

Abstract

This work examines the prosecution of the Roman Catholic Church in the Communist-ruled Czechoslovak Republic. The first part analyzes the mutual relationship of the communist ideology and the Roman Catholic Church. The basic tenets of communism are presented via the works of Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and consecutive texts labeled Marxist-Leninist. The thoughts of the church are presented through the statements of several popes that took a stand against the ideals of communism and the atrocities committed in their name. The second chapter analyzes the individual steps the Communist-controlled state took against the church. Particular attention is devoted to the period from the February 1948 Communist takeover up to the end of the 1950s. This period can be further divided into three phases, distinguished by the differing tactics employed by the Communist Party. In the first phase, the Communists were attempting to subdue the church, the second phase was characteristic by very ruthless prosecution of the church officials, while the hallmark of the third phase was mainly a systematic policy of atheization. The aim of this work is a comparison of the ideological underpinnings of the Communist ideology with the real-world practice of the attempted elimination of religion from society. Focus is also put on the tactics used by the Communist bureaucracy against the church, along with the main reasons that led the Communist Party towards the pursuit of the individual steps. The work shows that the underlying conflict between the Communist ideology and religion was not the only explaining factor of the Communist motives – there was also a pragmatic reason for eliminating the church, stemming from the fact that the Roman Catholic Church had a significant influence within the Czechoslovak society, thanks to the significant number of believers.