

Christian democracy in Central European countries which found themselves under the influence of the Soviet Union was not given the opportunity to play an important role in the development of the region in a way which was achieved by the Christian democrats after 1945 in the Western part of Europe. A fundamental role in this process was assumed by external conditions, and interventions from the outside became the decisive factor. Nevertheless, despite the relatively short period of time lasting in fact only two years, both identical traits and differences clearly manifested themselves in the understanding of what the guiding idea of a party with this programme delimitation should be. Factors of historical experience, religiousness of the population as well as the economic and social situation influenced the creation of the ideological foundations. Neither can we ignore the fact that, to a certain extent, old prejudices did not cease to exist. Within this context, it is difficult to accept the labelling of the year 1945 as the hour zero, as it has become customary especially in older historiography. For Christian democracy, it was instead to a large extent a gradual and continuous process and a conclusion of efforts which had been regularly appearing already in the previous decades.

Despite the limited possibilities however, the West as a symbol of a Christian cultural centre on the other side of the iron curtain which was just being created did not disappear. On the contrary, it was precisely the perception of Western values which remained a part of the programmes of parties and movements in Czechoslovakia, Poland and in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany in the first years. We need to bear in mind that revolutionary tendencies, nationalism and an inclination toward Communism and socialism were not limited to the Soviet sphere but that they were a global phenomenon, and that the Christian parties on Western side of the cold war front did not remain untouched.