

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE PASTORAL LETTER OF THE SLOVAK AND SUBCARPATHIAN RUTHENIA BISHOPS OF 1924

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The Slovak and Subcarpathian Ruthenia bishops of the Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches published a pastoral letter in November 1924 to respond to the fact that some members of these churches were members of communist, socialist, or progressive organizations that rejected belief in God, criticizing the churches from atheistic positions and striving to create a secular society. In an effort to expand their membership and electorate, the socialists went so far as to formally present themselves with Christian symbolism, which was supposed to deceive Catholics in a difficult social position and attract them to their ranks. The bishops reflected on this fact and, through the Pastoral Letter, explained to the members of their churches the destructiveness of socialist and progressive theories and recommended that they leave anti-Catholic organizations. Those Catholics who deliberately failed to take their teachings and warnings into account had to expect that the Church would not administer certain sacraments to them. The publication of the Pastoral Letter provoked a fierce reaction in socialist and progressive circles as an attack against the state, its constitution and laws, the government, and the democratic system that threatened the very existence of the Republic. The Pastoral Letter and its authors, the Catholic Church, the Holy See, and Czech and Slovak political Catholicism were violently attacked by journalists, triggering a press affair. Subsequently, the question time of German Social Democrats in the Chamber of Deputies resulted in a government crisis solved not only by the government, parliament, and political parties but also by the so-called Pětka (Committee of Five) as the supreme body of Czechoslovak politics. The search for a way out of the government crisis showed that the socialists, especially the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, did not want to defend their own ideology in the case but used the publication of the Letter to pressure the Czechoslovak People's Party, which, as part of the government coalition and the Švehla government, hindered the solution of the issue of regulating the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. They wanted to force a change in its attitude by acting tactically with the idea of a minority government without the participation of the Czechoslovak People's Party. However, the Czechoslovak People's Party's leaders handled the difficult situation it found itself in due to pressure from its coalition partners and the Catholic Slovak People's Party and the Prague radical wing of its own party formed around Rudolf Horský, thanks to the prudent policy of its chairman Jan Šrámek. Although it agreed to negotiate a regulation of the relationship between the state and the churches, it defended the membership of the Czechoslovak People's Party in the governing coalition, agreed to prosecute only those priests who manifestly violated the law, and defended the right of bishops to act independently in public within the limits of the law. This paper analyses and evaluates the current Slovak and Czech historical production on the topic of the Pastoral Letter, draws attention to the agreements and differences in the concept of the case individual authors presented, and indicates other possible research directions.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Episcopate, Pastoral Letter, Government Crisis, Socialism.

Formulation of the issue. A pastoral letter of Slovak and Subcarpathian Ruthenia Catholic and Greek Catholic bishops was published in Slovakia before Christmas in 1924. The document is dated 26 November in Žilina and was signed by nine church officials: Roman Catholics Augustín Fischer-Colbrie (1863 – 1925, Bishop of Košice); Karol Kmeťko (1875 – 1945, Bishop of Nitra); Ján Vojtaššák (1877 – 1965, Bishop of Spiš); Marián Blaha (1869 – 1943, Bishop of Banská Bystrica); Pavol Jantausch (1870 – 1947, Apostolic Administrator of Trnava), Štefan Področký (1846 – 1926, Vicar Capitular of Rožňava) and Abraham Tahy (Abris Tahy) in Subcarpathian Ruthenia (1861 – 1934, Episcopal Vicar of Užhorod, administering part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Szatmari incorporated into Czechoslovakia and located in the territory of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia). The Pastoral Letter was signed by two bishops of the Greek Catholic Church: Peter Gebej (1864 – 1931,

Bishop of Mukachevo) and Dionisije Njaradi (1874 – 1940, Bishop and Apostolic Administrator of Prešov). The numerous speculations in the press at the time concerning the authorship of the Pastoral Letter, which was attributed alternately to Bishop Fischer-Colbrie, the Papal Nuncio Francesco Marmaggi (1876 – 1949), the Archbishop of Prague František Kordač (1852 – 1934), the Bishop of Litoměřice Josef Gross (1886 – 1931), the Slovak priest and controversial politician František Jehlička (Jehliczka, 1879 – 1939), the politician of the Slovak People's Party Vojtech Tuka (1880 – 1946), the Bishop Pavol Jantausch, give an answer of official denial of some of them, emphasizing the joint authorship of the bishops [Apoštolský nunciatus, 1925, p. 1; Autor pastierskeho listu, 1925, p. 1; Pastýřský list, 1925, p. 1; Zesnulý biskup, 1925, p. 1]. Collective production is also confirmed, for example, by the statement of the Bishop of Nitra, Karol Kmeťko, of 1 March 1925, who declared the

objectives of the actions of the ordinaries: It is our 'common measure' which arose 'on our own initiative', 'only from religious and moral motives' and had in mind the welfare of the state and its inhabitants [Kmeťko, 1925, p. 1]. Journalists search for the author, having a hint of finding the main culprit of the alleged attack on the socialist and liberal social class, could not be successful with regard to the usual mechanism of the formation of such pastoral memoranda. From a technical point of view, the text was prepared by authorized individuals or groups, the presiding ordinary presented it to the commission of bishops and the Pastoral Letter became a common position of the whole College after discussion or possible modifications and approvals.¹⁷ In this case, the presenter was Bishop Fischer-Colbrie and the author of the concept (draft) can most likely be considered the canon Vendelín Halász (1884 – 1927), who then acted as secretary of the apostolic administrator Jantusch in Trnava [AMZV Praha, f. 2. sekce-politická - 1. Běžná spisovna (1918 – 1939), kart. 28 – sdělení Václava Müllera, 22. 6. 1925].

The publication of the Pastoral Letter provoked an unexpected reaction in Slovak and Czech society, especially in political circles, which was mainly reflected in the press. But the Pastoral Letter, understood as an attack on communists, socialists, and the so-called progressive public, also triggered a crisis for the Švehla government. The main part of the governing coalition was the Social Democratic Party and the Czechoslovak National Socialists. There were a number of agrarians and national democrats in the government, and some circles in their parties also felt affected by the Letter. The highest state administration bodies, the government, the Pětka, and the parliament, dealt with the address of the bishops. It was discussed by political parties both at the level of leadership and at the level of membership and commented on at numerous protest meetings.

Study objectives. The issue of the Pastoral Letter of the Slovak Bishops [the term is shortened for technical reasons] of 1924 became the subject of interest of a number of Slovak and Czech historians who reflect the publication of this document both in the broader interpretation of national and ecclesiastical history and the history of political parties or in the biographies of persons but also paid attention to the events accompanying the adoption of the Pastoral Letter by Slovak and Czech society through scientific studies or as part of their editorial efforts. This fact confirms that this topic is not only fundamental but also worthy of attention, having its place in the history of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period, as well as in the political history of the First Republic. Our aim is to reflect the historiographical interest in the topic. We want to find out the methodological approach of the authors to its elaboration, what conclusions they reached, to what extent the issue has been exhausted, and what, in our opinion, further investigation of the issue should be focused on.

Analysis of sources and literature. No author has yet attempted to reflect on the topic from the point of view of

historiography. Our research is focused on the analysis of the individual studies and publishing companies presented, described, and evaluated in the following text. We rely on the results of the examination of Slovak and Czech general and ecclesiastical history of the 20th century. Important sources for verifying the findings and comparisons are the archives of the National Archives in Prague (the Presidium Fund of the Ministry of the Interior) and the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Prague and in particular the periodicals of the political parties of that time – *Národní listy*, *Čech*, *Našinec*, *Lidové listy*, *České slovo*, *Večerní České slovo*, *Slovenské slovo*, *Rudé právo*, *Právo lidu*, *Venkov*, *Lidové noviny*, *Národní listy*, *Slovák*, *Moravská orlice*, etc. Historiographical reflection of the topic is selective, noting mainly more extensive analyses of the issue. Articles are sorted mostly in chronological order, but we combine this procedure by taking into account the content of the statement and the form of their presentation.

Research results. Perhaps the first historian to pay more attention to the issue of the Pastoral Letter was the contemporary of the events Josef Doležal (1893 – 1965), the leading Czech Catholic publicist and official of the Czechoslovak People's Party [Trapl, 2007; Trapl-Harna, 2010], in a monograph of 1928, which stands at the beginning of the rich historiography of this most important Czech political party, built on the programmatic basis of defending Catholicism [Doležal]. Doležal described the publication of the Pastoral Letter as 'an outstanding act of the Slovak Episcopate'. He highly appreciated the fact that the bishops acted openly and straightforwardly, regardless of politics: they could not 'walk on the diplomatic floor, they publicly called sin its maiden name and threatened to punish all those who disobeyed their teaching voice. They precisely distinguished the effort to help the poor for the better from the plague of communism. He was impressed by the 'rural sincerity' of the document in which the authors made it perfectly clear to Catholics that 'it is impossible to serve two masters, God, and the devil at the same time' [Doležal, p. 24]. However, Doležal also noticed the political dimension of the Pastoral Letter in its impact on society, or it seemed to him that its opponents among the socialists represented in the government perceived the bishops' warnings against communism 'only in a political sense'. He observed that the socialist criticism of the Pastoral Letter was directed not only at the Catholic Church but also at the Czechoslovak People's Party, which some coalition partners, led by the deputy prime minister, the national socialist Jiří Stříbrný (1880 – 1955) [Vykoupil], wanted to corner. Doležal perceived the coalition parties' demand that the Czechoslovak People's Party reject the Pastoral Letter and recognize the state's supremacy throughout the entire territory of the Republic and in ecclesiastical matters as impossible. It did not accept it even though it risked being expelled from the coalition. The author of the book also highly appreciated the 'negotiation skills' of the leader of the party Jan Šrámek (1870 – 1956) [Trapl-Konečný-Marek], who saw the danger, was able to prevent the threat and thwarted the socialists' goal. He considered Šrámek the winner of the affair because the People's Party defended its stand on the

¹⁷ The press speculated on the objections to the Letter that Bishops Blaha, Gebej and Kmeťko should have had. Confirmation or disapproval of these reflections is a matter of further research.

Pastoral Letter and remained in the coalition and the only concession - consisting in agreeing to further negotiations on the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church (it had been part of the coalition's program since 1922) and negotiations on the content of the law on holidays and days of remembrance - belonged not to them, but to the agenda of contacts at the government of Czechoslovakia – the Vatican level [Doležal, p. 26].

Miloš Trapl (*1935), an important Czech historian of political Catholicism [Malíř-Marek; Marek, 2015], followed in Doležal's interpretation of the case of the Pastoral Letter of the Slovak Bishops after almost half a century,¹⁸ who repeatedly returned to it in 1983, 1990 and 2008, therefore his approach to the matter is repeated in the essentials. Trapl sees the Pastoral Letter as a 'sharp speech of bishops against left-oriented Slovak Catholics' [Trapl, 1990, p. 239], but the focus of his interest is a detailed analysis of the document's impact on the political sphere, both in the dimension of political parties and the governing coalition. The author takes into account the ecclesiastical policy of the government cabinets (in this sense, the publication of the Pastoral Letter is the logical response of Slovak Catholics to the circumstances of the time). He prioritizes the behavior of the Czechoslovak People's Party, which found itself in a complex political position as a result of the address of the Slovak bishops (the political dimension of the Letter was in contradiction with its political strategy) and the almost panic reaction of the socialist governing parties to it (their press attacked the People's Party tactics of postponing controversial issues and waiting). In the resulting government crisis, it had to solve the dilemma of whether to support the positions of the Slovak bishops or reject the Pastoral Letter and resign from participation in the government. This decision was made against the background of relatively sharp internal tensions between Šrámek's leadership of the party and the Prague opposition formed around Rudolf Horský (1852 – 1926) [Marek, 2009]. Trapl believes that the Czech People's Party succeeded in adopting a balanced and reasonable attitude in this conflict between socialists and Catholics, thanks to which the right of Slovak bishops to freedom of speech was universally recognized and respected, and their only concession was to agree to discuss the draft law on holidays (the Czechoslovak People's Party did not support the law when voting in the parliament). The People's Party remained in the governing coalition so that they could – unlike Hlinka's People's Party – defend the interests of the population of the Catholic confession throughout the territory of the Republic directly in it, in the center of political decision-making.

Luboslav Hromják (*1976) [Hromják], Slovak theologian and historian, also chose a similar conception of the interpretation of the case of the Pastoral Letter, emphasizing the assessment of the positions of the Czechoslovak People's Party, which he describes as

pragmatic [Hromják, p. 112]. He perceives German Social Democracy as the initiator of negotiations on the separation of churches from the state in the parliament [Hromják, p. 111]. The Letter itself, according to the author, was 'the first joint serious protest against the growing oppression of the Catholic Church in the country' and the attitude of the Papal Nuncio in Prague Francesco Marmaggi (1870 – 1949) [Šmíd, 2015, pp. 86–89], as well as Pope Pius XI (Achille Ratti, 1857 – 1939, pontificate in 1922 – 1939) [Zapletal] to the message of the Catholic bishops addressed to the public professing Catholicism was described as 'enthusiastic' [Hromják, p. 109].

In a way, the texts of the historian of Slovak political Catholicism Alena Bartlová (*1939) [Bartlová] are the equivalent and full-fledged supplementary counterpart to Trapl's studies mapping the Czech environment from the Slovak side. She returned to the matter several times after 1989 [Bartlová, 2001, 2004, 2006]. The Pastoral Letter is considered to be an important national event, and this thesis is based on the fact that it had to be dealt with by all top state and political bodies, starting with the parliament, government, and ministries, but it was also dealt with by the Pětka, parliamentary groups, the leadership of all relevant political parties, the Slovak and Czech press at the central level, commented on by prominent personalities entering political life and by the Slovak bishops themselves, etc.

The author explains in her articles the reasons that motivated the College of Bishops to publish the Pastoral Letter. She comes to a fairly balanced conclusion that the document was the result of both the political and religious considerations of its authors. On the political level, she considers the Letter to be a product of the Slovak People's Party's offensive after 1920, when after unsuccessful elections, the leadership moved the organization to the position of a savior of Catholic Slovakia, aiming to free the country from the shackles of social democracy. It asked the Catholic clergy, who responded to the call through their spiritual fathers, for help and participation in this work. Their Pastoral Letter, presented in all churches in Slovakia, became part of the fight against the political left, one of the precisely targeted actions [Bartlová, 2001, p. 173] by which the Slovak Catholic hierarchy, supported by the nuncio in Czechoslovakia and the Vatican, became involved in the election campaign before the 1925 parliamentary elections [Bartlová, 2006, p. 139] and contributed to the victory of the People's Party in Slovakia: the Pastoral Letter 'was probably the answer to the boom of communist activity in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. It also became part of the election campaign for the next parliamentary elections. [...] The fact that the text of the Pastoral Letter and its emotional reading in churches influenced a significant part of the population in Slovakia and also influenced the results of parliamentary elections cannot be disputed.' [Bartlová, 2004, p. 139] This was a targeted attack on socialists and communists with the intention of weakening their positions.

Alena Bartlová has attempted to compensate for her predominant political assessment of the Pastoral Letter by emphasizing its religious dimension, although she does not elaborate on it. She noticed that the Letter had a

¹⁸ In this context, it is interesting, for example, that the Pastoral Letter defining itself against the ideology of socialism and its practice in Soviet Russia does not reflect any of the 'classical' works of Marxist historiography setting the tone of writing about ecclesiastical issues and attitudes towards the Vatican [Černý, Lúrová]. The mentioned content aspect probably discouraged the ecclesiastical historian B. Zlámal from the analysis of the Pastoral Letter; he knew about its existence [Zlámal].

significant theological charge. In a message to Catholics, the new Slovak Episcopate of the Republic defended Christian doctrine and called for its protection from the 'errors' of modern industrial society produced both by liberal and socialist thinking [Bartlová, 2001, p. 175].

We consider the results of the research of the Slovak political scientist and historian Milan Katuninec (*1960) [Katuninec] to be a significant input into the discussion on the motivation for publishing the Pastoral Letter. Although he did not deal with the subject monographically, as part of his examination of the genesis of the Christian trade union movement in Slovakia, he concluded that the bishops were prompted to act by the memorandum of the headquarters of the All-Union Association of Christian Social Workers of Slovakia. When it found itself in a deep crisis before the middle of the 1920s [Katuninec, 2001], it was looking not only for a new leader (found in Rudolf Čavojský having a close relationship with the Slovak People's Party) but also for a strategy of action, including both a sharper definition against the socialist and communist left and the use of the potential hidden in cooperation with church elites [Katuninec, 2015]. Another Slovak historian, Róbert Arpáš (*1973) [Arpáš], followed Katuninec's thesis, unique in a historiographical reflection of the Pastoral Letter in 2018, modifying it into an attempt by the Catholic Church to penetrate the workers' movement through the Pastoral Letter and to stimulate the transition of the workers from the socialist to the Catholic trade unions [Arpáš].

The theme of the Pastoral Letter acquires a new dimension by studying and making available the archival materials stored in the Vatican archives. Commented editions of documents were created both in the Slovak [Hrabovec, 2012] and in the Czech [Šmíd-Pehr-Šebek-Helan] environment at the beginning of the 21st century, including some that have certain links to the 1924 pastoral memorandum. The editors accompany their works with introductions [Pehr-Šebek] in which the Letter is interpreted and commented on to a greater or lesser extent, or they use the newly acquired knowledge in their further scientific publications. Overall, it can be stated that from the research point of view, the interpretation of the Letter of the Slovak Episcopate is enriched by aspects related to Vatican policy and Slovak and Czech diplomatic relations with the Roman Curia.

The leading Slovak historian of ecclesiastical history, Emilia Hrabovec (*1964) [Hrabovec], commented quite extensively on the edition of sources from the Vatican archives to the Pastoral Letter in 2012. She emphasized the fact that it pointed out the social and moral dangers of implementing socialist and communist ideology and emphasized the fact that it was fully in line not only with the Catholic concept of morality but also with the views of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI, who last presented them in his consistory allocation of December 1924. In this context, the author pointed to the connection of the Letter to content similar to the address of the Slovak Episcopate from 1920, which, like the statement of 1924, presented opinions no less sharp, unambiguous, and open but without any response in the Slovak or Czech public. She describes the reaction of government circles and the non-Catholic public to the Pastoral Letter as excessively

violent, explainable by the approaching elections, which both socialists and liberals were afraid of [Hrabovec, 2012, p. 74]. The author, probably also influenced by the position of Nuncio Marmaggi [Hrabovec, 2012, pp. 418–424], assesses the Czechoslovak People's Party in a relatively critical manner, comparing its response to the Letter with the position of the Slovak People's Party. She reflects on the discrepancy and describes the difference as abysmal. The Czechoslovak People's Party considered the uncompromising worldview speeches of the Slovak bishops as a 'threat to the fragile balance in the governing coalition' and its ministerial seats [Hrabovec, 2012, p. 83]. The Czechoslovak People's Party remained in the coalition by resigning from public support for the Pastoral Letter and agreeing to the Holiday Act [Hrabovec, 2018, p. 227; Hrabovec, 2012, pp. 428–429]. The contribution to the topic is the author's assessment of the activities and opinions of Nuncio Marmaggi, who intervened quite significantly in the course of the case from behind the scenes and informed Curia about its course. He did not want to escalate the conflict within the coalition and agreed to a cautious approach. He feared the unknown; what the creation of a new government without the participation of the Czechoslovak People's Party could mean.

Making the documents from the Vatican archives available in the Czech environment was, unlike the Slovak one, the work of a team of authors, some members of which accompanied the broad-based project with a comprehensive book introduction, but in the case of Marek Šmíd and his collaborators with a subsequent edition of diplomatic documents created by the contact of Vatican ambassadors with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Šmíd-Hajdinová-Mandzák] and other scientific studies which are also valuable for the topic of the Pastoral Letter of the Slovak Bishops.

The historian and political scientist Michal Pehr (*1977) [Pehr], together with the historian of Czech political Catholicism Jaroslav Šebek (*1970) [Šebek; Pánek-Vorel, p. 295], described the case around the Pastoral Letter of Slovak bishops as part of the introductory study to the edition of Vatican documents and identified with the assessment that this is the 'first fighting performance' of church representatives after the consolidation of the Republic [Pehr-Šebek, p. 130]. They see the creation of the Letter as a reaction to the social conditions in Czechoslovakia used for agitation by radical socialists and for the anti-religious propaganda of some associations. They claim that its publication was politicized because it attacked government parties. They describe the reaction of the socialists to the address of the bishops as aggressive [Pehr-Šebek, pp. 129–130]. The authors conclude that the Czechoslovak administration saw the document as an act of a political nature, the aim of which was to win voters for the Slovak People's Party and the Hungarian Christian Social Party, in contrast to the Vatican, which considered the Pastoral Letter to be a document of a religious nature. The left used the Letter to attack the Bishop of Košice, Augustin Fischer-Colbrie (1863 – 1925) [Mihóková; Zubko-Kleiber] and to stir up other thorny problems such as the Church's attitude towards the state and Hungary, separation, land reform, etc. They also take note of the government crisis that the

Czechoslovak People's Party, in their opinion, survived thanks to Jan Šrámek, but they are inclined to the thesis that the attack on the People's Party ended in a compromise [Pehr-Šebek, p. 133].

The Prague historian Marek Šmíd (*1979) [Šmíd], as part of his monograph devoted to apostolic nuncios in Czechoslovakia [Šmíd, 2015], gets us beyond the prevailing description, characterizing the introduction to the above-mentioned edition. The issue of the Pastoral Letter is secondary in its content, but the author enriches the topic with an opinion on the problem of the authorship of the pastoral document, the personality characteristics of Vatican diplomats, and references to the role of the envoy Václav Pallier (1880–1947) [Dejmek], who was an informant between Prague and the Vatican and although he did not even read the Pastoral Letter properly,¹⁹ he influenced both sides with his views. Šmíd agreed with the opinion that 'the Pastoral Letter [...] clearly entered the political sphere and indirectly sought the support of the Slovak People's Party before the upcoming parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia' [Šmíd, 2015, p. 258] and confirms that 'the Vatican perceived the Letter primarily on the religious level, while the government saw in it a current political pamphlet aimed primarily at weakening left-wing parties' [Šmíd, 2015, p. 259]. The author also draws attention to the issue of the reception of the Pastoral Letter by the faithful, which was not unambiguous, especially on the part of left-oriented Catholics, and was accompanied by both verbal rejections with excesses and negotiations before courts. In this regard, it is also necessary to draw attention to the study of Michal Marťák (*1978) [Marťák], who, on the specific case of Eduard Skalský [Marťák], created a model of the origin and solution of such cases and indirectly also draws attention to the need to go through the diocesan archives for the topic of the Pastoral Letter.

So far, the most extensive contribution devoted to the topic we are dealing with in this article is a study by the young Bratislava author Blažena Křižová (Pavlovkinová) [Křižová] from 2018, who tried to synthesize the research results so far and enriched them in two areas [Křižová]. She analyzed some important articles published in the press bodies of selected political parties (the social-democratic *Robotnícké noviny*, the agrarian *Slovenský denník*, the Slovak People's Party newspaper called *Slovák*), which can be interpreted as a presentation of the attitude of the political organization concerned to this

case; the analysis of Slovak periodicals should be supplemented by a similar probe in the Czech press in the spirit of the author's belief that the case had a broader, national and pan-European context [Křižová, p. 200]. The second level extending the existing knowledge about the Pastoral Letter, is represented by the author's reflection on the specific impacts of the document on the life of society. It was not only a declaration of the bishops' opinions, but, in the author's opinion, its core was the formulation of guidelines for the clergy and the faithful on how to behave in the situation described in the Pastoral Letter. The bishops not only lectured but also recommended and spoke about sanctions in case of choosing a wrong attitude from their point of view. Perhaps the most controversial impact on the public was the instruction on the conduct of elections in the conditions of the political system of parliamentary democracy. Therefore, the reaction to the Pastoral Letter was turbulent and divided society, as evidenced by the evocation of the situation in the church, state structures, political parties, and the interested public.

Křižová concludes that we cannot claim that the Letter primarily pursued political goals for the benefit of Catholic political parties (in Slovakia), but she does not exclude this possibility [Křižová, p. 210]. 'Even the contradictory attitude of Bishop of Banská Bystrica Blaha and Bishop of Nitra Karol Kmeťka to the publication of the Letter in their dioceses did not diminish the weight of the suspicion of politicization.' [Křižová, p. 210] She attributes the motivation for creating the Letter to national socio-political conditions, but she evokes foreign inspiration with regard to the incompatibility of Catholic doctrine with liberal and socialist theories. The author's claim that the address of the bishops 'was not, in fact, an extension of the Church's teaching but was in agreement with it' is critical, and its authors are reproached for the fact that it was not clearly formulated in the matter of sanctions, which 'caused various ways of interpretation and application in practice' [Křižová, p. 210]. She sees the problem in the fact that it was not possible to precisely define the degree of Catholicity of the organizations that the Catholics were not supposed to join – except for communist, socialist, anarchist, and Masonic structures.

Due to the relative completeness of the historiographical overview, we also selected literature dealing with the history of Slovakia or Czechoslovakia (or the Czech lands). We found that the overwhelming majority of the authors consider the theme of the Pastoral Letter of 1924 within the time frame as the work of marginalia, which they do not reflect [cf. e.g. Olivová; Olivová-Kvaček; Kováč; Krofta; Bokes; Odložilík]. Nevertheless, we can find useful insights even in this type of work. For example, the German author Harry Klepetař (1906–1994) [Klepetař, p. 204–205] pointed out the role of President T. G. Masaryk, who intervened in the case by negotiating with the ministers of the coalition parties and together with Foreign Minister Beneš, who consulted with Archbishop Kordač, contributed to calming tensions and resolving the crisis in the coalition by compromise. These themes were developed years later by Antonín Klimek (1937–2005) [Pánek-Vorel, p. 136] in two of his monographs [Klimek, 1996, 2000]. He was a prominent Czech historian dealing with the history of the First

¹⁹ On 17 January 1925 V. Pallier wrote to F. Marmaggi: 'I pointed out that the Letter in the substantial summary (I do not know the whole text myself) was also published in the *Osservatore Romano* on these days.' [Šmíd-Pehr-Šebek-Helan, p. 399]. A few days later, on 1 February, in a summary report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for January, he reported on his conversation with the then Papal Prelate Francesco Borgognini Duca (1884–1954): 'I assured Borgognini that he could bet his life that the Letter was intended as a political act to win the electorate for the 'Christian' parties, i.e. the 'Christian People's Party' and the 'Christian Social Party', whose patron is Bishop Fischer-Colbrie.' [Šmíd-Hajdinová-Mandžák, p. 290]. He wrote in another report: 'My aim is that all the distinguished dignitaries of the Vatican Foreign Service hear directly from me that we regard this Pastoral Letter as a political, anti-government act and not an act of religious character.' [Šmíd-Hajdinová-Mandžák, p. 303]. As evidenced, for example, by the cases of the Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs Giuseppe Pizzardo (1877–1970) and the former Archbishop of Prague Pavel Huyn (1868–1946), he was quite successful, the Letter was described as 'non-opportunistic'.

Republic. While he perceived Masaryk's approach in the affair as quite radical (he was supposedly 'outraged' by the behavior of the Czechoslovak People's Party; he concluded that Catholics should be given a 'lesson' and a signal to break with the Catholic Church [Klimek, 1996, pp. 338–339] and writes that the president promoted the idea of resolving the government crisis through a caretaker government, he considered Beneš to be one of the key men who contributed to reconciliation (unlike his party colleague Stříbrný) also in the National Socialist Party. Klimek assessed the Slovak bishops' approach as 'non-diplomatic' due to their limited experience with higher spheres of politics [Klimek, 2000, p. 457], accused them of 'aggressiveness' and called the warning of bishops' sanctions as 'imposing anathema on socialist organizations and the Sokol' [Klimek, 1996, p. 339]. The author of the last major synthesis on the history of the First Republic, Zdeněk Kárník (1931–2011) [Štaif], evaluates the above-mentioned sanctions as a 'political intervention of the Church restricting civil rights' and the consent of the Czechoslovak People's Party to 'adopting the law on holidays' as paying the penalty for the compromise [Kárník, pp. 321–322].

Research conclusions. Reflection of the results of the examination of the issues related to the publication of the Pastoral Letter of the Slovak and Subcarpathian Ruthenia Bishops of 1924 leads us to believe that the factual potential of the topic has been largely exhausted. If new archival sources of fundamental importance are not found (in the diocesan written material, in the personal funds of bishops and other interested personalities of ecclesial life, which in our opinion, cannot be assumed), nothing substantial can be added to it in this regard. However, the scope for further research remains open in the search for motives that inspired the Episcopate to publish its message to the Catholic public, as well as in the sphere of interpretation of the content of the Pastoral Letter. We see a lot of space for research in the so far insufficient capture of the reaction of political parties operating in the Czech environment and in the assessment of the attitudes and behavior of the political establishment responding to this document. Deficits also exist in the knowledge of the extent to which the Pastoral Letter, thanks to its sanctioning provisions, was able to influence or change the behavior of the members of the Catholic Church.

An analysis of the content of the Pastoral Letter leads us to the conclusion that the document can be interpreted as a manifestation of the Magisterium of the Episcopate, which does not primarily pursue political goals in the sense of serving political Catholicism or other structures of the Catholic camp. We also believe that the often repeated thesis about its connection with the parliamentary elections in 1925 should be treated with caution because the elections were early (both to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate) and were not on the agenda at the time of the publication of the Letter; no more than speculations appeared in the newspapers or in

the lobby. In addition, a reflection of the 1925 press shows that the issue of the Pastoral Letter was already 'forgotten' or covered up by much more urgent matters in the autumn, namely the consequences of the Marmaggi affair in the ecclesiastical sphere. At the same time, however, it should objectively be noted that the Pastoral Letter entered with its content into the public discourse that transcended the boundaries of the Catholic Church and touched on the problems that resonated in Slovak and Czech society at that time (the optimal model of the political system, the social issue, the problem of secularization, education, and upbringing, but also the functionality of the party-political system, and Czech and Slovak unity). We are convinced that the government crisis caused by the publication of the Pastoral Letter and all that was connected with it was the work of political parties (or the press as their spokesperson), primarily the socialist ones, with the intention of suppressing and deterring both the Catholic Church and the inflexible political Catholicism.

Regarding the question of the motivation of the bishops and the goals of their actions, the historiography is still divided in the interpretation of the problem. The majority of historians seem to be inclined to believe that the Ordinaries did not want to fulfill only their pastoral teaching mission in the religious sphere, but their intention was also to intervene in politics. However, if we study the publicly available addresses of the Episcopate, none of them explicitly confirms the thesis about the non-religious dimension of the Letter. The statements of the hierarchs must be decisive in solving this problem. Otherwise, we would have to admit that they are not true, and the bishops themselves violate the Ten Commandments or question their moral profile and the Magisterium. On the other hand, we must realistically reflect the fact that the Pastoral Letter of the Slovak Bishops provoked a short-term political (coalition, government, parliamentary) crisis in the country, a political affair that was directly addressed by the top state and party management. So what caused it to become the subject of very sharp political controversy? Does the theological content of the Pastoral Letter addressed to people declaring their identity with the Catholic Church objectively have the ability to provoke in a secularizing society the escalating controversies perceived as the beginning/continuation of the 'cultural struggle'?

The Pastoral Letter of the Slovak and Subcarpathian Ruthenia Bishops de facto launched the second stage of the gradual adjustment of the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church in the Czechoslovak Republic, which ultimately resulted in the obstruction of the law on the separation between the state and the churches in *Modus vivendi* [Dejmek; Halas; Helan] as an important factor of a stabilizing nature, which is undoubted of fundamental importance for the existence of the First Republic.

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ДО ІСТОРИОГРАФІЇ ПАСТИРСЬКОГО ПОСЛАННЯ СЛОВАЦЬКИХ І ПІДКАРПАТСЬКОРУСЬКИХ ЄПИСКОПІВ З 1924 РОКУ

У листопаді 1924 року словацькі та підкарпатськоруські єпископи католицької та греко-католицької церков видали пастирське послання. Воно реагувало на той факт, що деякі представники цих церков були членами комуністичних, соціалістичних або прогресивних організацій, які виступали проти віри в Бога, критикували церкви з атеїстичних позицій і докладали зусиль до створення секулярного суспільства. Водночас соціалісти, прагнучи розширити свою членську базу та електорат, зайшли настільки далеко, що на офіційному рівні презентували себе християнською символікою, що мала ввести в оману католиків, які перебували у складному соціальному положенні, та залучити їх до своїх лав. Єпископи відреагували на цей факт і в пастирському посланні до членів своїх церков пояснили згубність соціалістичних і прогресивних теорій та порадили їм вийти з антикатолицьких організацій. Католики, які свідомо нехтували їхніми настановами та застереженнями, мали взяти до уваги, що церква не уділятиме їм деяких тайнств. Видання пастирського

послання спричинило в соціалістичних і прогресивних колах різку негативну реакцію як напад на державу, її конституцію та закони, уряд і демократичну систему, який загрожує самому існуванню республіки. Пастирське послання та його автори, католицька церква, Святий Престол, чеський та словацький політичний католицизм зазнали гострих нападок з боку журналістики і спровокували скандал у пресі. Згодом інтерпеляція німецьких соціал-демократів у Палаті депутатів призвела до урядової кризи, над подоланням якої працювали не лише уряд, парламент, політичні партії, але й так звана П'ятірка як найвищий орган чехословацької політики. Пошуки виходу з урядової кризи показали, що для соціалістів, насамперед для Чехословацької націонал-соціалістичної партії, у цій справі не йшлося передусім про захист власної ідеології. Публікацію послання вони використали для тиску, зокрема, на Чехословацьку народну партію (ЧНП), яка, будучи частиною урядової коаліції та уряду Швевли, гальмувала вирішення проблеми врегулювання відносин між державою та католицькою церквою. Вони хотіли змусити її змінити свою позицію, просуваючи ідею створення уряду меншості без участі ЧНП. Проте керівництво ЧНП впоралося зі складною ситуацією, в якій опинилося внаслідок тиску партнерів по коаліції, а також католицької Словацької народної партії та празького радикального крила власної партії, об'єднаного навколо Рудольфа Горського, завдяки далекоглядній політиці її голови Яна Шрамека. Хоча воно й погодилось на переговори щодо врегулювання відносин між державою і церквами, але, з іншого боку, відстояло членство ЧНП в урядовій коаліції, дало згоду на притягнення до кримінальної відповідальності тільки тих священників, які явно порушили закон, і захистили право єпископів на незалежні публічні виступи в межах закону. Стаття аналізує та оцінює наявний словацький та чеський історичний доробок на тему пастирського послання, зазначає спільні й відмінні риси у трактуванні справи окремими авторами, а також пропонує інші можливі напрямки дослідження.

Ключові слова: католицька церква, єпископат, пастирське послання, урядова криза, соціалізм.