



Truth (and Faith) Prevails: An Archbishop of Prague in a Godless Time

Stefano Arroque

All rights reserved. Printed in Hungary. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Author: Stefano Arroque

Danube Institute Leadership

President: John O'Sullivan

Executive Director: István Kiss

Director of Research: Calum T.M. Nicholson

Original Design by: Carlos Roa

Designed by: Max Keating

© 2026 by the Danube Institute

January

Cover: Designed by Max Keating

Image: Attribution:

Dietmar Rabich / Wikimedia Commons / "Prag, Karlsbrücke -- 2019 -- 6697" / CC BY-SA 4.0



Contents

About the Danube Institute	iv
About the Author	v
Introduction.....	1
Footsteps.....	3
Awakening	6
Conclusion: The Legacy of Cardinal Tomášek	9



About the Danube Institute

The Danube Institute, established in 2013 by the Batthyány Lajos Foundation in Budapest, serves as a hub for the exchange of ideas and individuals within Central Europe and between Central Europe, other parts of Europe, and the English-speaking world. Rooted in a commitment to respectful conservatism in cultural, religious, and social life, the Institute also upholds the broad classical liberal tradition in economics and a realistic Atlanticism in national security policy. These guiding principles are complemented by a dedication to exploring the interplay between democracy and patriotism, emphasizing the nation-state as the cornerstone of democratic governance and international cooperation.

Through research, analysis, publication, debate, and scholarly exchanges, the Danube Institute engages with center-right intellectuals, political leaders, and public-spirited citizens, while also fostering dialogue with counterparts on the democratic center-left. Its activities include establishing and supporting research groups, facilitating international conferences and fellowships, and encouraging youth participation in scholarly and political discourse. By drawing upon the expertise of leading minds across national boundaries, the Institute aims to contribute to the development of democratic societies grounded in national identity and civic engagement.

About the Author



Stefano Arroque is a scholar of European politics researching on Central and Eastern European political and cultural affairs – with a focus on Austria, Hungary, and Georgia – and the internal dynamics of the European Union, as well as EU-Hungary relations. Originally from Brazil, Arroque lived in Belgium for five years, between Leuven and Brussels – as well as a short stint in Kutaisi, Georgia. He holds a Master of Arts in European Studies from KU Leuven and an Executive Masters in European Public Affairs and Communication from IHECS. During his time in Brussels, he also worked as a Public Affairs consultant, bridging the gap between regional governments, private actors, and the European Institutions. His articles have been published in several newspapers, magazines, and journals in Europe and North America. He is a Knight of Office of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George.

Introduction

In The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, published in 1978, Milan Kundera dedicates an entire chapter to “litost”, an untranslatable Czech word. Whether it was an accident of linguistic fate, or the result of a uniquely Bohemian worldview or collective consciousness that would lead Czech, of all languages, to have a word for litost’, remains a subject of lively debate. Litost’, as articulated by Kundera, is “a state of torment created by the sudden sight of one’s own misery”.¹ And yet, it is undeniable that the Prague of Communist days gone by was, in the eyes and words of its most virtuous sons, a city of litost’. No fair assessment of the turbulent Czechoslovak experience of Communist rule and liberation therefrom is complete without litost’ – or, rather, without the conceptualization of it. Alongside this ever-present litost’, however, was an underlying faith, at times religious, at times secular. Czechoslovakia, and the modern-day Czech Republic, are seldom remembered in the context of religious faith. Nevertheless, understanding the anti-Communist resistance of the mid- and late-20th century is impossible without that tension between faith and litost’, in which the lives of its dissidents, clergymen, politicians, and intellectuals, went by. Resistance against Communism in Europe was, after all, as much a churchly calling as it was a political one.

From the late 1940s to the last days of the Iron Curtain, priests, pastors and bishops were as much a part of the resistance movement as protest leaders and political dissidents. To name but a few, Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Poland; Cardinal József Mindszenty in Hungary; Father Nicolae Steinhardt and Pastor László Tőkés in Romania; and Cardinals Josef Beran and František Tomášek in Czechoslovakia. Clerical resistance was particularly repressed and despised by Communist authorities. Priests engaging therein were often imprisoned, threatened, denied their right to exercise their ministry – sometimes tortured. While often more “passive” than more secular acts of protest and political dissent, Christian-based resistance confronted the regime in a plane it sought to deny: the

spirit. In Marxist terminology, it was an act of resistance in and of the superstructure – not a challenge of ideologies, but a challenge on the integrity of the dominating ideology itself. In its most brilliant instances, it offered the Communist orthodoxy of the time challenges of metapolitical nature that it was unable to answer without making explicit the contradictions between theory and praxis the Parties had made a priority to hide.

Catholic theology, social teaching and institutional strength are antithetical to both historical materialism and to the Communist regime’s intent of consolidation as society’s ultimate moral arbiter. This was first acknowledged by Pope Pius IX in his *Nostis et Nobiscum* encyclical, published just one year after the Communist Manifesto.² This thesis was later, and most notably, revisited in *Rerum Novarum*, the 1891 encyclical by Pope Leo XIII that laid out the foundations of Catholic social doctrine. In the 20th Century, in light of the Russian Revolution, the increased revolutionary fervour across Europe and the consolidation of left- and right-wing totalitarianisms, Catholic doctrine thereon became particularly conflictive. The 1937 *Divinis Redemptoris* Encyclical, authored by Pope Pius XII, explicitly condemned “atheistic Communism” and denounced its “false messianic idea”.³ The Encyclical emphasises Communism’s denial of the very idea of God and, *ipso facto*, “refuses human life any sacred or spiritual character” – including marriage and the formation of a family, which, from a sacrament, are reduced to a mere legal contract.⁴ In Communism, as per the Encyclical, differences between soul and body, between material and spiritual, are nullified, as the soul itself is denied, while the material is apotheosised. *Divinis Redemptoris*, though not the first Encyclical to cover Communism, is notable for its acknowledgement of the quasi-religious, while profoundly anti-spiritual character of Communism, which would become even more intense in its later, Eastern European iterations. Under these terms, clerical resistance to the regime, more than a political act, becomes a moral and religious duty.

1. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (Harper Collins, 1999), p.167.

2. An earlier encyclical, *Qui Pluribus*, published in 1846, contains the first mention of Communism as a threat alongside Socialism. Given its publication date, however, it is safe to assume it referred to pre-Marxist iterations of the ideology.

3. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical On Atheistic Communism *Divinis Redemptoris* (19 March 1937), §8, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html.

4. Ibid., §11.

The Czech resistance was notably intellectual, notably bourgeois, in the words of their Communist detractors. And, in their intellectualism, it was exceedingly, almost painfully, human. Reading any works by Czech dissidents, whether book, play or samizdat, was a political and emotional tour de force, from the depths of litost' to the heights of hope. For both secular and Christian dissidents, equally important to freedom was the quintessentially Czech concept of "living in truth". Though interpreted differently from a purely philosophical point of view and from a theological one, the idea was a cornerstone of the Czech resistance. The concept was made famous by Havel and would feature heavily in both his writings and his latter speeches as President. His inaugural address to the now-liberated, hopeful Czechoslovaks was sombre. He used much of his time to address the moral malaises afflicting the country for the past decades, which, in their core, were the result of a refusal to "live in truth", i.e. to hear lies, pretend to believe them, and adapt one's lives thereto.⁵ As described in *The Power of the Powerless*, the system was based and dependent on the perpetuation of the lie, masqueraded as a coherent and somewhat "palatable" ideology.

That ideology provided "people, both as victims and pillars of the post-totalitarian system, with the illusion that the system is in harmony with the human order and the order of the universe".⁶ In other words, it provided an acceptable justification, to oneself and to the world, for compliance with the regime. To live in truth is, thus, to recognize and to denounce ideology, to unmask the structure based on lies and intimidation that existed underneath it. To live under the lies of the regime was a constant experiment in litost'. Christians living under Communism, and clergymen in particular, were particularly affected by it. To live as a Christian in a post-totalitarian State is a constant commitment to live in truth, i.e. in opposition to the dominant

ideology, and in accordance with the Faith. As such, resistance, whether active or passive, became a natural, almost logical choice for many Czechoslovak clergymen – even after the worst periods of anti-Christian repression had passed. In a life devoted to Christ and shaped by Biblical and ecclesiastical principles, when faced with a system as antithetical to those principles as Eastern European Communism was, the only possible options are resistance or betrayal – to God, to oneself, and to one's faith and flock.

This was the choice posed to thousands of clergymen in the long years of Communism. Among them was František Tomášek, Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal, and one of the towering figures of the Czechoslovak resistance. A Moravian by birth and education, Tomášek was ordained as a priest in 1922, the year Czechoslovakia became an independent State. He was appointed Bishop of Olomouc, in the Eastern part of the Czech Republic, by Pope Pius XII, in 1949, against the wishes of the Communist party. Moravia was historically more religious than Bohemia, and Olomouc is its cultural, spiritual and economic centre. Tomášek's nomination and enthronement, made in direct conflict with the Party's wishes, would cost him his liberty. In 1950, Tomášek, alongside other Bishops nominated by Rome without previous consultation with Communist authorities, was arrested and interned at a labour camp, where he would remain for three years. Even after his release, Tomášek was confined to a small Moravian town, allowed to perform only parish priest duties. Though recognizing the blatant injustice and absurdity of his situation, Tomášek chose, for most of his priestly life, a path of compromise, rather than conflict. This attitude would define much of his latter episcopal career, not least his – somewhat surprising, at the time – appointment to the Archdiocese of Prague, replacing another well-known clerical resistance figure: his predecessor, Josef Beran.

5. Lubomir Martin Ondrasek, Living in Truth Amid Ideological Falsehood and Political Hypocrisy, *Providence*, 21 March 2022, <https://providencemag.com/2022/03/living-in-truth-ideological-falsehood-political-hypocrisy-vaclav-havel/>

6. Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (International Centre for Nonviolent Conflict, 1978), p. 7.

Footsteps

František Tomášek's own enthronement as Archbishop was a product of anti-Communist resistance – not his own, but that of Cardinal Josef Beran, his predecessor. A committed conservative, steadfast traditionalist and militant anti-totalitarian, Cardinal Beran was par excellence the clerical enemy of a Communist regime. Raised in the waning days of the Empire, Beran's theology and politics were defined by the steadfastness that had come to characterize so many Central European Catholic conservatives of the time. Men, those were, who upheld the values of a world that no longer existed in a world that had come to be, against the wishes of the Church and of themselves. Beran, for his scholarly profile, was made a Professor at the Charles University of Prague in the early 1930s, where he also oversaw the training of seminarians. Through his scholarly and priestly networks and duties, then-Monsignor Beran positioned himself openly against Nazism. He ensured the publication of Pius XII's notorious German-language Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge*, which denounced Nazi racial doctrines. In 1942, following a Mass in which Monsignor Beran prayed for Czechoslovak prisoners of war, he was arrested and interned at the Dachau concentration camp, where he remained until his liberation by the Allies in 1945. One year later, Pope Pius XII nominated Beran Archbishop of Prague, in a newly-free Czechoslovakia.

Prague's regained freedom would be fleeting, as would Beran's. In 1948, Czechoslovakia fell to the East of the Iron Curtain, and the weight of iron rule fell upon it once more. Parliamentary elections intended to consolidate the return of democratic rule delivered a divided and chaotic legislature. Profiting from the political chaos and with tacit support from the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, under the leadership of Klement Gottwald, enacted a coup d'état. Parliament was dissolved, any meaningful opposition was either banned or disenfranchised, the command of security forces was given to apparatchiks. Through Soviet support and through Western indifference, Czechoslovakia was made a one-party Communist State. Gottwald, following a prolonged period of chaos and purges, established himself as Czechoslovakia's uncontested

ruler, and the mechanisms for the establishment of a police state were put into place. Dismantling Czechoslovakia's complex ideological fabric became a priority – one dear to Gottwald, a committed Marxist since his youth days, and a pragmatic Stalinist since coming to power.

Following Gottwald's death in 1954, his anti-religious programme was pursued with zeal by his successor Antonín Novotný. Known as a hardline Stalinist, Novotný was responsible for elevating the Czechoslovak security state into an apparatus of the absurd – as it would be fittingly depicted in Havel's absurdist plays. Novotný's excesses, and the Czechoslovak reaction thereto, would eventually fuel the Prague Spring. For both rulers, that familiar voice of dissent speaking from the pulpits of Prague had become, just as it had been for the Nazi occupiers, an unacceptable presence. Beran was first arrested by the Communists in 1949, three years after becoming Archbishop of Prague, due to his denunciation of a plan to make all clergymen State employees.⁷ He had previously attacked Communism and forbidden Czech priests from pledging allegiance to the regime and its ideology, as had been required of them. Beran's actions were reminiscent of the teachings and instructions of *Divinis Redemptoris*, which, for him and so many prelates who chose the path of resistance, had not been supplemented by the Vatican's new, cautious approach.⁸ The Archbishop's arrest was but one of the many measures taken against Christians, and Catholics in particular, by the Communist authorities. One of its first measures was the repression of the Eastern Catholic, or Uniate communities, which had existed for centuries in Eastern Slovakia. Under the new regime, Eastern Catholics were forced to either adopt the Latin Rite or join the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia.

The 1950s were, overall, a period of heightened anti-Catholic action by the State. In the literal sense of the word, as those operations were known as *Akce*, translating to either "Action" or "Operation", in the quintessentially totalitarian technocratic whitewashing. In 1950, with Beran already imprisoned, *Akce K* and *Akce Ř* were initiated.⁹ The two capitalized letters refer to Kláštery and Řeholnice. In

7. TIME Magazine 'Freedom for a Fighter', 11 October 1963, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,805130,00.html>

8. The Encyclical, by then, had been attenuated by subsequent Encyclicals and political actions by the Vatican. The installation of Communist governments in several Catholic-majority Central and Eastern European countries led to major policy reconsiderations by the Holy See.

9. Radio Prague International, "‘Operation K’ - How the Communists wiped out Czechoslovakia’s monasteries in one brutal stroke" 13 April 2020, <https://english.radio.cz/operation-k-how-communists-wiped-out-czechoslovakias-monasteries-one-brutal-8103215>

English, respectively, Monasteries and Nuns. Those actions aimed to destroy Czechoslovakia's historic monastic communities. Part of the justification for Akce K and Akce Ř was economic. Monasteries and convents owned land and assets, which the Communists were eager to expropriate. The main objective, however, was spiritual. Monasteries formed both the bulk of the Church's religious education structure and constituted a solid faith-centred community at its service. Moreover, monks and nuns, by virtue of their lifestyle, where work is a spiritual duty complementary to prayer, rather than a *raison d'être*, were the antithesis of the *homo sovieticus*. Akce K took place swiftly, over two days. More than 200 monasteries were raided, with over 2,100 monks arrested, most of whom were sent to labour camps.¹⁰ A similar fate awaited the over 4,000 Czechoslovak nuns, only a few months later. Beran, from his arrest, strongly protested against these Operations, and the regime's training of collaborationist "priests" to replace the imprisoned ones.

For Beran, accepting a regime where "differences between soul and body are nullified" was unacceptable, unworthy of a Churchman. He was first placed under house arrest and later transferred to several prison facilities. Beran remained imprisoned until 1965, during which time the Archdiocese was both deprived of leadership and subject to constant attacks and subversion attempts by the State and the Security services. His release, and eventual transfer to Rome in 1969, where he would live for the remainder of his days, was the result of a careful compromise and long negotiations between the Czech Church, a Czechoslovak State reeling from the fallout of the repression of the Prague Spring, and the Vatican. As part of the negotiations to guarantee Beran's release, he agreed to hand over control of the Archdiocese to an Apostolic Administrator. The prelate chosen to take on this role, and later on that of Archbishop of Prague, was František Tomášek.

10. Minarik, Pavol. 2023. "Official and Underground: The Survival Strategy of the Catholic Church in Communist Czechoslovakia." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 24 (3): 332–51. doi:10.1080/21567689.2023.2279161.

Attribution:
Ingo Mehling, CC BY-SA 4.0, via
Wikimedia Commons



Awakening

Tomášek's elevation to Apostolic Administrator was as much a call of ecclesiastical duty as it was a moment of political awakening. Three years after his nomination, Alexander Dubcek, then-Chairman of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, announced several liberalizing political and economic reforms, in a definitive break with Gottwald and Novotný's legacy. This openness, which would later become known as the Prague Spring, gave birth to unprecedented cultural, artistic and political activity across the country. Czechoslovakia, for a short period of time, rediscovered its nature as a homeland of intellectuals, writers and artists, many of whom would become leaders in the post-1968 dissident movement.¹¹ Dubcek's "socialism with a human face" was much less restrictive of religion than its predecessors. Several clergymen were released from domestic arrest and labour camps. Eastern Catholic churches were once again permitted to operate. And, for the broader Catholic Church, there came a sense of religious freedom, even if limited, for the first time in a generation. Clergy were allowed to speak and preach on matters previously out of reach. Formerly blacklisted priests were officially reinstated. Tomášek became a strong supporter of Dubcek. Through his reforms, he sought to implement his own in the Archdiocese, inspired by the Second Vatican Council.

The violent end of the Prague Spring, by force of Soviet tanks and StB repression, would have a long-lasting impact on Tomášek. What followed the spring was normalizace, the policy of restoration of total State control over public life enacted by Gustáv Husák, Dubcek's successor. For Tomášek, the recovery of religious and political freedom, even beyond that enjoyed during the Prague Spring, and the protection of those engaged in the struggle against the regime inside and outside the Church, became a leitmotif. In this path, he had to strike a difficult balance between the Vatican and his own Church. In Rome, Pope Paul VI's exceedingly cautious approach to the Eastern bloc, though intended to protect local Catholic communities from regime-led reprisals, placed an insurmountable burden on local prelates. Dialogue was emphasised over dissent, compromise over resistance--a form of "Vatican Ostpolitik", as it was fittingly

branded at the time.¹² Eastern bloc governments and their security services saw in this passive approach not good faith but weakness. Above all, a window of opportunity to further undermine the Church, this time from within.

In Czechoslovakia, authorities supported a movement of pro-Communist priests known as *Pacem in Terris*. Though nominally Catholic priests, members of *Pacem in Terris* were widely regarded as not sincere in their priestly vocation, nor in their Christian devotion. They were apparatchiks in a cassock, whose only objective was to destroy the remaining, feeble institutional and spiritual fabric of the Czechoslovak church. Tomášek, though well aware of this fact, refrained from publicly denouncing it throughout the 1970s. For an Apostolic Administrator in a troubled See, running counter to Vatican policy could put the entire Archdiocese at greater risk than a passive approach would have. It would not be until Cardinal Wojtyla's election as Pope John Paul II that Tomášek, now officially the Archbishop of Prague, would be able to truly follow on Cardinal Beran's footsteps as a clerical dissident. The 1982 *Quidam episcopi* decree banned Communist and other ideologically-affiliated movements within the Church. Tomášek, through a letter smuggled to the Vatican, succeeded in obtaining official confirmation that *Pacem in Terris* was in violation of the Encyclical, much to the dismay of Czechoslovak authorities and State media. Membership in the movement collapsed, from one-third of Czech priests to a handful of apparatchiks.¹³ Pressure on the Archdiocese and attacks on the Church by political and media figures increased in a way not seen in decades. Tomášek, sensing the urgency of the times and of his own age, and now free from the Vatican's ill-fated Ostpolitik, was free to follow in Beran's footsteps as a moral and spiritual resistance leader.

The 1980s saw the Archbishop's – and, since 1976, Cardinal's – profile rapidly rise in Czechoslovak dissident circles. He openly condemned *Pacem in Terris* and endorsed protests against the movement and against governmental meddling in Church affairs, including a hunger strike by 120 seminarians.¹⁴ Husák, by then an aging autocrat, sought

11. Felix Corley, "Obituary: Cardinal František Tomášek", 5 August 1992, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-cardinal-František-Tomášek-1538238.html>

12. Tomsky, Alexander. 1982. "'Pacem in Terris' between Church and State in Czechoslovakia." *Religion in Communist Lands* 10 (3): 275–82. doi:10.1080/09637498208431034.

13. Minarik, "Church in Czechoslovakia", 2023.

14. Tomsky, "Pacem in Terris", 1982.

to maintain as much control as possible over the Church while continuing the regime's subversive activities therein, while stopping short of repressive measures seen elsewhere.

Unlike in Poland, and unlike Gottwald, he did not dare arresting Tomášek. At the time, the Party's – and the StB's – attention was directed at the grassroots resistance that had found in Havel its leader and in his Charter 77 companions its intelligentsia. Tomášek was, however, well-aware of the risks, for himself and for his flock, that his dissident activities incurred. Nevertheless, momentum was clearly on the side of the dissidents. The regime's political and societal legitimacy grew weakened by the day. Within the Church, a timid revival seemed to be underway. No longer were the infiltration and intimidation tactics successful, no longer were seminarians and theology students fearful about proclaiming their views and beliefs. Ostpolitik was long gone. The Episcopal Palace of Prague, over the course of the decade, became a locus of Czechoslovak resistance, a meeting point of visiting foreign leaders, non-conforming intellectuals and other religious leaders.

Tomášek, by now in his eighties, did not hesitate in using his rank and prestige to intervene in support of fellow imprisoned dissidents. He pleaded with the government for the release of imprisoned dissidents and for less harsh treatment to be given to those facing other forms of sanctions. Concurrently, he maintained contacts with American and Western European diplomats and heads of government, often at the behest of the Communist authorities.¹⁵ His contacts with secular dissidents, including leading figures from Charter 77, continued throughout the decade, notwithstanding governmental pressure. Following the fall of Communism and the inauguration of Havel as President in 1989, Tomášek arranged for Pope John Paul II to visit Czechoslovakia and meet the new President – the first Papal visit to Prague and the first by John Paul II to an Eastern bloc country apart from Poland.¹⁶ In his final years as Archbishop of Prague, Tomášek's Sunday Masses at St Vitus Cathedral were ever fuller, between longtime parishioners and new faces. Crowds would gather under his balcony to cheer the Archbishop after the end of the Mass,¹⁷ much as they had cheered Havel on his way to Prague Castle.

15. Embassy of Bulgaria to State, Telegram 414, 4 February 1987, 0909Z, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v10/d414>

16. Radio Prague International, "April 21, 1990 – When John Paul II became the first pope to visit Prague", 20 April 2020, <https://english.radio.cz/april-21-1990-when-john-paul-ii-became-first-pope-visit-prague-8102461>

17. Corley, "Tomášek", 1992.



Attribution:
JiriMatejicek, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Conclusion: The Legacy of Cardinal Tomášek

By the fall of Communism, Cardinal Tomášek was recognised as one of the great clerical resistance figures of 20th century Europe, alongside his own predecessor and his Pope. Though not as well-known in the West as some of his Polish and Hungarian counterparts, Tomášek was a towering figure of 20th-century European Catholicism. What Havel had been for the State, Tomášek had been for the Czech Church – and largely to the Slovak one as well. He would remain at the helm of the Archdiocese of Prague until 1991. He was succeeded by Miloslav Vlk, another well-known clerical dissident, ordained during the Prague Spring. By then, nearly four decades after his first appointment as Apostolic Administrator, it was difficult to imagine the Archdiocese without Tomášek, and Tomášek without the Archdiocese. If in his initial years he was met with resistance by certain conservatives, who suspected him of collaboration due to his more compromising approach, by the end of his episcopal life those suspicions were long gone. Tomášek's spiritual steadfastness and fervour matched those of Beran, as his ever more frequent conflicts with the State in the Husák years would show. His praxis, however, was markedly different until the 1980s. Upon his death in 1992, he was remembered mostly for his selflessness and dedication to his causes, as an Archbishop, as a dissident, as a Czech patriot.

Tomášek's labours were made all the more difficult by the peculiarities of being a Christian leader in the Czech lands. His native Moravia had retained much of its 19th-century religiosity well into the Communist years, with a Catholic majority coexisting with substantial Protestant and, until the Holocaust, Jewish minorities. In Bohemia, however, secularization advanced at a much faster pace. Bohemians, even in the first half of the 20th century, were not known for high levels of religiosity. Catholicism in particular became associated with Habsburg rule by nationalist-minded Czechs as early as the mid-1800s. Religiosity became synonym with clericalism, and clericalism with Austrian rule over Czech lands. Some sought to remain religious in a distinctly Czechoslovak way, the most notable example of which being

the reestablishment of a State-supported Hussite Church in the 1920s. Mostly, however, people either retained their faiths or became irreligious. Following the independence of Czechoslovakia, secularism grew in popularity in Bohemia and, to a lesser extent, in Moravia – Slovakia remained distinctly Christian. Even among those who formally identified as Christians, irreligiosity was much more widespread than in neighbouring Poland, Hungary or even Austria. The Nazi occupation and subsequent Communist rule added further, unbearable strains to this already-damaged fabric. The anti-Catholic Akce, the arrest and exile of Cardinal Beran and the similar strains being levelled on Protestant clergy made being a clergyman in the Czech Republic a herculean task.

Tomášek was well-aware of this reality. Nevertheless, he chose an even more difficult path – that of resistance. He did not leave behind a burgeoning Church. As of today, it is estimated that only 9% of Czechs are Catholic, while three-quarters of the country do not profess any religion – one of the highest percentages for a non-Communist country. Nevertheless, the Church has retained a level of institutional respect that would be unthinkable had it not played such a key role in the resistance. The role of Cardinal, then Archbishop, Tomášek in the resistance and in supporting dissidents is widely documented in the Czech Republic, as is that of Cardinal Beran. In many ways, the fact that the Church has even managed to survive to this day, let alone retain its respect and soft power within Czech society is due to the tireless work of Tomášek and all priests and bishops who joined him in resisting the regime. The history of the Czech church in the 20th century was one of resistance: against apathy, against oppression, against infiltration. Whenever it was led by men who followed the teachings of the Church, it prevailed. Whenever some of its clergymen chose political convenience over resistance, it faltered. The motto of the Czech Republic, often cited by Masaryk and Havel, and allegedly based on a quote by Jan Hus, states that "Pravda vítězí". Truth prevails. Cardinal Tomášek, though far from Hussite theology, made it his leitmotif.

