

Abstract:

The state-socialist system built after 1948 in Czechoslovakia was characterized by an effort to purposefully secularize society and replace religiosity with an ideological system based on the values of Marxism-Leninism. The repressive measures gradually affected all religious organizations, but not all of them equally. A specific category was constituted by religious groups, which the communist discourse defined as "sects." These were repeatedly placed in existential danger because they were outside the contemporary notion of "normal" religion. The dissertation uses the example of two such communities (the Pentecostal Movement, the Jehovah's Witnesses Religious Society) to analyse the interactions of religious actors with state representatives. The thesis demonstrates that the state's atheization strategies did not produce an atheistic society and, using the concept of the religious field, created a disjunctive space at the intersection of religion-culture-politics in which various believers were forced to modify their spiritual practices, but certainly did not become dominated passive bystanders. Similarly, the state administration did not remain static, and its activities gradually diversified according to the specificities of a given religious group. The thesis concludes that the state did not develop a unified strategy regarding the so-called sects, and its various bodies sometimes pursued independent goals. The absence of specific guidelines on various religious issues led to heterogeneity in the decision-making of local actors representing state power and, ultimately, to the decentralization of state church policy.

Key words: Pentecostal movement; Jehovah's Witnesses, Apostolic Church, religious minorities, atheism, church policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, religious field, sects, communism