

ANALYSIS OF THE ANTICULT ACTIVITIES IN CZECH REPUBLIC 1993 - 2017

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- Faith and Religion Censorship
 - Spreading of Religious Intolerance
 - Destruction of Religious Pluralism in the Czech Republic
 - Religious Discrimination Supported by Governmental Apparatus
 - Persecution of Freedom of faith and Belief and Freedom of Expression
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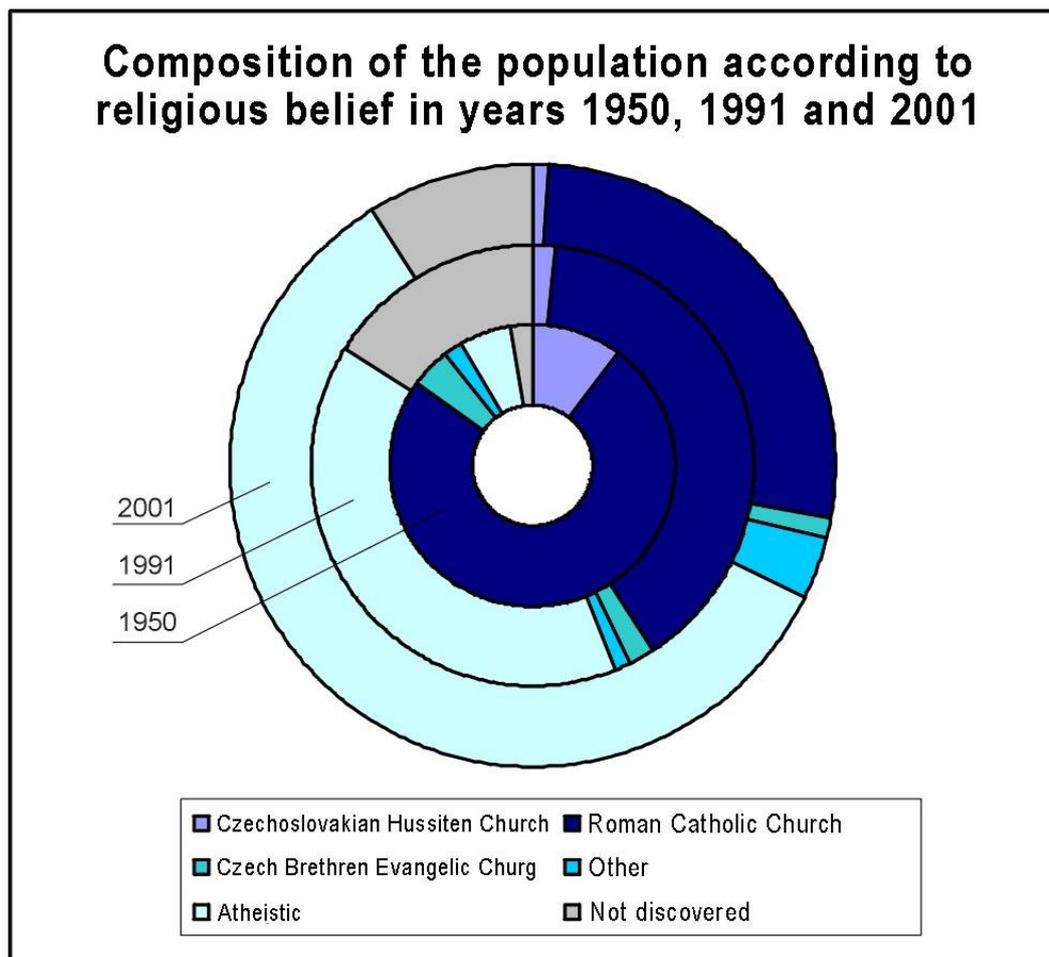
1. RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

„Almost half of the inhabitants are possibly afraid to admit their religious or non-religious affiliation. Churches undoubtedly have a huge outflow, it is a big fall.“

Czech Helsinki Committee

The Czech Republic is the most atheistic and secularized country in the world. During a research of European Commission Eurobarometr at the beginning of 2005, only 19% of Czech inhabitants stated that they believe in god, God exists. It is, after Estonia (16%), second lowest value of 25 countries of EU at an average value of 35%. In 1991-2001 the number of believers decreased by 1,2 million to 32%. The Roman Catholic Church has a dominant position in the Czech Republic to which only 10% of the population were registered during census in 2011. The number of believers has been still decreasing.

The liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church is barely attended by 10% of the number of proclaimed ones to the catholic church in the census in 1991 and also the number of their clergymen decreases, but nowadays they are unpopular in public (a rate of "unpopularity" is according to research of STEM and IVVM in last years between 50% to 60%, while "popularity" does not exceed 25%.)



(https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%A1bo%C5%BEenstv%C3%AD_v_%C4%8Cesku)

4. SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SECTS AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

“Mission of the coming era is the radical renewal of human responsibility. Our conscience must catch up with our intellect, otherwise we are lost.”

Vaclav Havel

Society for the study of sects and new religious movements is a representative of the anti-cult movement in the Czech Republic. Another candidate for representative of the anti-cult is the Skeptics club Sysifos, famous for the humiliating prize of "the erratic boulder" for those who are interested in what is not able to be verified by scientific methods. Activity of Sysifos is not far from being able to compete with the destruction of the lives of thousands of believers, the liquidation of minority movements, spreading intolerance and fear against new religions in the whole society of which SSSNRM is responsible for.

Towards the general public and journalists, they claim that their criticism of religious movements and sects is scientific, independent and objective. They prop themselves upon scientific language, but otherwise everything is regarded and evaluated by their dogmatically Christian view refusing another faith.

„The Society was registered by Ministry of the Interior in 1993, under a former designation „Exodos“ - The Ecumenic Society for Sects´ and New Religious Movements´ Study (hereinafter „Exodos“). The society with this former designation was founded by Zdeněk Vojtíšek and Tomáš Novotný, who plentifully discussed sects´and new religious movements´ issues, in the process, as I have already mentioned, their idea was to found a society which would concern religious movements and especially would inform the public reliably about a religious sectarianism. Originally the group „Exodus“ only organized a few conferences, lectures and studies. In the course of time it came up to gradual increase of its activity and so it was necessary to adapt its activity legally. So the organization was registered as a civic association under a current designation: „The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements“. A form of a civic association doesn´t require its members to be experts in that area. It isn´t about a professional or an academic subject, so any approval committee wasn´t necessary to evaluate a scientific erudition of its members. For an official registration it was sufficient only to pass information about a foundation of the society including approved statutes (by which an activity of The Society as a nonprofit organization was allowed) to Ministry of the Interior. (*In: Gabriela Pešková, a bachelor´s thesis, University of Pardubice, 2016, About circumstances of an origin of „The Society for the Study of Sects...“*)

The chairman of the civic association is a former Roman Catholic priest Ivan Odin Štampach. Its main spokesman and most active member is doc. Zdeněk Vojtíšek, a clergyman of the Evangelical Church. Other active members include a Roman Catholic priest Aleš Opatrný and a specialist on pastoral therapy in a psychiatric hospital, Prokop Remeš. The other members, who number less than twenty, come from the academic background and are clergymen as well. A large number of new members are recruited by the Society from the university students of theology of doc. Vojtisek. They are forced by the school system to do practices, and the offer of their own teacher to engage in the activities of the SSSNRM looks attractive. Students of the doctorate are so poorly paid that the reason for joining the SSSNRM may be to participate in

implementation of an activity that is subsidized by the Ministry of Culture, Labor and Social Affairs.

They are even paid for these assessments by the police and the courts as for independent reports which play an important role in judicial decisions. Over the past eight years, they have been directly assigned by ministries to subsidies of 1.65 million Czech crowns, which is approximately 70 000 USD. During stalking, which they call researching, when they encounter a significant group, they report it immediately to the police. Alternatively they complain when the sects do not pursue any criminal activities, and consequently the police could not disperse them easily. So they at least accredit such criminal activities to the religious groups in the eye of the police, the courts and the public. However, the Society has no official mandate (e.g. By the Roman Catholic Church) to undertake such activities.

The Ministry of Interior has no official authority to monitor the activities of sects and new religious groups. **On its website, however, they refer to the expert work which says** that the ministry relies in terms of monitoring of new religious groups on the activities of the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements. Namely their website states: *"In the Czech Republic there is no separate department or a group specializing on dealing with sects and their potential threats ... The police, on the instructions of the Ministry of Interior or the Police Presidium, only carry out monitoring of a selected group and observe whether any breaches of law are committed. **During consequent investigation of these cases, it is very difficult to blame somebody from committing a crime and proving the suspects guilty because there is a lack of sections that deal with this issue. Then the suspects are accused of alternative crimes (restriction of personal liberty, extortion, violations of the moral education of youth, etc.)....** The police officers dealing with dangerous sects cooperate with the Ministry of Culture and the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements, which is, in the long run, engaged in monitoring and watching the alleged sects and new religious movements."* (ZEMAN, R: The role of the police in the fight against racism and xenophobia, Prague, Ministry of the Interior, 2000, p. 15)

Designation to be „a sect“ is thus ensuring religious discrimination, social exclusion and contempt. Sometimes the religious discrimination based on general and specific activities of SSSNRM could turn to serious religious persecution. We brought attention of the Minister for Human Rights, Jiri Dienstbier, regarding their biased attitude. He was intrigued by such a systemic error of monopolistic cooperation with them; He promised to have their activities investigated. Nevertheless, their leading representative continues to repeat his behaviour, which we consider to be criminal, and contributes to the religious persecution.

They do their subversive activity very cunningly. At first, they create a panic fear of danger of sects in society in front of which nobody is sufficiently protected. They stir up a hate to their otherness. And then, they proclaim that chosen new movements are sects. They do not have to take care of the rest. As in the Second World War, Nazism spread hatred and fear of the Jews, their discrimination and extermination was largely in hands of ordinary people. Even today, because of the activity of the anti-cult movement, the believers of new movements face

the impossibility of living fully their faith, or such oppressions at work, in personal life, society. It is so unbelievable what words of the would-be scientists can do.

Hundreds of statements to the media, several expert opinions for courts and Ministry of Culture, activities of the secret police units - and the lies of several individuals, the whole state and the nation accept it as the truth. However, this is a deliberate activity, and already in advance not only members of SSSNRM but also the majority of the involved state units are aware of their consequences (liquidation of religious minorities). The activity of SSSNRM is not only illegal, it is engaged in crimes against humanity and incites the state apparatus to it.

For example, because of SSSNRM the followers of Guru Jara have been suffering from:

- Numerous terminations from employment including and academic careers
- Destruction of relationships, friendships, marriages (divorce), families of members due to social stigmatization
- Extreme and sudden loss of business, clients and finance
- Health and psychological/mental distress from long-term traumatizing persecution
- Banishment of public reading of any PGJ religious materials
- Death threats and bullying via internet
- Ceasing of spreading church teachings because of stress and fears associated with membership, and thereby a dying church due to constant threats and humiliation
- Loss of meaning of life and depression due to loss of the possibility to safely practice one's faith
- For more than two years, the spiritual Masters of this religious society have been in detention without their little children, almost without medical care and in permanent danger of their lives. In the Czech Republic a fabricated court against them took place without their knowing and they are threatened with physical liquidation.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF SSSNRM

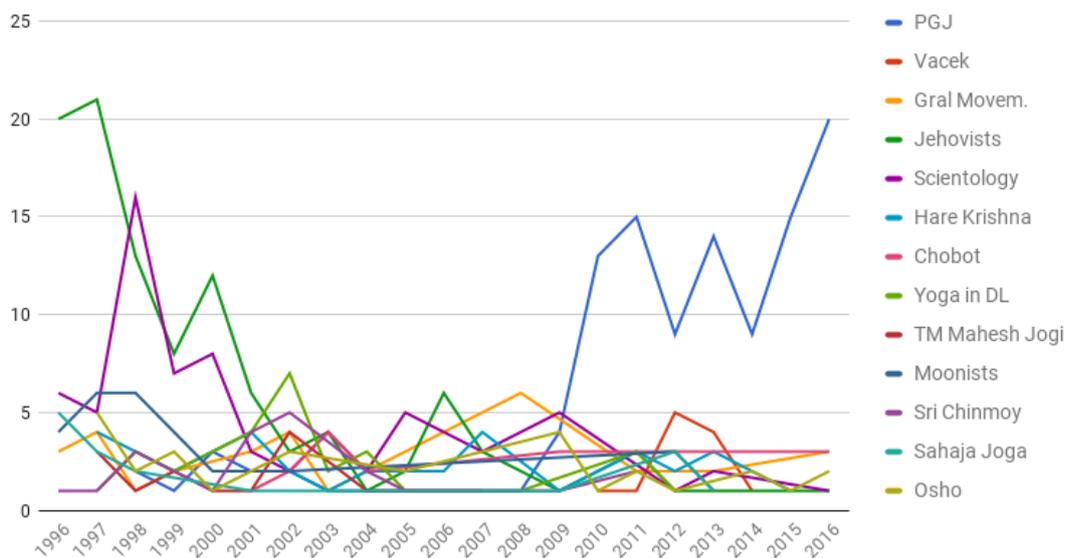
"The history teaches that democracy without values is easy to change in an obvious and camouflage totality."

Pope John Paul II.

Articles statistics

We have researched the articles of the SSSNRM members or mentioned their attitude of discrimination of new religious movements. We relied mostly on a list of articles from the most respected printed periodicals, online newspapers, television and radio stations archived in the AnnoPress. We have found **744 articles** or parts of interviews intentionally creating a **negative image of new religious movements over the last 21 years.**

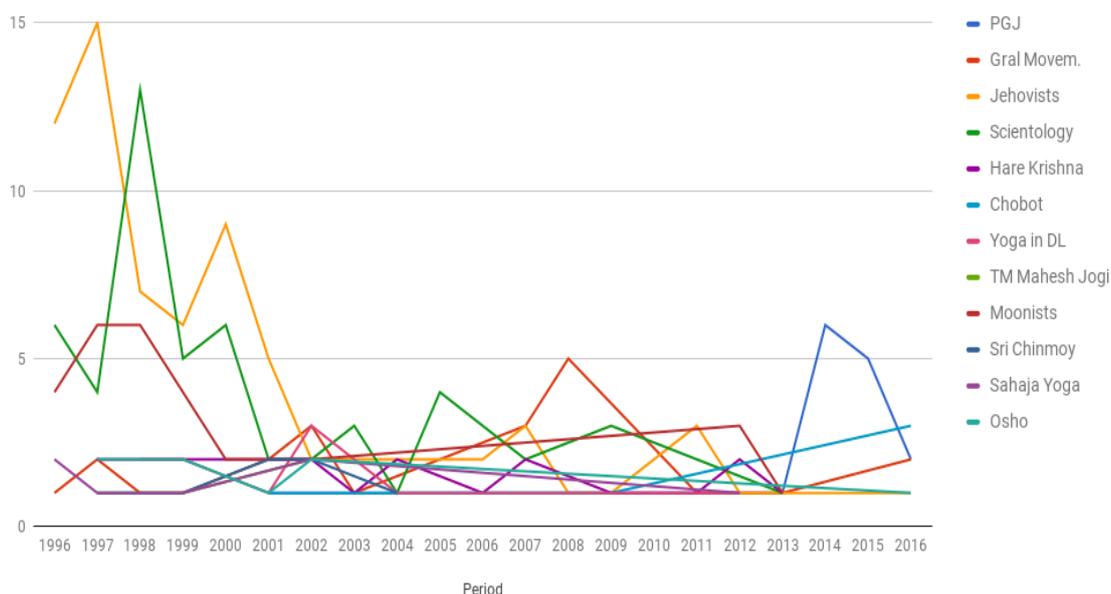
Articles in periodics 1996-2016



A graph of persecute media expressions of anti-cults to religious minorities

It seems that the trends towards discriminatory statements and the slanders of new movements generally slightly decreases. It is that after the expansion of the new religious movements after the revolution in 1989, the propaganda of the anti-cult and its connection with the state forces had ensured their dispersal or at least the minimization of the base of the believers, and thus they considered them not as dangerous and competing with the Christianity of which almost all members of the SSSNRM are spiritual. Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain accurate numbers of the number of believers of the most persecuted religious groups, and thus to show the causal connection also statistically. From interviews with major representatives of the societies, we are convinced that the time-out of the believers followed the waves of anti-cult pressure.

The only new religious movement, to which discriminatory articles still go in the great is Path of Guru Jara. It has been going through the biggest media discriminatory pressure in the last few years and because of this, the biggest persecution.

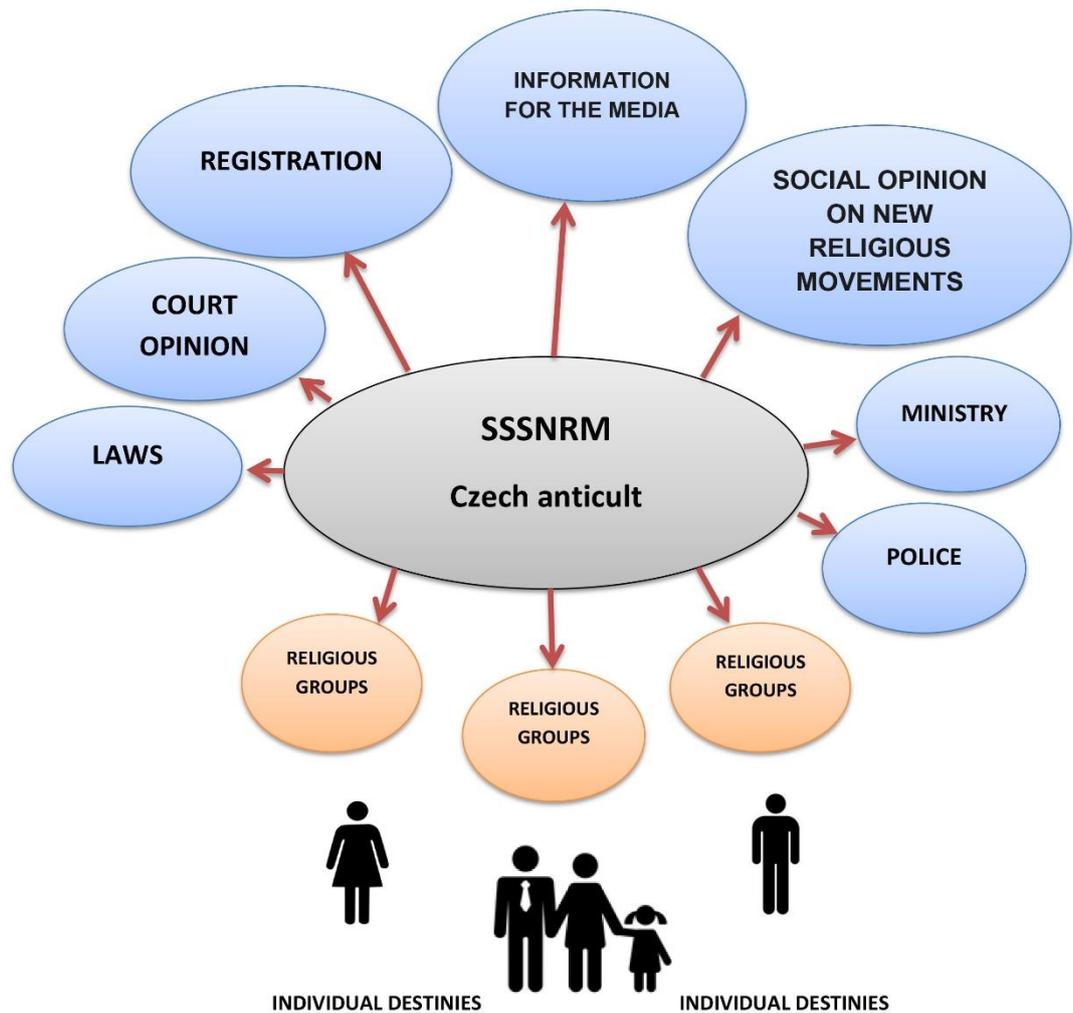


Graph of persecute media expressions of doc. Vojtisek to religious minorities

We have also paid attention to articles that doc. Vojtisek had written only recognized media or where he was he was quoted with his discriminatory remark to address the new religious movements. The way how doc. Vojtisek negatively wrote about new movements between 1990 and 2002 was simple, in the style of tabloid press. The anti-cult movement is therefore very easy and relatively briefly to pay attention to the persecuted group, and the press will do the rest of work for them. Since 2002 there has been a well-seen tendency to focus more on the creation of professional academic texts, from which subsequently draw others.

Another interesting finding of the analysis is the effort of the SSSNRM to advocate and protect so-called "victims of sects". From many cases, it is clear that the Society for study of sects will make the victims from the apostates. Sometimes, these former members have more intention to start their own version of the movement from which they have mostly left because of their unfulfilled ambitions. **In the second graph it is possible to see articles of only one member of SSSNRM - doc. Vojtisek. He is the most active spokesman of the anti-cult who is responsible for a most of the discriminatory statements in media.**

As seen from the above data, the greatest activity reached on public media Zdeněk Vojtíšek was in the years 1996 - 2002. In this period was adopted so-called the two-stage model of registration of religious communities following the example of Austria, where the possibility of registration of minority religious movements ensured greater respect and protection of the rights of believers. At this time also Zdeněk Vojtíšek has begun to profile more as an expert on sects and religious extremism, gradually began to cooperate with the police and courts.



The Czech anti-cultural society SSSNRM has a great impact. It negatively affects not only religious societies and the Church, but also the lives of thousands of individuals that make it impossible for them to fully live their faith. It has a huge direct impact on social perception. Through their publications, television appearances, articles, or other media involvement, they are spreading hatred towards new religious groups.

For their liking to scandalize religious minorities and for its resounding title, which in itself is already inappropriate, the media loves them. **They have a monopoly position in cooperation with the ministries of culture, interior and labor and social affairs. They prepare reports for the courts, train police officers and cooperate with them to persecute new movements. The SSSNRM also has an impact on law-making, members are politically engaged, one of them is a member of the Czech Parliament.** There has still not been anyone to stop their genocidal activity.

7. CRITICISM OF EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITIES OF SSSNRM

*“Hope is not a conviction that something good will happen,
but the certainty that it makes sense - no matter how it will end.”*

Vaclav Havel

Activity of the SSSNRM was criticized as non-democratic, spreading intolerance, and creating an inappropriate fear of all new non-Christian religious societies in Czech society already in 1998 by the Czech Helsinki Committee. The unprofessionalism of the SSSNRM, the close Christian origins, and the intention to spread fear and thus to destroy religious minorities, were the reason of emergences for studies of some persecuted religious societies - Hare Krishna, Scientologists, Friends of Jiri Vacek, Yoga in Daily Life and the Path of Guru Jara. Media is fully devoted to the Society for research of sects because it provides them with scandalous statements on account at new movements. In the 25 years of its work, there has been issued only one article, which uncovered its true face and inadequate activity. Several diploma and bachelor theses have been established confirming the incorrectness of existence of the anticult movement and its clearly negative impact on religious pluralism and the democratic values of the Czech state. We presented some extracts resented here.

Czech Helsinki Committee

The Czech Helsinki Committee report on the human rights situation in 1998, a large amount of space is devoted to the legitimate criticism of the SSSNRM as anti-cult representatives. Then the head of the SSSNRM was assigned to the Czech Helsinki Committee, and in the 2001 report he himself criticized the Act about Churches and the controversial and abusive paragraph 5 on the prohibition of pressure for addiction to the leadership of new movements. But he had not mentioned that his Society was abusing this paragraph to suppress peaceful religious minorities. In all other reports since his work in the CHC, there has been no longer the issue of the pernicious impact of anti-cult, suffering believers, and, with one exception, the reports has even avoided the theme of faith. And not only in the reports, from 2002 to 2015, CHC has ceased fully to defend the freedom of faith - despite the demands of persecuted believers. It makes the impression of Ivan O. Štampach as a double agent who does not report hypocritically about his participation in anti-cult within the framework of the CHC but fulfills the mission of the SSSNRM within the CHC.

A Report on a State of Human Rights in the Czech Republic in 1998, Prague, 51. – 52.

An image of new religious movements that the public is forming, is unfavourably influenced by some study and educative activities, which unfortunately affect decision-making of state authorities because of subjectivity of their approaches.

a) The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements

A separate chapter is represented by activities of The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements. It's about a civil association which was established as a follow-up to an association of traditional Christian denominations with a designation „Exodos“. This civil

association sets itself a main task to inform about sects and new religious movements. Decision-making members of this association are christianly motivated people connected to registered denominations. These experts theologially criticize almost all new religious movements. **Because they are aware that the public isn't sensitive to Christian scientific arguments, they use criminal and medical arguments.**

The main goal is to clarify a danger that arises for individuals who yield to teachings of sects. In fact this group uses generally existing intolerance to opinion differences and **almost all new acting religious minorities marks as sects**. Members of this association name themselves as experts on sects' area and use a scientific language. **But in fact they biasedly emphasize tragic cases of some peripheral religious groups, all new movements associate artifically together and stigmatize them this way.** Their starting point is naturally theological and their true motivation is an attempt to prevent a „distorted“ interpretation of Holy Scripture. This is manifested even in that they connect groups which worship a wrong God with groups which worship Satan, because according to a true Christian both teachings come from Satan. Conclusions of this association are accepted by the media absolutely indiscrimately and it seems that its activity influences also the registration authorities with which they have an affiliation. This association is very active in the educational area and organizes regularly lectures, in which using its subjective point of view, it biasedly interprets teachings of particular denominations and new religious groups.

b) Publicizing in the media

The only source of information about new religious movement comes only from The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements which leads to demonizing and stigmatizing. Only very rarely there is an article in the media where truly unbiased experts who are occupied with Religious Studies express their views.

c) A criminalization

A report of the police of the Czech Republic processed from materials and consultations with The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements in 1994, defines attributes of sects (this concept is used for all new religious movements) and adds that in some of these sects a psychic disorder is manifested, their members are in fact like mentally ill. They must be treated similarly. Allegedly it is very difficult to leave a sect without consequences on a member, because “he/she has been brainwashed“. **Just “this danger“ should justify a criminalization of new religious movements.**

This tendency to criminalize new religious movements is most strikingly manifested in conclusions of The Report about a manifestation of extremist attitudes in the Czech Republic in 1995. This report motivated the establishment of a special department for monitoring extremism, where new religious movements and sects became a subject of **monitoring and subsequently got on a list of groups suspected of extremism**. In the report was to these groups reproached e.g. even violation of social (not legal!) standards.

A criminalization of a religious group could manifest itself even in specific approaches of a specialized division of The Police of the Czech Republic. Representatives are summoned to pass an explanation without being informed about the reason of a summons, they are being

interrogated even for several hours. Besides this, data is collected about members of a group, about „their achieved spiritual level“, even about potential contacts with foreign countries. Gained information was – supposedly unofficially – communicated to the press. It's natural that every society must face a danger of such sects and other groups which can threaten lives of people, their health, morality and other human values. But it must have criteria for an assessment of these phenomena through which it is possible to separate really dangerous and damaging manifestations from noble efforts and activities which contribute to a development of spiritual life in its variety and plurality.“

From the report Czech Helsinki Committee on Human Rights 2001, author: Doc. ThDr. Ivan O. Štampach

Registration itself does not give religious entities the same opportunities as registration under the applicable law. This requires authorization to performance of special rights. Apart from the fact that the religious grouping have to comply with the requirements of paragraph 5, it still has to comply with several other conditions, in accordance with paragraph 11, of which the condition in article 1 (a) deserves attention that the Church or other religious society is registered under this Act continuously at the date of submission of the proposal 10 years, and in accordance with article 4, the proposal for granting such authorization has to include the signatures of so many adult citizens of the Czech Republic or foreigners with permanent residence in the Czech Republic who are accountable to this church and religious society, as the number of 1 per thousand inhabitants of the Czech Republic, according to the latest census... If the legislators consider that a procedure is necessary to prevent the abuse of the position of a registered church or religious society, it can be ensured by law. However, the way this law ensures is problematic in terms of human rights. The wording of paragraph 5 is legally unclear and easily misused. During its preparation, the influence of the so-called anti-cults could be applied.

In this term, church or other groupings are denoted, aimed at suppressing the rights of religious minorities. Authority deciding on registration or granting of authorization or the court that would review such a decision, would have to turn to unrelated experts. The danger of the impact of anti-cult initiatives on the application of this paragraph is considerable.

The law can be further investigated by the relevant legal instances, which will assess its compliance with the constitutional order of the Czech Republic and international human rights conventions. The Czech Helsinki Committee supports such an examination of the law and, in the event of its final confirmation, will pay particular attention to the equality of registered and unregistered, large and small, traditional and new religious entities, and the way of application of § 5. It will also take note of possible administrative bullying that churches and religious communities are at risk.

From the report Czech Helsinki Committee on Human Rights 2006

The Ministry of Culture refused to register four religious entities with reference to Act No. 3/2002. PhDr. Zdeněk Vojtíšek, who is professionally engaged in contemporary religiosity, used his right to information and examined these cases directly at the ministry. In his paper on the International Religious Conference on Religion and Politics held in Pardubice by the Department of Religion and Philosophy at the Philosophical Faculty on October 3 and 4, 2006, he took the view that all these decisions were legal and legitimate.

Hare Krishna

Religious freedom and psychology of fear Tattva-darší dás or who is interested to harm Hare Krishna movement, <http://www.vaisnava.cz/clanek.php3?no=8>

You may have already met an interesting phenomenon in our media. On the one hand, there are positive or neutral programs and articles about different religious groups whose authors describe their personal experiences or experiences from visits to the centers of these movements and on the other hand we can see absolutely negative articles. We may ask, "Who is interested in harming, for example, the Hare Krishna movement? Who wants to give them the label of "dangerous sects" that people are afraid of? Who, how and why does it do it?"

All negative articles have the same origin. They come from members of the Society for the study of sects and new religious movements (SSSNRM), especially Mr. Prokop Remes, Zdenek Vojtisek, Tomas Novotny and several others. Whenever their names appear in the press, it is clear how much it hits. It is a group of members of various Christian churches who completely ignore all truly scientific studies about the effects of the spiritual practices of religious movements and appoint themselves into self-appointed experts. They aim to attack mainly the Church of Unification, the Hare Krishna Movement, the Mormon Church, Scientology, and others. If we look at their actions closer, perhaps we can be surprised by the obvious similarity with the medieval inquisition. Their weapons today are fake propaganda to create fear of "new religious groups".

The first way how to do it is to "throw everyone in one sack" and try to create the impression that everything that one group does wrongly also applies to all others, or that they are basically all the same as Satanists. Thus, a picture of a member of the Hare Krishna movement and an article about sexual orgies appears next to each other. The readers thus completely miss the fact that one of the conditions for entering the Hare Krishna movement is to avoid any extramarital sex life. It is the same as if one teacher were convicted of the offense at school and because of this, all others were fired. They are trying to combine known negative facts such as mass suicide in Jonestown with all religious groups. This creates the fear in the subconsciousness of people regarding "destructive cults," "dangerous sects", no matter what the real philosophy and life of these groups are. The best way how to remove this negative influence is to teach as many people as possible about what teaching the movement is spreading and what their practice is.

The second way is to manipulate public media and thus public opinion. The members of the SSSNRM use the ignorance of journalists and directors, to whom they always emphasize only negative information (often coming from their foreign colleagues and have nothing to do with the situation in the Czech Republic), and those with good intent distribute distorted information or pronounced defamation. Very often they are their friends or members of the same churches as they are, but it is not the rule. At this point, we all can help a lot. Write your personal opinion to the editorial board and explain their mistakes and inaccuracies, they did. Write your own experience with Hare Krishna and explain our philosophy.

The third way is to completely ignore the opinions of real scientists and experts. In our country, the Hare Krishna movement is still young, therefore so many such studies have not been made, but where the Hare Krishna movement is longer, there are quite a lot. Some

sociologists or students of orientalism or religion have written many books and treatises that sect-fighters such as Vojtisek completely ignore and cite only their foreign colleagues from the anti-cult movements. Thus, the readers will learn that the activities of the members of the Hare Krishna movement are reduced to the production of candles, etc. (see the magazine Blesk), and this innocent information only proves that these gentlemen did not come in contact with Hare Krsna movement in the Czech Republic and therefore they know almost nothing about it. They do not bother to reply to the letters of the members of the movement, make a visit to any of the centers and only stereotypically promote their propaganda about the danger of all sects.

Therefore, it is still necessary to point out that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is a 5000-year-old authorized religion, which is part of the widespread tradition of Hinduism, to which millions of people devote in India till now. It is a big mistake to consider all non-Christian societies (or non-Catholic) as sects.

The fourth way how to awake fear and religious intolerance in people, is a big lie. Sect-fighters tries to combine the effects of the above-mentioned techniques in their books, articles and television performances and create a credible picture of the danger and trickiness of new religious groups. Their claims sometimes contradict, by which they are proving that it is a cheap propaganda designed largely for uninformed or less intelligent people. They use the terms "brainwashing", "psychological and material addiction to cult" and like this, but they do not define or provide it with any credible proof. The resulting image of their propaganda is probably the following: "A greedy religious leader or guru hungry for power seduces new members and transforms them into completely manipulated and dependent individuals with washed brain, who then he exploits and hides his information from them. The only defense against it is not to join them and not to be interested in what they say, do, and teach, because the sect is like a drug, and one must not touch it either. They can be nice to you, to help you out of the worst, but you still have to run away from them as quickly as possible."

The sect-fighters can also cause big problems in family relationships because they claim to parents that they are losing their children if they enter the Hare Krishna movement. Of course, it is a big pain for the Catholic if his/her son or daughter become a Protestant, and it is similarly difficult for the atheist if his/her child become a believer, but to claim that after their entry into the religious movement their son or daughter is not their son or daughter any more, is really demagogy.

Sometimes they also mention that there is the possibility of deprogramming (which is, of course, unlawful), which they give wealthy parents an indication of what services are available to them. (It's basically kidnapping and torture of their children which could help them to get out of sects).

Our sect-fighters use mainly materialistic arguments, but they speak from a Christian perspective, which is a combination that speaks for itself. And if I now refer to the Ten Commandments, "you will not bear false testimony against your neighbor", you will probably consider me naive.

The irony of all this is that Hare Krishna movement found itself in a similar situation as the Christian prophet Jesus Christ (maybe it would be interesting to hear what our sect-fighters would do from Jesus Christ if he lived and preached today). We can learn just from his life. How many injustices they committed on him! How much he had to endure, and still he did not embitter

and constantly tried to give people the most precious - love for God. The same we all should do.

In closing, we can only state the words of Zdenek Vojtisek from Ahoj magazine: "The sect makes a sect, above all, I would say, its dishonest work with the people I have already talked about ..."

Jiří Vacek

Zdenek Vojtisek - Critical analysis of public performance, 19.08.2012, source: <http://www.jirivacek.cz>

Mr. Vojtisek is an active member of Evangelical Brotherhood Church. He is its preacher and theologian. This church is known as the fundamental opponent of all Eastern spiritual directions, such as Yoga, Buddhism, Hinduism and others. He considers them the creation of evil powers - the devil.... In public, Mr. Vojtíšek represents himself exclusively as a scientist - a religionist, and thus conceals his true convictions and endeavors. In fact, he is not and cannot be a religionist, because, contrary to the fundamental rule of religionistics - which this science is built upon, he judges and evaluates the individual spiritual movements.

The evidence that, contrary to the real science of religionistics, Mr. Vojtíšek evaluates the various spiritual directions, is also determined by the fact that he is registered by the Ministry of the Czech Republic as an expert. **Mr. Vojtisek even talked about this assessment of the "sects" in the one and only meeting with him in our apartment, even in front of witnesses. He described how he participated in the meetings of state security forces, he specifically named the BIS (Security Information Service - Something Like Secret Police), where he spoke about the activities of the Sects. He considers all Eastern spiritual directions as yoga and others as sects.**

For this purpose, the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements (hereinafter referred to as the Society) was founded. To collect information on the Eastern Spiritual Directions. The activities of the Society, namely of Mr. Vojtíšek, are dealt with by a student of religion at Masaryk University in Brno in her 2009 bachelor's thesis, Andrea Nosková. Name of the thesis is "Society for studying sects and new religious movements: analysis of its discourse."

At the end of my thesis I conclude: "The analysis of the publications of the members of the SSSNRM did not confirm the hypothesis of the anticult discourse of the society. It has proven that the SSSNRM's effort is to describe new religious movements as problematic and not entirely legitimate groups. Although the society provides space for "the other party" (lectures by the groups themselves) and seeks to preserve the notion of objectivity, he still fights some sort of hidden struggle with the groups. He acts in order to strongly warn about negative psychic influences from the groups. At this level, it is a secular-rational argument. SSSNRM also seeks to point out the incompatibility of the group's doctrine with the values of Christianity. This argumentation is present rather implicitly, but unambiguously."

"Basically, all the publications analyzed here possess a warning voice. This is the "between the lines" information that the reader is supposed to accept, and this call of his is even more distinct in the "expert expressions" for the media (by Vojtíšek). Most often there is a warning against mental dangers, which is also difficult to defend against because it is not easily recognizable. There is no doubt about the involvement of SSSNRM members in "remedying the situation".

It is a question of how far such collection of confidential personal information can go and if it is at all permissible under the relevant Personal Data Protection Act. These personal details of the members of the "sects" are very sensitive and easily abusable

especially for the constant indication of the social danger of the sects by the Society SSSNRM and by Mr. Vojtíšek. Personally, I have experienced and proved that Mr Vojtíšek infallibly violates the copyrights of others and arbitrarily interferes with the texts of others. I was asked to answer for his Dingir magazine 30 questions he had submitted to me. Without my consciousness and permission from the whole interview, which had 30 questions and answers, he published only ten of them in a way that the conversation had completely lost its proverbial value and therefore showed us in the unfavorable light in the eyes of the readers of Dingir.

The procedures used by the Society SSSNRM are grossly inconsistent with the Constitution of the Republic, which guarantees freedom of personal religious belief. They engage in religious intolerance and criminalize everything that comes from outside Christianity. It is not difficult to understand that the anti-cult movement is nothing but a modern inquisition. It has less power than before, but the evil of hatred spreads equally. In terms of our statehood, the conduct of the SSSNRM society and Mr Vojtíšek are unconstitutional.”

Both the SSSNRM society and Mr. Vojtíšek are in the role of advocates of the well-being of our society, and they are constantly suggesting that new, especially Eastern, religious groups pose a threat to society. No one has entrusted them to be the guardians of our society, nor do they defend our social common interest, but they only defend the interest of their own churches.

The SSSNRM society and Mr. Vojtíšek do not just settle for the mere dissemination of their opinions, but they issue expert opinions and information to state authorities in this nature. What really threatens our society and the whole state is the effort of the SSSNRM Society and Mr Vojtíšek to violate the right to free personal and religious beliefs and to live in harmony with it. Instead of freedom, they impose the conviction on us that there is no salvation outside of the Christian Church, and they try hard so that the state authorities also accept this viewpoint and take it into account when decision-making. It is a real direct attack against democracy in our country.

Magazine Reflex

Article Holly society – An authority is the one who has got a nice name, Jiri X. Dolezal, Reflex, 1. 9. 1995, str. 10-11.

In a building of Society for the study of sects and new religious movements (SSSNRM) a Christian bookstore is located, in the passage you can find Christian message boards, in the yard there is a Christian prayer hall.

In a moment, dr. Remes appeared, we greeted and introduced each other, and the doctor continued, "What are you wearing? You're not seen under that." He meant the beads that hung on my neck. "Beads, doctor," I explained in surprise. On the way to his office, the doctor asked me what I had on my hand (prayer beads) and whether I was Hare Krishna.

For the uninitiated, it should be noted that members of the Hare Krishna movement are not called Hare Krishna, but devotees - das. And the prayer beads they use look completely different than my Tibetan ones. And the devotees always wear it in a cloth bag. This knowledge is not taught at elementary school, but I was surprised that a member of the Society for research of sects does not know it.

He came to me - the above described person - somehow spontaneously. It is a very similar method to when Scientologists place a questionnaire to your mailbox and few days later they will send you a letter that after a while you will jump out of the window. And that they can help you... By this they cause addiction. In the case of dr. Remes, it was certainly about something else - he himself thinks Scientologists are a destructive cult.

The Society for research of the sects and new religious movements finds unfair when the group (sect) does not provide true and complete information about itself. However, the Society itself, does not automatically, for example in its name, let know people that it is a society of CHRISTIAN intellectuals.

The society just came into existence and soon got the favor of the media. No matter what that no one knew what society actually is, regardless of the attitudes and methods of some of its members which are debatable, regardless of the fact that society is not yet able to provide some deeper information about new religions. It has a nice name. It is fully sufficient – after all it sounds so nice.

Bachelor thesis by Andrea Nosková, Society for the Study of Sect and New Religious Movement: Analysis of its Discursivity

The anti-cult movement has had its own, specific ideology from the outset. Bromley and Shupe describe the specific steps, when most of them was used in argumentation. It is a historical explanation of the discovery of subversive phenomena, a description of powerful (or devilish) forces with the ability to change the human natural character, the identification of anti-socially tuned people planning to subvert, warning of the public of this danger and formulating of a corrective plan to prevent disasters.

The authors of this concept further describe a special vocabulary that serves the ideology of the anti-cult movement. The central concepts are "brainwashing", "cults" (sects), and "children" in the sense of members of the movement who are in a helpless situation. Over time, the anti-cult movement has begun to "stick" by these terms activity of a number of groups. This campaign has been quite distant from the original plan for rescuing young people and has gained more of the features of defending individuality. She has identified a number of quasi-religious therapies (Est, Scientology), conservative Christian churches, and quasi-religious corporations (multi-level corporations such as Amway and Mary Kay) as subversive groups. As a result, for example, the term "cult" became somewhat vague.

The new religious movements are referred as anti-cult movements as cults, sects, para-religious, quasi-religious, pseudo-religious groups, or other ways to discredit groups. In this dualistic concept, "religious" is conceived as "covering" the world and recognizing freedom of thought, while cults have "non-religious" goals and are always based on violence, coercion, psychic manipulation and separation.

The starting point for the analysis performed on selected SSSaNNS titles will be the hypothesis that the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements is a group that represents the discourse described above as an anti-cult in the Czech Republic.

For the purpose of the analysis, the characteristic features of the anti-cult movement were chosen to be searched for in the texts.

Typical manifestations of anti-cult discourse will be considered the following:

- Labeling groups of new and alternative religiosity as "destructive cults", "dangerous sects" and "totalitarian movements",
- describing the role of members of these groups as passive individuals who have been manipulated (brainwashing) or obsessed (religious argumentation), prevented from leaving,
- taking phenomena out of the context, descriptions without support in the theoretical and methodological basis, use of unverified information,
- excessive generalization and simplification, bulvarisation, emotionally colored assessment (eg ridicule), seemingly scientific terminology,

- dualistic perception of the issue, stylization into the role of the judge who decides on this division, or Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the movement from a religious point of view, claiming the truth,
- the intention to warn of danger (mental or mental) and engagement in the remedy of the state of affairs.

Zdeněk Vojtíšek

The most striking feature of Vojtíšek's characteristics of new religious movements, however, I consider his belief that these are temporary phenomena (their development is towards denomination) and that membership in these groups is equally temporary. Vojtíšek in this regard is based primarily on the concept of J. W. Fowler describing the seven stages of the development of religiosity. Applied to the phenomenon examined here, participation in a new religious movement fulfilling the characteristics described above corresponds exactly to a certain stage of the development of a person (especially a teenager) and adequately satisfies his needs in that period. But a well-developing individual, of course, over time (usually within two years) must necessarily have to "grow up" in such a group.

The goal of this development is "healthy faith," Christian belief, in this respect, the action in a new religious movement can be perceived as "unhealthy" or "faulty religious attitude". The danger of these movements is to prevent their members from reaching a higher (individually reflexive) degree of faith. It is thus defined from a psychological point of view, and the aim of the pastoral counselor is, above all, the restoration of mental equilibrium after leaving the group, which can help to overcome the difficult life situation and lead to a positive evaluation of the life stage in the movement. The varied nature of "sectarianism" from sociological (transition to denomination) and psychological (developmental level of faith) viewpoint, according to Vojtíšek, offers great hope, which is the very basis of pastoral counseling. In his comments, Vojtíšek mostly confirms the stereotype of perceiving members of the group as passive, indecisive and essentially self-conscious beings.

Tomáš Novotný

The role of the arbitrator is much more distinct in the case of Novotný than in Vojtíšek, in some places the author decides directly about what is good and bad. The measure of acceptability is either the author himself or, more frequently, the social "norm", or Christianity.

Similar as Vojtíšek, however, he finds the most convincing answer in the human psyche: "[...] to such organizations, people do not join on the basis of a rational decision, but they are led by quite different reasons: the need to belong to someone, the desire to control, the feeling of danger, etc." Novotný does not forget to constantly stress that in the case of new religious movements, it is a feeling that wins over reason, which must be regarded as a human weakness that only facilitates targeted manipulation by groups. Doctrine is not at all important in this "decision-making": "That is why the person is able to believe absolutely anything.

To emphasize the absurdity of these teachings, Novotny likes to pick up shocking facts, deliberately attacking reader's emotions, and even making some elements of learning ridicule to emphasize their deviation from "normal".

Prokop Remeš

Evidence to confirm the correctness of this hypothesis could also be the Christian handbook by Prokop Remeš *Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Bible?*, issued in 1990 and designed for effective theological conversations with the Jehovah's Witnesses. The purpose of these conversations, based primarily on the Bible's argumentation, is quite clear: "... you desire to help them to learn the true essence of the joyful rumor that God reveals through Jesus Christ." This awareness is at least as important as a warning for Remeš before psychic manipulation.

Conclusion

What, however, is absolutely necessary to reject, is just the assessment of the groups. To a greater or lesser extent, we find it in all the publications analyzed (eg, at Novotný explicitly, Vojtíšek implicitly included in the theory of the "phase of mental development"). The measure of this evaluation is most often becoming its own, predominantly Christian values. We encounter the interconnection of religious (Štampach, Novotný) and secular-rationalist (Remeš, Vojtíšek) anti-cult argumentation, often within a single publication.

The analysis of the texts highlighted the most striking moments when the author styled himself into the position of a referee and humorous commentator (Novotny) or a moral judge (Štampach). Of course, such a post legitimizes possible action against groups.

Essentially, all of the publications analyzed here have a warning voice. This is information "between the lines" the reader has to accept. This appeal is even more marked by the "expert expression" of the media (Vojtíšek). Most often there is a warning about mental dangers, which is also difficult to defend because it is not easily recognizable. There is no doubt about the involvement of SSSaNRM members in the "correction of the situation".

The analysis of SSSaNRM members' publications has confirmed the hypothesis of anti-cult discourse. It has proven that the SSSaNRM's effort is to describe new religious movements as problematic and not entirely legitimate groups.

9. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

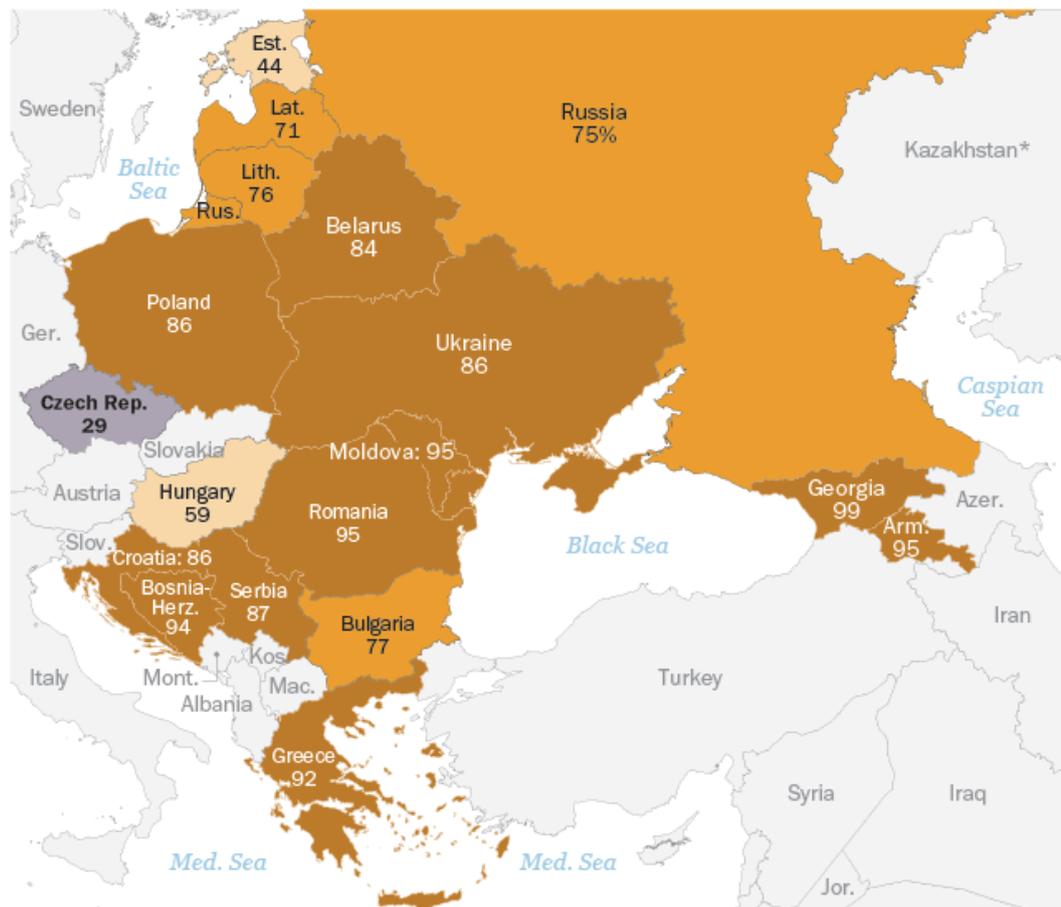
"Freedom and responsibility are two sides of the same coin."

Vaclav Havel

The Czech Republic is one of the most atheistic countries in the world, which is connected to the activity of the anti-cult movement, according to us, as a cause and a consequence. The reasoning behind the small, and still decreasing religious faith of Czech people is the historical development of our country, national temperament and also the influence of anti-cult movement. Established Churches are dealing with a drastic decline of believers. New religious movements could have filled the empty spot of faith as it did after the revolution in 1989. However, in 1993 the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements was established.

% who say they believe in God

■ < 40% ■ 40%-60% ■ 61%-80% ■ > 80% ■ Non-surveyed country



The fact that it is a stepping stone of the anti-cult movement is shown in this report, and it is proved by two quoted diploma theses. It is absurd that this community of Christian scholars argues in the assessment of new movements by comparing with the Christian view of the world, but by its statements and testimonies most often leads people to materialism. On the other hand, the great influence of this civic association in the post-communist Czech Republic is possible also because, according to the Pew Research Center, only 29% of Czechs are believers. Any faith, therefore, gets into the minority, which is a good field for spreading fear, contempt and hatred against new religious groups.

The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements chooses different strategies to combat freedom of belief - for example:

- 1 – unclear, vague and ever-changing definition of a sect
- 2 - variation of absolute destructiveness of sect versus neutral term according actual need
- 3 - which group is in the category of destructive list of sects keeps constantly changing
- 4 – principal incitement to hatred versus sporadic defence of rights
- 5 - religionist pseudoscientific arguments and constructs disguised as science
- 6 - support from the state
- 7 - good spiritual rhetoric of SSSNRM, versus manipulative spiritual concepts of sects
- 8 – cause a fear and then calming down
- 9 – stigmatization by prejudices
- 10 – attitude towards believers of minorities as immature

SSSNRM cooperate with media which appreciates ability of their members to scandalize new movements. In analyzing media impact of SSSNRM since 1996 we have found almost 750 articles creating a false negative image of new religious movements. Many of them according to us fulfill the facts of the violation of criminal laws: Spreading an alarm message, Slander, Defamation of a nation, race, ethnic or other group of persons, Incitement to hatred towards a group of persons or to the limitation of their rights and freedom, Founding, supporting and promoting a movement aimed at suppressing human rights and freedom and Unauthorized use of personal information

The way how SSSNRM same as other anti-cult movements in the world destroying religious minorities, corresponds to the scheme Dresden University revealed in 2012. The specificity of the Czech Republic as a post-communist country is massive connection with corruption of the police, the courts and officials, and production of cases and processes on order. SSSNRM has a connection to the most European powerful anti-cult group FECRIS from France. Doc. Vojtisek, the main spokesman of SSSNRM, wrote adoring epilogue to the book of one representatives of FECRIS.

When the law on churches was adopted in 2001, the Czech Republic inspired not only the Austrian version of a similar law, but also copied the most problematic paragraph of the French law on churches Act. In our case, this is paragraph 5 This abusive and democracy damaging law was at the same time a pain of president Vaclav Havel, who vetoed it. However, he was outvoted, and although the Constitutional Court cancelled some parts of it, and in 2011 its amendment corrected some details, the law on churches stayed inadequate for the democratic principles of promoting pluralism and freedom.

Anti-cult movement arrogates only true interpretation of God and it is getting out almost inconspicuously and cunningly other minorities. If the same did the part of the biggest political party, everyone would be opposed to totalitarianism, and other states would put pressure on keeping democracy in the EU. Freedom of faith and religion has been still repressed, and so the human rights of many people are denied. Once, a religious society is liquidated for that SSSNRM as it used to be with STB (state secret police during communism) keeps a list of their members. Secondly, because the right to opinion and freedom of religion is generally reduced,

when the state's approval and the opinion of members of this civil society is needed. It also has a monopoly on expert opinions of the forensic expert in criminal cases (even those fabricated), cooperates with the police (even with the secret one), it has in its ranks the politicians and it is involved in the regulation of laws.

The Czech Republic was founded as a purely secular state with no state religion and therefore, there is no reason for regarding and evaluating small religious groups by Christian viewpoint without its tolerance and understanding. And besides, why should such evaluation be presented as objective assessment? Let alone why should the police and the courts regard them as being relevant? The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements has a monopoly on the cooperation with the police, the courts, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Culture. They monitor and produce expert reports on new religious groups and their members for the courts and the police. In reality, however, the totalitarian-minded members put themselves in the position of the supervisory body representing the interests of the major Christian community, as, for example, the Inquisition in the Middle Ages used to do. Totally unlawfully and contrary to fundamental human rights and freedoms they claim a right to watch dissenters and create false reports and commentaries that serve to stigmatize them in the public.

Recommendation for the Czech state:

- Immediately correct the way of registration of religious societies, which fulfill international democracy standards and conventions to which the Czech Republic made a commitment
- Keeps duties of neutrality. None of the churches should be exposed to a state repression and discrimination from the side of the state, especially if it is the case of a minority group. Such minority group should be mainly protected.
- State intervention in religious issues should be minimal and it should not be in favor of discriminatory anti-cult rhetoric
- Anti-cult opinions should not be considered as officially approved expert opinions and knowledge of how to handle new religious movements, especially if bias of their propagators is provable,
- The state must not determine the form of faith and God in which man has a right and it should not be an arbitrator of choice at all. If this does not happen and the state behaves differently than the international conventions require, it should immediately prepare a plan of implementation of restoration of democratic systems. Mainly, by promoting awareness and education in a particular sector, by unbiased review and legal analysis. This is the only way to objectify opinion and develop sensitivity to problematic issues such as the anti-cult movement today.
- Improving the effectiveness of state control mechanisms for the protection of human rights (the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Human Rights) should be improved and training should be sensitive to the handling of religious issues in order to acknowledge and correct the serious misconducts of the state authorities.