

The Church Financing Scheme

Its Influence on Religious Freedom in Czechoslovakia to 1989

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The financing of church life in the Slovak Republic is still a topical theme. Cofinancing church activities from the national budget has not always garnered a positive response among the laity. The current scheme of financing Slovak churches developed out of the cooperative model of a relationship with the state. Its roots are found in the reformation period of Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790). The traditional church financing scheme was cleverly used by the communist regime that came to power in Czechoslovakia after the end of the Second World War. The author demonstrates, using specific documentation from archived materials, the limitations to religious freedom that resulted from the scheme of the state taking on the financing of church life.

Introduction

In the Slovak Republic, church-life financing continues to be a contemporary subject for debate among experts and the nonprofessional public. In the Czech Republic, discussion has also been happening due to the shared political and economic background of the two countries till the end of 1992, whether in the erstwhile state formation Austria-Hungary or in the more recent Czechoslovak alliance since 1918. The discussion pervaded most of society; engaged in it were a host of experts from the church as well as from various sectors of society and political life. This is understandable given that Christianity, whether people like it or not, was and still is a significant part of the social life of our society. At the same time, we observe that the beauty and magnetism of Christianity's image is on the wane currently. To a certain extent, the church-financing scheme, in

particular the state's share in the budgets of churches and church organizations, is playing a part in this.

Churches as a group are indisputable bearers of the particular cultural and religious heritage of our nations, and of European civilization in general. The message of salvation in Jesus Christ is spread within churches and through churches; it is there that the Holy Spirit uses the preacher and the church setting for the most important task: preserving the content and life of faith by passing it on. Faith is in fact "from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Faith has helped and helps believers to live a fully rounded life. Unfortunately, the question of cofinancing the church's activities from the national budget is a current one also because these activities do not always find a favorable response in onlookers. Atheists, agnostics, people indifferent to spiritual questions, or disappointed members of the church believe that the state should use the resources devoted to churches in some other way. Some political parties appeal to these sentiments in society when creating their agenda.

The current church financing scheme evolved from the cooperative model of a relationship with the State. It is delineated by legal norms and contractual relationships. The scheme originally began to develop in the distant past. The ruling powers, becoming aware of the church's influence on the population, endeavored to find a way to cooperate with the church so that the developing Christian church did not directly jeopardize the effectiveness of political power or, more ideally, so that the church would bolster their purposes. The church subsequently took advantage of everything allowed by the state's supervision. The power of the church was considerable.

History itself shaped the current church financing scheme in Slovakia. In this sense, Emperor Joseph II became a significant historical milestone. He reigned from 1780 to 1790. By issuing the Patent of Toleration in 1781, he contributed to religious freedom in Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Belgium, and also in the Kingdom of Hungary, of which the present-day territory of Slovakia was part. He tried to limit the political influence of the church with more thorough supervision. He deemed it necessary to abolish the contemplative orders of the Catholic Church. He shut down in total 413 monasteries in Bohemia and Austria, and 138 in the Kingdom of Hungary. He considered useful only those monasteries effective in pastoral activities in the school system, healthcare, and in the area of charity. The creation of so-called endowment funds, where he collected the immovable and other assets (e.g., fields) of the closed-down monasteries, influenced the development of the church funding scheme. He did this with an enactment in 1782. Later, with the consolidation of the endowment funds, the so-called religious *matica* (matrix) came into being. The state managed its rev-

enues. It made use of them to establish and financially provide for new parishes which came into being as a result of the migration of a population in search of work in the developing new industrial areas, as well as for the economic provision of the clergy.

It became evident that this church financing scheme was feasibly advantageous for both parties, for the state as well as for the church. More noticeable changes in the scheme took place only after the troubled year of 1848. After a number of difficulties implementing the reconciliation treaty of 1855, laws were brought out in 1874, which made it possible for churches to create foundations, and state control over church economic activities was done away with. Introducing compulsory payment of *Congrua*—income, or more precisely an add-on to the clergy’s income, which was provided by the state (through laws and their amendments from 1885, 1890, and 1894)—meant a change in the financing of the clergy. J. R. Tretera¹ summarizes that churches were financed (1) by revenue from their own church property, (2) by compensation for secularized church property, (3) by revenue from religious funds (matrices), (4) by state and municipal subsidies and grants, and (5) by contributions and gifts from church members and supporters.

With the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, a new situation arose. On the territory of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, seven church organizations were recognized, in Slovakia and Ruthenia eight. The state simply took over this situation based on Austrian and Hungarian arrangements. Between the years 1918 to 1922, additional churches were gradually legally established. There followed a massive show of resistance toward the Catholic Church and a movement lobbying under the watchwords “Vienna before Rome,” “Away from Rome,” and “Rome must be judged and condemned.” Among the newly formed churches was also the Methodist Church, whose example I want to use later in this study to show how a new, apparently advantageous, church financing scheme influenced religious freedom. Since 1936 it has gone by the name of the Evangelical Methodist Church, except for the period of World War II, when it was obliged to use the title “Methodist Church in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia”; presumably influenced by the fact that in Germany the name Methodist Church was used. The accepted and state-recognized churches received state help. Even then the question of separating church and state was discussed on a large scale in society. Yet the complicated situation concerning the formation of new churches and also, according to some historians, the demagoguery of some politicians, meant that separation was not incorporated in the constitution in 1920 and issues of church financing were not resolved at their core and anew. On the contrary, progress directed politics toward the

preparation of the so-called *Congrua* law, though we must say that this was in conflict with wider public opinion. This was issued in 1926 acknowledging churches in receipt of *Congrua* or subsidies. Among churches receiving *Congrua* were the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church in Bohemia and Moravia, and in Slovakia and in Ruthenia the so-called accepted churches—the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, the Evangelical Reformed Church, the Orthodox Church, and the Jewish religious society. The subsidized churches' legal right to subsidies was embodied in the *Congrua* law.

Churches unrecognized by the State, also including the Evangelical Methodist Church, had to solve the financing of the preachers at their own expense. With the Great Depression of 1929, the fall of stock prices on the American stock exchange and economic collapse, financial problems buffeted several churches. Generous subsidies had been coming from the United States in the 1920s for the activity of the newly formed Methodist Church. After the outbreak of the Depression, these subsidies were radically and swiftly reduced. Preachers' salaries were met by taking up special collections in Methodist Churches, designated as *na salár* (from the English "salary"). Not every church was capable of providing its preacher with a salary sufficient to support him and his family. In this situation arose the possibility of forming a larger church, which could be achieved by merging smaller churches. An interdenominational committee was appointed, which met regularly with the purpose of uniting the evangelical churches. This is witnessed to by a number of archived materials from the Evangelical Methodist Church's Prague archives, which the author of this article studied personally.² In a report from 1936 we read the names: Dr. A. Lukl, chairman; members: Dr. J. Hrozný, Dr. J. B. Jeschke, M. Krejčí, Dr. J. B. Souček, and K. P. Lanštják. Present from the Evangelical Methodist Church were Dr. J. P. Barták, V. Vančura, J. Erlebach and a certain brother Procházka. The committee's work did not lead to a merger of the churches. It is to the credit of the above-mentioned brothers that they accepted the Methodist objection that the merger should not take place merely due to the pressure of material conditions. All efforts were interrupted by World War II. This separated Czechoslovakia into the Slovak state and the Imperial Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (German *Reichsprotectorat Böhmen und Mähren*). Under the dictate of Hitler, short-lived (1939–1945), artificially created or forcibly imposed states were formed. For the work of the churches this meant certain limitations, principally in the Slovak state, which banned all churches not accepted or recognized by the state from carrying out public activities and religious ceremonies. The Interior Ministry's³ regulation labelled such churches as "religious sects" and categorized them with spiritists. The Evangelical Methodist Church in Slovakia ceased to exist in a legal sense. Its members either joined the

existing, sanctioned churches or they moved abroad, primarily to the Imperial Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Limitations to the Freedom of Performing Religious Ministry

After World War II ended, democratic conditions were established for the churches and the prewar legal situation was renewed. The chaos following the war led quickly to a communist putsch in post-war Czechoslovakia. This took place in February 1949. The country came under the dictate of leftist-thinking politicians led by Klement Gottwald and affiliated with Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union. These abused power, manipulated public opinion, and built a repressive, totalitarian regime. The political activity of the democratic parties was limited; house raids began to be carried out; intimidation, imprisonment, and execution of political dissenters were not far behind. Atheism was the distinctive political byword of the new arrangement. Legislation was intended to support its dynamic spread. With the help of accepted laws, the totalitarian regime gradually gained control over various areas of church administration and the spiritual life of the parishes.

Following the coup of 1948, laws were prepared and passed that undermined the foundations of the churches' activity. The Roman Catholic Church was most affected, but the smaller churches also were not safe from state crimes carried out in the name of "progress, democracy, and socialism." Democratically minded church leaders began to sense that limitations on their freedom to perform spiritual ministry were on the horizon. By October 29, 1948, superintendent Dr. Josef. P. Barták had written to his clergy:

I bring your attention to the codex of the Czechoslovak Republic, of 1948, section 85, issued October 16, 1948, page 1,466, to paragraph 28 mentioned below, which relates to the office of the clergy or to other similar functions. The wording of the law is literally this: "The misuse of the office of clergy or any similar function.—Whoever abuses the performance of his office or any similar spiritual function to bring influence to bear on political matters which is unfavourable to the Peoples' Democratic order of the republic, will be punished...." It is very important that anyone representing the office of a clergyman or his representative should remember the provision of this law and universally avoid any kind of hint and any kind of expression which might be interpreted as a manifestation of a viewpoint not favorable to the People's Democratic order of the republic.... Let us ask the Lord to give us wisdom; that we might faithfully and conscientiously represent our office and fulfil the evangelistic role which has been entrusted to us.⁴

The communist legislators made clever use of the *tradition of church financing by the state*. They were meticulous in this because they were well aware that it was worth their political while to forfeit a paltry sum of money from the national budget to gain total monopoly over the churches and gradually put them in a humiliating position, thus scoring political points with people who were not favorably inclined toward the churches. Ratified law no. 218/1949 (a collection of legislation statutes), concerning the economic provision of churches and religious societies by the state, related to all registered churches. Registration was compulsory for every church. Only registered churches could carry out spiritual activities. And, conversely, church fellowships which for some reason were not registered had their activity banned. The churches understood the law to mean that “the state intended to cover all expenses as well as the purchase of pedal organs, the installation of an organ, upkeep of the church warden, where necessary; expenditure on lighting, heating, cleaning and repairs of the buildings, the construction of new buildings and facilities.”⁵

According to this law *the state was supposed to cover all the financial needs of the churches*. Churches, but also many people in general, were disoriented and began to believe better times were coming. The Church Council of the Evangelical Methodist Church published and sent a letter to all churches on August 11, 1949, in which they provided information about the passing of the law,

whereby the relationship of churches and state has undergone modification on the basis of equal rights.... The state is taking on the economic cares of individual churches, thus ours also, and is providing churches with reimbursement for the salaries of all clergy, so that they might be free to carry out their spiritual calling. The fact that the state is affording protection to all churches is evidence that it acknowledges religion and church as a very important element in the development of our national and state life. We rejoice that the message about Jesus Christ and salvation in Him is not limited and may sound forth in our houses of worship, in schools, and under the open sky for individual, social, and national renewal.⁶

It quickly became apparent that this was in fact an overly optimistic and unrealistic view; that is to say, instead of joy there was an incipient atmosphere of fear. Limitations on the freedom to carry out spiritual ministry were not long in coming. A quantity of archived materials communicates the significant restrictions that the church had to observe in practice, the consequences of which meant major limitations.

The new situation was supposed to bring a more financially secure position for the churches but in actuality it had a huge effect on religious freedom. The

church received money from the state, but the state—or to be more precise, the ruling communist party—coerced the church into obedience through changes in the laws, political trends, intimidation, and reprisals. It interfered in many significant areas of church administration and in the life of the church. On the basis of archived materials, copies of which we have gained from the Evangelical Methodist Church archives in Prague, we have identified the following specific areas of church life that were significantly and directly influenced by the state and that impacted religious freedom in Czechoslovakia under Communist Party rule.

The most significant limitation was so-called “state approval for the performance of spiritual ministry.” It was a decision by which the relevant communist Office for Church Affairs permitted the clergy of churches and religious organizations activity in spiritual administration, preaching, church offices, or church educational and pedagogical institutes. State approval was tied to the execution and signing of an oath, which was also demanded from all state employees in a similar way: “I promise on my honor and by my conscience, that I will be faithful to the Czechoslovak Republic and the constitution of the Peoples’ Democracy and that I will not undertake anything that would be against its interests, security, and integrity. As a citizen of the People’s Democratic state I will conscientiously fulfil my duty which arises from my position and, according to my abilities, will endeavor to support the building program aimed at the welfare of the people.”

Churches were called upon to provide the exact addresses of places where church services would happen. In addition, they had to provide the day and hour of the church service as well as whether they would occur regularly, who would perform the church service, and whether he had a substitute. Thus, schematization came into being, which the state oversaw. Individual churches then received “systematized places” for clergy⁷; it was almost impossible to expand their number. The church was obliged to request state approval for clergy in systemized places from the relevant municipal or regional national board, and in the case of high church dignitaries, state permission had to be requested at the state Office for Church Affairs or directly from the government. At the same time, state approval was a condition for the allocation of a salary. Granting or removing state approval was abused in a variety of ways for coercing or bribing the clergy. State approval was tied to a specific location where spiritual ministry was carried out. If the clergy displeased the powers, in the better case he was punished by moving him to a different parish, in the worst case he was deprived of state approval. This was frequently followed by bullying by state security, interrogation, imprisonment, and other repressive forms of enforcing obedience to the state powers. Efforts at spiritual activity, without state approval for the performance of spiritual ministry, qualified as a criminal offence, as “obstructing

state supervision of churches and religious societies.” State approval was dispensed on the basis of §§1 and 2 of law no. 218/1949 Zb, concerning state economic provision for churches and religious societies, which had been in effect since November 1, 1949.

The requirement for gaining “state approval” applied to all persons in any spiritual ministry whatsoever, hence also to unpaid lay preachers. On April 30, 1952 the State Office for Church Affairs issued under no. 292.4-II/52, “Approval to Lay Preachers to Carry Out Spiritual Activity,” in which among other things attention is drawn explicitly to the fact that “only such persons who receive state approval may operate as lay preachers and only in the district allowed by the decision of the regional national board.”⁸ In this way, churches with smaller numbers, which traditionally had been dependent on the ministry of the laity, were crippled. Church headquarters were obliged to emphatically warn church congregations and ministers to report lay preachers. They had to be

persons, who have their own vocation, who are Czechoslovak nationals, reliable and above reproach as concerns the State. Lay preachers have to place an oath of loyalty to the Czechoslovak republic into the hands of the chairman of the regional national board, according to paragraph 19 of the government statute no. 220-223/1949 Zb, before beginning their activities, which they will undertake without stipend and without being appointed to a systemized clerical place. Lay preachers can work only within the boundaries of the state-approved religious community to which they have been allocated; they are subordinate to the officially-appointed spiritual administrator, who will entrust them with some of the tasks of their religious activity, according to the principles of the relevant church or religious society. The spiritual administrator is responsible for the activity of subordinate lay preachers and is obligated to exercise constant supervision over them (e.g., to examine the texts of sermons prepared and so on).⁹

The archive preserved lists of suggestions for “church functionaries, about whom it is assumed that they would be able to substitute for the preacher in church services when necessary by reading sermons approved in advance by the church.”¹⁰ These were only recommendations of people. The church authorities were then answerable for presenting the suggestion to the appropriate authorizing government office. Any kind of substitution for the absent or ill clergy by someone lacking state approval was prohibited by the State.

State administration required that voting results for church functionaries, such as presbyters or members of the elders, for example, be reported to them. Pastors declared this directly to the church division of the local national com-

mittee. The archive contains documents concerning the discharge of this duty from several parishes (Protivín, Prague 2, Sedlčany, and Teplice). Local churches had to take into consideration not only the spiritual and personal qualities of lay colleagues but also whether they would be acceptable to officials. As several had some “unsuitability,” whether a nonworking-class background, membership in a political party other than the communist, relatives abroad or any kind of “unsuitable past,” the opportunity for using lay ministers was limited. This was also a significant limitation on individual religious freedom.

After the introduction of state-funded support, the church was no longer permitted to take up *na salár* offerings for the salaries of the clergy. Fees for ceremonies known as stole fees, collected by the ministers of state-recognized churches and including special donations at wedding ceremonies, funerals, or baptisms, were not forbidden. The ECM church headquarters, however, recommended that the preachers of ECM use money received in this way to create a fund, from which they could hand out support to the poor and needy, who would generally turn to pastors for counsel and help.

Churches and all church offices were called upon to prepare a budget for 1950 and relatively soon after this to prepare a budget for 1951. It was expected that the clergy would be paid directly by the appropriate government office; all other employees would also be supported by the state but through the individual churches. The central offices of churches were to render an account for all expenses once a year and were liable to a government audit. As it turned out in practice, individual church parishes and other financial bodies presented their annual budgets and, besides this, quarterly financial statements to the relevant government body. Church headquarters were responsible for the prompt handing in of quarterly financial statements. First the clergy sent them to be checked at the central office, from which they then travelled to the appropriate secretary for Church Affairs on the national committee. A twofold audit system by church and state was introduced. All entries were under rigorous scrutiny and it was always stipulated what was permitted and what was not, which travel expenses may be charged and which not, where purchases could be made,¹¹ and so on. The state Office for Church Affairs issued accounting regulations. They introduced new cashbooks and issued systematic guidelines on filling them out for parish accounting records.¹² One of the columns was entitled “State Contribution for Reimbursement of Cash Deficit.” However, despite legal regulations, there was often a gaping void here. An incalculable volume of archived materials leaves us in no doubt that the financial support, even when extremely paltry, was a reason for the state to obtain exact information about the churches’ finances, in an ideal and regular manner (every quarter). At the same time, it provided the

state with ammunition against the churches; on the one hand, it was supporting churches, but on the other—through the decline in the financial strength of the churches—it was signaling to the public that religion was on the decline and would cease to exist without state support.

The new situation created the impression that *church members were no longer under any obligation* to contribute any kind of donation or financial contribution. These donations and contributions were not forbidden and very quickly it became evident that they were very necessary for churches since the state did not fulfil its legal requirements consistently. Fears that spiritual life would deteriorate if people ceased material support of the church were fulfilled. Many people became persuaded that the state was financing everything and many times the church called for support in vain as they lacked resources for repairing buildings, for maintenance of premises, often even for heating and other needs essential for proclaiming the gospel. The lack was felt also by church headquarters, which required up to half of all collections from congregations for its running, for its theological students, for repairs to buildings, and to aid parishes with unusual expenses or urgently in need of help.¹³ These demands, unfortunately, also produced misunderstanding and a certain tension between parishes and church headquarters, which continued for the duration of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

The law about the funding of churches and religious societies led to a whole host of other regulations, many of which *also affected religious freedom*. In church circles, already under political pressure, these were interpreted as “new commitments and obligations which necessarily accompany the new privileges for all churches.”¹⁴ After the monetary reform on June 1, 1953, which impoverished many and might signify the beginnings of unrest, the churches were called upon to explain to their members, that “the role of the monetary reform, which was carried out in June of this year, is an attempt to create conditions for the growth of production, for an increase in work productivity and thereby to improve the material and cultural level of the workforce. Our immediate goal is to lower retail prices so that the wages of the workers and all employees really increase. To attain this goal, it is essential that we apply the principle of maximum thrift and economy....” And thus followed a whole series of tasks church congregations were supposed to perform.¹⁵

There was also another restriction connected with the above-mentioned limitations on the freedoms and rights of the church: the loss of their right of registry. On December 7, 1949, the National Assembly’s legislative body passed law no. 265/1949 Zb concerning Family Law. All church registers, which recorded births, baptisms, solemnization of marriages, and deaths, became state property

as of January 1, 1950, and had to be turned over to the administration of the national committees. Church registers were concluded on December 31, 1949, and writing in them was no longer permitted. Extracts from these registers were no longer made by a church registrar but by a person authorized by the national committee. Violating the new regulations was punishable by law according to paragraph 45 of law no. 266/1949 Zb concerning provisional changes in some civic legal affairs.

With law no. 265/1949 Zb concerning Family Law, civil matrimony was made obligatory. Section 4 of the law stipulates that “Marriage is entered into publicly and ceremoniously in the presence of two witnesses. To get married outside the office of the local national committee is only possible for very serious reasons.” Religious wedding ceremonies in churches and other sacred places had to be preceded by entry into marriage at a civil marriage ceremony; therefore, these simply amounted to a church blessing on an accomplished marriage.

Gradually the state interfered even in baptismal practices and customs. The state Office of Church Affairs sent a letter to church headquarters in which they prohibited the bestowing of another name, specifically, a Christian one, on children being baptized. The headquarters were to notify the clergy performing the baptisms that it was only permissible to baptize a child with the (Christian) name which had been written in the national register and was mentioned in the birth certificate. At the same time, they notified the registrars that when entering previously baptized children in the birth register, they should register the child only with the Christian name that the child had on their baptismal certificate.¹⁶

Church premises were to continue to be a place where politics was never discussed. Church representatives, under pressure from officials, urged their clergy to a “greater effort than before; that houses of worship or church environments not become a seedbed for political agitation or discussions. Let us really focus on the things of God so that souls fatigued either by work or political influences which surround us in this world, find peace and rest in the halls of the Lord.”¹⁷ As mentioned, however, the state exploited the church with financing for its own political propaganda and for its own goals. Churches were also monitored by state security and a network of informers, thus allowing state power to implement and maintain an environment of fear in the churches. This finally compelled the majority of the clergy as well as the laity to prefer to avoid political themes of an oppositional nature. Those who found the strength to oppose, or simply turned to representatives of state power with some question that was unpleasant to the state, suffered.

On June 23, 1952, the ministry of education, sciences, and the arts issued a law by which the teaching of religion in schools was altered. The law, besides

other things, emphasized that no one had the right to oblige parents to enroll their child in religious education classes. Lessons of religious education were supposed to be positioned in the timetable in such a way that they not “interrupt the flow of teaching of compulsory subjects for all pupils.” In practice this meant that the teaching of religion was delayed until the later afternoon hours so that pupils would be deterred from them. Again, in the prevailing atmosphere of fear, the church described this as “normal organizational measures by means of which order was to be introduced into the teaching of religion in schools.” Based on instructions from superior state bodies, clergy were obligated to read out a circular letter, sent to them by the ministry, at Sunday worship services.¹⁸ The fact that the interpretation of the ruling of the Ministry of Education, Sciences, and Arts (MESA) prompted serious displeasure is testified to by a subsequent letter, with which they conversely forbade the reading from pulpits of the MESA ruling in question a mere eight days later.¹⁹

As churches were maintained by the state, the state demanded not only loyalty but also the active support of state policies. This was mainly revealed by the fact that right from the beginning of the fifties and afterwards for the entire duration of so-called socialism, churches were obliged to speak often of peace and engage in promoting peace according to state authority directions. Churches accepted “peace commitments,” such as, for example, organizing peace libraries, assuming responsibility for support of Czechoslovak Red Cross activity, participating in collective membership of it; in addition, clergy accepted responsibility for preaching about peace at least once a month, “peace cupboards” with propaganda literature and peace slogans²⁰ had to be organized on church premises. The evangelicals’ headquarters in Prague—*Kostnická jednota* (Unity of Constance)—periodically organized political education courses in cooperation with the State Office for Church Affairs, to which it invited clergy and laity active in churches.²¹

The State Office for Church Affairs directed churches also in the business of issuing and distributing pastoral letters, church circulars, instructions, and even letters of counsel! Among other things, this blatant interference in the internal affairs of the church is also clearly documented in an excerpt from a letter dated July 25, 1952, from this office, preserved in the ECM archives.²²

As part of the state’s attempt to gain active support of communist policy, preachers were forced to accept “commitments”; often as well as having to participate in political training or reading some book of political propaganda. One of these commitments included four points:

1. In the performance of my profession as a clergyman and outside of it I will, in the spirit of Christian doctrine, work for the eradication of human depravity and mammonism and will teach believers that the socialistic arrangement of villages/towns allows us to not only live better and easily but also more righteously and therefore more Christianly.
2. By the end of November of this year I will study “Conspiracy against the republic.”
3. I will attend a fourteen-day training of clergy at the next session.
4. I will raise our youth to be dutiful people, loving the People’s democratic motherland.²³

Also churches had to include in their work plan, besides spreading the gospel, a commitment to try to be a dynamic force for building up socialism, to proclaim “eternal friendship” among all nations led by the Soviet Union and similar, clearly forced formulations.²⁴ The church was supposed to engage actively in the “building of socialism in various ways, for example, by collecting old paper, keeping pavements clean, clearing snow from public spaces in front of churches, involvement in various campaigns, such as decontamination of the germs of infectious diseases, eradication of insects, eradication of mosquitos, rodent control in towns, and so on.”

At the same time, the state assumed the right to decide about various matters, such as, for example, the issue of *religious holidays*. Good Friday was declared a workday and church services could only take place in the evening hours.²⁵ As recently as 1961 the state issued instructions about the layout of church office space: It recommended the positioning of the portrait of the president of the republic on the front wall, but on this same wall other portraits or religious symbols could not also be placed. On the contrary, they forbade the decoration of church premises with the state symbol and the Czechoslovak state flag and advised that the flag of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic be hung on ecclesiastic buildings, excluding churches, on state holidays.²⁶ The state interfered in many church affairs, such as the right to decide about immovable assets and about the use of church apartments and so on.

The system of church financing during the period of the totalitarian regime under the leadership of the Communist party led to the creation of an atmosphere of intimidation, distrust, and suspicion. The activity of churches, financially maintained by the State, experienced regression and significant limitations. Believers were intimidated. Many, fearing for their jobs, were afraid to go to church services. Several professions, such as teaching, the professional army, the

police, government offices, management positions, and many others, were tied to renouncing an active profession of faith, which included participation in church services. In some cases the clergy were frightened or forced into reporting on their colleagues. The size of the clergy's salary was far below the state average. Paradoxically, the state gave the impression of friendly relations with the church and of being a benefactor who looked out for the pastors' welfare. The reality was such that especially young preachers' families had to live very modestly. Lies were spread through propaganda that "pastors were living beyond their means." The life of the clergy did not remotely interest the state; on the contrary, they proceeded according to the principle "the worse, the better."

This scheme of church funding was in place until 1989. After the fall of the totalitarian regime the discussion concerning the separation of church and state was revived. Considering the complexity and the history behind this question, state supervision over the work of the church was brought to a swift end. The question of financial separation was solved in such a way that wages were paid into the church headquarters' administration again but the money paid out to the churches from the state budget corresponded to tables that had been adjusted by government decree. The size of salaries changed, even reaching the nationwide average in the nineties. However, it must be said that after the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993, church financing evolved differently in the two republics. In the Czech Republic, agreement was reached on restitution and a gradual lowering of the state contribution over the course of seventeen years until achieving complete financial separation of church and state. Restitution also took place in the Slovak Republic, but an agreement about complete financial separation has yet to be reached. New legal amendments are being prepared but so far have not been accepted. The churches want to have the right of choice for determining the salaries of the clergy but the majority do not want or are not able to forgo the state contribution because of inability to fully finance church activity out of their own resources. However, this is not the subject of this study.

Notes

1. Jiří Rajmund Tretera, *Stát a církev v České republice* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2002), 120.
2. Archive research done by the author of this article in August and September 2017, specifically archive documents of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Czechoslovakia, Praha 2, Ječná 19. Additional sources consulted and reference herein include: Radovan Čikeš, *Vztahy státu a církvi na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Constitution for Church and State Relationships, 2006); Martin Sabo, *Štát a cirkev na Slovensku. Vývoj financovania cirkvi* (Bratislava: Redemptoristi—Slovo medzi nami, 2006); Jiří Rajmund Tretera, *Stát a církev v České republice* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské Publishers, 2002); Ordinance of the Ministry of Internal affairs of the Slovak State no.: 134.731/IIa-1940, September 12, 1940; Law no. 218/1949 Zb. concerning economic provision of churches and religious societies by the state; Law no. 265/1949 Zb. concerning Family Law.
3. Number: 134.731/IIa-1940. Bratislava, September 12, 1940, Subject: Religious sects, measures. Signed by minister Alexander Mach.
4. Josef P. Barták, *Kazatelům Evangelické církve metodické v ČSR*, in Prague, October 29, 1948, ECM Archives, Prague.
5. Václav Vančura and Josef Pavel Barták, superintendents, *Duchovenstvu Evangelické církve metodické v ČSR*, in Prague, October 18, 1949, 3rd ECM Archive, Prague.
6. J. P. Barták et al., *Církevní rada všem sborům Evangelické církve metodické*, in Prague, November 8, 1949, ECM Archives, Prague.
7. From a document dated April 22, 1952, it follows that in the whole of Slovakia only two ECM parishes were “systemized,” that is in Bratislava and in Sereď.
8. For ministers: Vladimír Ekart, *Udělení státního souhlasu k výkonu duchovenské činnosti laickým kazatelům*, in Prague, April 30, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
9. For ministers Vladimír Ekart, *Státní úřad pro věci církevní Praha 12. Máchova ul. ref. 7. Církevní rada evang. církve metodické, Ječná 19, Praha 2. Na vědomí*, 1949, ECM Archives, Prague.
10. Cited from the letter of pastor Ladislav Schneider to superintendent Václav Vančura, ref. no. 154/50, in Prague, July 28, 1950, ECM Archives, Prague.
11. Edict of the ministers of domestic trade and finances from June 26, 1953, concerning the purchase of goods from retailers by economic, budgetary, and other organizations and facilities.

12. *Směrnice pro vedení účetní evidence farností (far: úřadů, sborů, nábož. obcí) od 1. 1. 1954.* Parish offices, churches, and religious communities led the following accounting books, or records, according to this regulation: (a) income and expenses log, (b) book of accounts receivable and payable, (c) book of material stock, (d) inventory, (e) summary of property, (f) ledger and payroll, and (g) stole fees log.
13. Václav Vančura and Josef Pavel Barták, superintendents, *Duchovenstvu Evangelické církve metodistické v ČSR*, in Prague, October 18, 1949, 4th ECM Archive, Prague.
14. Václav Vančura and Josef Pavel Barták, superintendents, *Duchovenstvu Evangelické církve metodistické v ČSR*, in Prague, October 18, 1949, 1st ECM Archive, Prague.
15. Stanislava Vaňková and J. Černý, *Kazatelům evangelické církve metodistické*, ref. no. 552/53, in Prague 29th July 1953.
16. Jan Dolek, *Určení jména dítěti při zápisu do knihy narození a při křtu*, č. j. 211/65-I/1-Č., in Prague, June 19, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
17. Václav Vančura and Josef Pavel Barták, superintendents, *Duchovenstvu Evangelické církve metodistické v ČSR*, in Prague, October 18, 1949, 1st ECM Archive, Prague.
18. Václav Vančura, superintendent, *Všem kazatelům evangelické církve metodistické v ČSR*, ref. no. 777/52-supt. V., in Prague, August 18, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
19. Václav Vančura, superintendent, *Všem duchovním evangelické církve metodistické v ČSR*, in Prague, August 26, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
20. Václav Vančura, superintendent, *Kazatelům evangelické církve metodistické*, ref. no. 663/52-supt. V., in Prague, July 9, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
21. The ECM archive in Prague holds invitations to these events organized from 1950 onwards.
22. For ministers: Vladimír Ekart, *Vydávání pastýřských listů, oběžníků, instrukcí, pastoračních dopisů a jiných projevů*, ref. no. 376.3-II/52, in Prague, June 25, 1952, ECM Archives, Prague.
23. Josef Příhonský, pastor, in Týn nad Vltavou, October 26, 1950, ECM Archives, Prague.
24. Václav Vančura, *Vlastní plánování*, ECM Archives, Prague.
25. Václav Vančura, *Bratřím kazatelům evangelické církve metodistické*, in Prague, March 24, 1953, ECM Archives, Prague.
26. Karel Hruža, head of department for church affairs, in Prague, July 6, 1961.