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Paper title: Secularism in south Moravia, Czech Republic?

Abstract: The Czech Republic is quite often mentioned as the most secular and atheistic state in Europe. Czech political scientist Petr Fiala appraises the Czech Republic as a “special example”, some kind of laboratory of secularism (2007). He attributes that this fact is not only the consequence of forty years of totalitarianism in the former Czechoslovakia, but mainly the “anticlerical” attitude and atmosphere from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century which led to this result as well. Although it is necessary to say that these general trends are valid for the whole state, in every single part there exists a different situation. We can divide the Czech Republic into several historical parts with (maybe) self-contained development – Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Due to the historical context we should keep in mind that the former Sudetenland area was resettled with quite different people (in their religion and religiosity) by governmental decree. In my paper I will focus on the South Moravian region – the bastion of Catholicism (likewise the South Bohemia region). The case study was written on the base of field research in the parish of Věteřov in 2011 and 2012. The social position of the local Catholic priests was looked at during the whole 20th century (the very whole existence of this parish, by the way). I made use of the respondents’ answers (parishioners as well as priests), and the chronicles notations. From this field research we can deduce some results about the changing and remaining influences but they can’t be applied as a model illustration to all of the Czech Republic, even South Moravia. On the other hand, some tendencies we can label as a basic patterns. It means primarily the perception of a priest’s position in the time of national oppression under Communism and collaborationist priests’ alliances. Nowadays, the position of clergyman is changing – due to political decisions (church restitution) and the consecutive pressure of media, and more – the Church is supposed to find a new pastoral direction after more than 20 years of freedom. This paper will be focused on the priest as the heart of the rural community, his view on his own position in the parish and in the whole village. On the other side I follow the opinions and attitudes of believers and atheists, or as Czech Catholic theologian Tomáš Halík (2011) calls them, “apatheists.”

