohlrab-Sahr's perspective in which secularization is seen as "always the result of some historical conflict" (Wohlrab-Sahr, Burchardt 2011). As there are different „roads to modernity“ (Himmelfarb 2008), there is also multiplicity of the ways how the relationship between religion and society could be organized and of cultural meanings that are attached to both religion and secularity (cf. Berger, Davie, Fokas 2008). This fact opens up the space not only for historical sociology but also for cultural sociology.

¹ The items „Complete confidence“ and „A great deal of confidence“ were computed together.

² A similar picture is offered by other indicators of traditional religiosity used in the EVS questionnaires.

³ The term „society“ must be here understood with reference to Sommerville's analysis as a „population“ – i. e. a sum of individuals – not a structure. By secularization of Czech society we, thus, mean secularization of Czech population in the sense of „a significant shift of attention of ultimate (religious) concerns to proximate concerns“ (Sommerville 1998: 250).

⁴ In the quotation three (not four) countries are dealt with because Czechia and Slovakia are taken as one country – Czechoslovakia.

⁵ A significant difference between the religious situations in Czechia and Slovakia has been often discussed by authors writing about religion in European countries (van den Broek, de Moor 1994, Ramet 1998, Greeley 2002, Froese 2005).

⁶ At least once a month.

⁷ More about the contemporary situation of religion in Slovakia see Bunčák (2001), Krivý (2001) and Tížik (2006).

⁸ Besides the traumatic type of nationalism Ramet distinguishes also heroic, defiant, taboo and muted nationalism (Ramet 1989: 265-266).

⁹ Martin states that for Czech nationalism it was very difficult to get embedded in any of existing religious traditions – Catholic or Protestant. „Catholicism was disqualified by its associations; Protestantism was largely destroyed“ (Martin 1978: 103).

¹⁰ The process of formation of modern Czech nation is depicted by Hroch (2004).

¹¹ Václavík (2010: 52-74) is also critical of some common explanations of the high level of secularization of Czech society.

¹² Pabian adopts McLeod's periodization of religious development in Europe, which consists of three periods: the era of confessional states, the era of religious polarization and the era of religious fragmentarization (see McLeod 1997). The reality of religious development in Czech lands in 19th and at the beginning of 20th century falls in the second period.

¹³ Srmiska points out to the fact that national existence does not present for the peoples of Central Europe a lived commonplace but a precious reality which is always uncertain and threatened. This feeling is according to him one of the crucial characteristics to the countries of that region (Michel 1991: 4). The important role of a sense of security in connection with religiosity is emphasized by Inglehart and Norris (2004).

¹⁴ This fact explains according to Pabian anti-Catholic moods after the establishment of Czechoslovak Republic better than the support of the Habsburg monarchy by Catholics.

¹⁵ Pabian supposes that many of these converts were „cool“ Catholics who inclined to the secular pole of the continuum evidence of which is given (among others) by the massive decrease of believers in Czechoslovak Hussite Church during the Communist rule.

¹⁶ The Czech Republic is among the most developed countries in the post-Communist bloc, which significantly affects traditional religiosity. Hanuš (2005: 44) writes that „highly industrialized Czech lands (...) had represented a 'structural problem' for traditional religious mentalities“. Similarly, Spousta (2002: 346) claims that together with identification of Catholicism with unpopular Habsburg state „the rapid industrialization, especially in the northern and western parts of the region, led to a relatively fast decline in church allegiances“. The exceptional position of the Czech lands in the context of modernization process is also mentioned by van der Broek and de Moor (1994: 204), who regard Czech lands (especially Bohemia) as an exception in the general picture of Eastern Europe as an economically backward region in comparison with Western Europe.

¹⁷ The term „society“ we need to understand here in the sense opposed to a state or a state system.

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