

ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE HOLY SEE AFTER THE CREATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE FALL OF 1918

M A R E K Š M Í D

ABSTRACT

The present study deals with the establishment and development of diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See immediately after the creation of Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1918 which underwent a dramatic and turbulent change. The most acute questions to discuss included the filling of Czech and Slovak bishopric thrones, the Church administration in Slovakia and the matters of Church education while the filling of the bishopric thrones in the Czech lands and Slovakia proved to be of crucial importance for the proper functioning of the Church administration in Czechoslovakia.

The study is based on source material, mainly of diplomatic nature, from the Archive of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague and the Vatican archives, the study reconstructs the character, form and transformation of diplomatic relations between the young Republic and the headquarters of the Catholic Church in Rome at the turn of the 1910s and 1920s. Extensive archival funds have been confronted with numerous literature sources, including contemporary history texts.

Keywords

Czechoslovakia; Holy See; Diplomatic relations; Catholic Church; Church history

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headquarters of the Catholic Church in Rome at the turn of the 1910s and 1920s. Extensive archival funds have been confronted with numerous literature sources, including both old classical works and modern history texts.

Church representatives perceived with concern the atmosphere and religious situation in Czechoslovakia in connection with the events of the fall of 1918. They were especially disturbed by the leading ideas of the new state which were based on the political, religious and social beliefs of a trio of Czechoslovak politicians – Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, and Milan Rastislav Štefánik – who had during World War I tirelessly agitated within a foreign political movement for the Czechoslovak matter, trying to persuade the world's politicians about the need to break down Austria-Hungary. They called for republicanism against the obsolete monarchism and for social radicalism supporting the economic upswing of the poorest classes, delivering speeches about Catholicism as a religion connected with the Habsburg monarchy and promoting the idea of Czechoslovakism based on the existence of a compact majority Czechoslovak nation in the new republic.

Despite the declared and sometimes real claims of allegiance of the lower Catholic clergy to the national program, the creation of a new Czechoslovak republic in the fall of 1918 was in no way positive for Catholicism. The harsh, forced, and often unfair actions towards the Church and everything Catholic in the Czech lands, such as the tearing down of the Marian column in Prague's Old Town Square in November 1918, the pulling down of statues of saints, iconoclastic riots, plundering of churches and chapels, and the removal of crosses from schools and public spaces, filled Church representatives with fear of *progressivism* which could strongly turn against Catholicism.

The first steps to establish diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Czechoslovakia were taken in the first year of the republic's existence. Pope Benedict XV recognized the legitimacy of the successor states in Central Europe and called their leaders to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, namely through the agency of the apostolic nuncio to Vienna Teodoro Valfrè di Bonzo.¹

¹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium officiale* X (Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1918), X, 478–479; Jana Gajanová, 'On the Relation of the Vatican to the pre-Munich republic' [O poměru Vatikánu k předmnichovské republice], in *Churches in Our History* [Církev v našich dějinách], ed. Bohumil Černý (Prague: Orbis, 1960), 155.

By the end of February 1919, nuncio Valfrè di Bonzo arrived in the recently created Czechoslovakia to meet President Masaryk on 3 March in order to discuss both the establishment of mutual diplomatic relations and the current questions of religious nature. By the end of September 1919, the Holy See decided to send the former secretary of the apostolic nunciature in Vienna Clement Micara to Czechoslovakia where he was to represent the Holy See at the Czechoslovak episcopate for religious affairs.²

Official relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See were established on 24 October 1919 when nuncio Valfrè di Bonzo arrived for the second time in Prague, accompanied by the above-mentioned secretary Micara. On the same day, both men were received by the Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš and the next day by President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk to whom they submitted the official recognition of Czechoslovakia by the Holy See. On 26 October, both men attended the ceremonial consecration of the new Prague Archbishop František Kordač in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague castle in which many important personages in the political and religious life of the country participated. Thereafter, the nuncio to Vienna introduced the new representative of the Holy See to the bishops present.³

Clement Micara, an Italian Catholic Church dignitary, was well prepared for the demanding mission in Czechoslovakia. He had both curial and diplomatic experience from his wartime stay in Western and Central Europe which allowed him to maintain an objective distance from the events in Central Europe. A native of Frascati near Rome, he studied theology at the Roman institution of Collegio Capranica where he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy, theology and law. He was ordained as a priest in September 1902. After graduating from the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy (*Accademia dei Nobili Ecclesiastici*), he entered the service of the Roman Curia and became a professional diplomat. He gained his first diplomatic experience in the nunciature in Argentina. Later he was transferred from Buenos Aires to Brussels

² Marek Šmíd, *The Apostolic Nuncio in Prague. An Important Factor in Czechoslovak-Vatican Relations Between 1930 and 1950* [*Apoštolský nuncius v Praze. Významný faktor v československo-vatikánských vztazích v letech 1920–1950*] (Brno: CDK, 2015), 41; Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (hereafter AAV), Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 12, fascicolo 44.

³ Šmíd, *The Apostolic Nuncio in Prague*, 42; AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 5, fascicolo 16, f. 6, Beneš to Valfrè di Bonzo 24. 10. 1919; *National Politics* [*Národní politika*], 25. 10. 1919.

where he witnessed the invasion by German troops and subsequently experienced months of hardship during World War I.

In 1916, Clemente Micara was transferred to Vienna where he became secretary to the new apostolic nuncio Teodoro Valfrè di Bonzo. It was there, in the capital of the Habsburg monarchy, that he became acquainted with the Czech and Slovak agendas and gradually penetrated into the religious situation of the country of his future activities. After September 1919, he did not return to Vienna but remained in Prague where he as a representative of the Holy See at the Czechoslovak episcopate became a mediator for establishing proper diplomatic relations.⁴

Regarding the size of the diplomatic mission, in June 1921 the apostolic nuncio was joined by the secretary of Piacenza, the alumnus of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in Rome Antonino Arata, who thus became the first secretary of the apostolic nunciature in Prague.⁵

The Vatican regarded the agreement of the Czechoslovak government with Micara's official mission as so formal that they counted on his announcement as archbishop of Apamea in the consistory on the same day (21 April 1920). When, however, the response from Prague had not come, the Pope decided to postpone this act ordaining Micara the titular archbishop of Apamea in Syria on 7 May 1920. On the same day, the Holy See also charged him as the first apostolic nuncio to Prague with leading the diplomatic mission in Czechoslovakia. On 8 August 1920, Micara was ordained as bishop and a month later, on 9 September, he submitted his credentials to President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk during his inaugural audience at Hluboš castle near Příbram.⁶

From the establishment of diplomatic relations, both the Czechoslovak and the Vatican sides focused mainly on topical questions of

⁴ Emília Hrabovec, 'Die Nuntien in der Tschechoslowakei. Clemente Micara, Francesco Marmaggi, Pietro Ciriaci und Saverio Ritter,' in *Eugenio Pacelli als Nuntius in Deutschland. Forschungsperspektiven und Ansätze zu einem internationalen Vergleich*, ed. Hubert Wolf and Frank Kleinehagenbrock (München – Wien: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 177–196.

⁵ The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague (hereinafter AMFA), fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 3. 7. 1921; AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 6, fascicolo 21, ff. 41–42.

⁶ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 17. 8. 1920 or Krofta 10. 5. 1920; Josef Pejška, *The Church Law with Respect to the Particular Czechoslovak Law. The Hierarchical Code of the Church [Církevní právo se zřetelem k partikulárnímu právu československému. Hierarchický řád církevní]* (Prague: Československá akciová tiskárna, 1937), II, 172–173.

Church life in Czechoslovakia which had been previously attended to by nuncio to Vienna Teodoro Valfrè di Bonzo and his secretary Clemente Micara or by leaders of the spiritual life in the country (archbishops, bishops, abbots, etc.) who had directly communicated with the Holy See and its offices. The apostolic nunciature in Prague informed the secretariat of state – the supreme policy-making body of the Roman Curia to which apostolic nuncios were subordinated – about the most notable events via letter, report, telegram, or telephone, although at first Vatican diplomats did not place much trust in the latter.⁷

The first Czechoslovak envoy to the Holy See was Kamil Krofta who submitted his credentials to Pope Benedict XV on 22 March 1920. Having studied documents in the Vatican archives as a young historian in the early 20th century, Krofta was familiar with the Roman environment. Prior to his diplomatic mission, he had become a full professor of Czechoslovak history with a special focus on Slovakia at the newly founded University of Bratislava. The choice of Krofta was to ensure that the relations between the republic and the Holy See would be maintained in the spirit of the intentions of Czechoslovakia's founders. Krofta himself had repeatedly declared his allegiance to the foreign resistance movement led by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk from the summer of 1918.⁸

Krofta's secretary at the Czechoslovak embassy which was located in Rome at 15 Virginio Orsini Street was lawyer Vladimír Rubeška who served there as legation secretary until June 1921 when he was replaced by Miroslav Niederle, an active member of the anti-Austrian resistance movement in the ranks of the Czechoslovak Legions during World War I. After Krofta's departure in late 1921, Niederle alone

⁷ The Secretariat of state was divided into three sections. Section I – *the Section for Relations with States* (Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari), headed by a Secretary. Section II – *the Section for General Affairs* (Ufficio degli affari ordinari), the former Secretariat of State, headed by an Under-Secretary or or a Substitute, and Section III – *the Chancery of Apostolic Briefs* (Segreteria dei Brevi apostolici). Nevertheless, the Pope still had the final say in all matters.

⁸ Archivio Storico. Sezione per i rapporti con gli stati (Segreteria di Stato), fondo Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari Austria-Ungheria (hereinafter AA. EE. SS.), Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 527, ff. 69–72, Micara to Gasparri, 12. 11. 1919 or 18. 11. 1919; Marek Šmíd, 'Kamil Krofta's Mission to Rome in the 1920s' [Římské mise Kamila Krofta ve dvacátých letech 20. století], in *Science, Culture, and Politics in the Czechoslovak-Italian Relations 1918–1951* [Věda, kultura a politika v československo-italských vztazích 1918–1951], ed. Jitka Rauchová and Bohumil Jiroušek (České Budějovice: Jihočeské muzeum v Českých Budějovicích, 2012), 94.

headed the Czechoslovak embassy to the Holy See as chargé d'affaires. The early days of the embassy were extremely modest – the envoy had no typewriter, moved around the city without a car, etc., as evidenced by Krofta's political reports and his *Diplomatic Diary*.⁹

The issue of the reform clergy which resulted in the creation of the Czechoslovak Church in January 1920 was very painful to deal with for the Holy See. Some Church dignitaries, such as Secretary of State Gasparri, regarded it mainly as a failure of the priests in the disciplinary sphere and thus saw the remedy for the situation in the firm and determined personage of the archbishop of Prague František Kordač as well as in the strengthening of the formation of priests. They believed that the existing schism was the result of the social stratification of priests, with significant differences between bishops and priests, assuming that the schism would not spread, but, on the contrary, would soon end with the collapse of the new Church. They perceived the principle of religious freedom in the republic as the government's sympathizing with the reformed Catholic block which only kept escalating its demands. The recognition of the newly formed Czechoslovak Church, independent of Rome, by the Czechoslovak state in September 1920 was considered as a confirmation of this course.¹⁰

The Church dignitaries of the Holy See strongly protested against the simultaneous use and confiscation of Catholic churches which they perceived as a serious violation of the rights of the Catholic Church. They sharply objected to these practices in their diplomatic note of 7 July 1920. The subject of Krofta's negotiations with Roman dignitaries was the question of the nature of Church property and ownership.

However, it was not only the matter of the Czech lands but mainly the Church-religious situation in Slovakia that significantly interfered in

⁹ Kamil Krofta, *Diplomatic Diary 1919–1922* [*Diplomatický deník 1919–1922*], ed. Jindřich Dejmek (Prague: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2009); AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 51. 3. 1920; Jindřich Dejmek et al., *Diplomacy of Czechoslovakia, Part II. A Biographical Dictionary of Czechoslovak Diplomats (1918–1992)* [*Diplomacie Československa, II. Biografický slovník československých diplomatů (1918–1992)*] (Prague: Academie, 2013), 171; Jindřich Dejmek, 'The Beginning of Diplomatic Relations Between Czechoslovakia and the Vatican (1920–1921). Krofta's Diplomatic Mission to Rome' [Počátky diplomatických vztahů mezi Československem a Vatikánem (1920–1921). Kroftova vyslanecká mise v Římě], *Czech Historical Review* [Český časopis historický] 91, no. 2 (1993): 226.

¹⁰ Marek Šmíd, 'Thursday 8 January 1920. Rubicon of the Reform Catholicism?' [Čtvrtek 8. ledna 1920. Rubikon reformního katolicizmu?], *Theological Review* [Theologická revue] 88, no. 2 (2017): 137–153.

Czechoslovak-Vatican negotiations. The post-war hardships in Slovakia where the difficulties of coexistence with an economically stronger partner were fully manifested, the broken trade ties with Hungary, penetration of Czech capital into Slovakia, poor transport infrastructure, higher taxes and lower wages, poorer competitiveness, lack of goods, decline in industrial production, higher unemployment and inconsistent unification – all these issues were politicized and thus interfered in the negotiations with the Vatican. In any case, Slovakia felt it as discrimination.¹¹

Regarding the Church administration, the Bohemian Church province consisted of the Prague archdiocese and the dioceses of Česká Budějovice, Litoměřice, and Hradec Králové. The Moravian province included the Archdiocese of Olomouc and the Diocese of Brno. In Slovakia, there were five dioceses: Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Rožňava, Spiš, and Košice. Trnava still did not have the status of a separate diocese but that of apostolic administration. The religious life in Subcarpathian Ruthenia was influenced by two Greek Catholic eparchies – the diocese of Mukachevo with the seat in Užhorod and the diocese of Prešov with the seat in Prešov.¹² The filling of Slovak dioceses where the government sought to replace the former Hungarian ordinaries with Slovak ones proved to be an especially challenging task. The situation developed in favour of replacement as the former administrators had either died shortly after the creation of Czechoslovakia (the bishop of Spiš Alexander Párvy died in March 1919, the bishop of Rožňava Ludovít Balás died in September 1920) or had been expelled from the country (the bishop of Nitra Vilmos Batthyány and the bishop of Banská Bystrica Farkas Radnai both left in March 1919). Therefore, after 1920, the majority of bishopric thrones in Slovakia needed to be filled, namely in Spiš, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Rožňava, and Trnava, the latter being the seat of the Slovak part of the archdiocese of Esztergom.¹³

¹¹ Roman Holec, 'The Economic Development of Slovakia Immediately after the Creation of Czechoslovakia in the Context of Czech-Slovak Relations' [Hospodársky vývoj Slovenska bezprostredne po vzniku ČSR v kontexte česko-slovenských vzťahov], in *Czechoslovakia 1918–1938. The Fates of Democracy in Central Europe [Československo 1918–1938. Osudy demokracie ve střední Evropě]*, I, ed. Jaroslav Valenta, Emil Voráček and Josef Harna (Prague: Historický ústav AV ČR, 1999), 276–277; Dušan Kováč, *History of Slovakia [Dějiny Slovenska]* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1999), 76.

¹² Róbert Letz, *History of Slovakia [Slovenské dejiny]* IV. 1914–1938 (Bratislava: Literárne informačné centrum), 276.

¹³ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 31. 3. 1920; AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 12, fascicolo 44, Šrobár to Valfrè di Bonzo 28. 2. 1919. Trnava was the seat of a vicariate of the archdiocese of Esztergom from 1886.

Only one of the former Hungarian bishops, Augustín Fischer-Colbrie, was not unseated after the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The Czechoslovak government initially perceived him positively. However, when influential personages from his circle of acquaintances started to be hostile towards the Republic, the government changed its opinion and sought to remove and transfer the bishop to Hungary. Despite the interventions of the Holy See, Fischer-Colbrie's compliant attitude did not last for long so the Church-religious situation in the east of the country remained unstabilized. Subsequently, the government strived to unseat Fischer-Colbrie but the Holy See refused to do this and instead exerted pressure on the bishop through nuncio Micara, hoping to improve the situation. Eventually, the Czechoslovak government did not remove Fischer-Colbrie from his post after 1918, apparently knowing that their political reasons would not convince the Holy See. The government also did not want to irritate the Hungarian Catholic community as well as the vast majority of the faithful in Slovakia who perceived Fischer-Colbrie as an important spiritual leader – for example, Andrej Hlinka stood on his side.¹⁴

As already indicated, the dispute between the Czechoslovak government and the Church hierarchy concerned the appointment of bishops, often referred to as ‘the fight for nomination law’. While the Holy See disagreed with the decision of the Czechoslovak government to use the rights of the Habsburg monarchy, in particular the exclusive right to appoint bishops and fill the posts of high Church dignitaries, the government, by contrast, sought to maintain control over newly appointed bishops and their loyalty. The government held the view that based on the Reception Law No. 11/1918 or Article 64 of the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic of 29 February 1920 they had the rights of the former Austro-Hungarian rulers that were enshrined in Act 50/1874 on the Law of Patronage (§ 38), and that had been passed on to the Czechoslovak government which now could decide about the election of high Church dignitaries, mainly archbishops, bishops, and canons.¹⁵

¹⁴ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 21. 4. 1920; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 589, f. 7; Marek Šmíd, ‘Contribution on the Relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks after the Creation of the Czechoslovak State in 1918’ [Příspěvek ke vztahu Čechů a Slováků po vzniku společného československého státu v roce 1918], *Cultural History [Kultúrne dejiny]* 4, no. 2 (2015): 179.

¹⁵ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 13, ff. 58–65, Micara to Gasparri 1. 1. 1923, resp. ff. 71–74,

The Czechoslovak government sought to pass on to them the right of the former Austro-Hungarian rulers to appoint bishops which the curia had granted them for their service to the Catholic Church. The Holy See refused to grant the right to Czechoslovakia as a successor state to the Austrian government, as it was a purely personal right which had ceased to exist with the fall of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. However, having taken over all the obligations of the former monarchy towards the Church, the Czechoslovak government refused to relinquish this right. They wanted to have influence in Church matters also through nomination and not to be presented with a *fait accompli* – for example, in order to prevent the unilateral promotion of a political party's candidates. The Holy See, too, disapproved of the linking of politics and religion, so they were willing to admit the objections of the Czechoslovak side on this point.¹⁶

For example, the negotiations on the filling of the three Slovak dioceses – Nitra, Spiš, and Banská Bystrica – were eventually resolved by a compromise, although it was mainly the Holy See that receded from its demands for selecting individual ordinaries, showing its good will towards the young Republic. Both sides were well aware that delaying the settlement of the dispute only damaged Catholicism in Slovakia and led to more tension, nervousness, and uncertainty of the faithful without a shepherd. Thus, by the end of 1920, an agreement was reached that Marián Blaha would not be appointed bishop of Spiš but the bishop of Banská Bystrica and Karol Kmetko would not become ordinary of Spiš but ordinary of Nitra. Eventually, the rector of the seminary Ján Vojtaššák, who had headed the diocese of Spiš as capitular vicar already from the summer of 1919, was pushed for the post of bishop of Spiš.¹⁷

Besides the aforementioned bishopric thrones, it was also necessary to fill the Greek Catholic (Uniate) bishopric posts in the Diocese of Prešov and the Diocese of Mukachevo with the seat in Užhorod. The slow progress of the Catholic Church in the east of the country was

Beneš to Micara 22. 10. 1921; AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 12, fascicolo 45, ff. 101–102.

¹⁶ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921; AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 12, fascicolo 48, f. 36, Gasparri to Marmaggi 19. 9. 1925.

¹⁷ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 18. 12. 1920; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 591, f. 43, Gasparri to Micara 19. 10. 1920, resp. ff. 45–48, Micara to Gasparri, 20. 11. 1920.

taken advantage of by the Orthodox, who attempted to alienate Greek Catholics from Rome, and also by infidels – often zealous communists.¹⁸

At the time of the creation of Czechoslovakia in the fall of 1918, the post of bishop of Prešov was held by Štefan Novák, a Slovak Church leader, who administered the diocese in a rather inert manner, often staying in Vienna and Budapest. Given his Hungarianization policy in the spheres of education and religion, he resigned from his post and left for Hungary shortly after the establishment of Czechoslovakia. The Holy See considered his resignation as necessary. The search for a suitable successor for his post took a long time – only in June 1922 was the vacant seat of apostolic administrator of Prešov filled by Serbian Dionýz Njaradi, bishop of Križevac.¹⁹

As for the Mukačevo diocese, it had been administrated by Antal Papp, a Ruthenian Greek Catholic priest of Hungarian origin from 1912. After 1918, Papp also proved himself as a decisive and militant Hungarian who was, moreover, ignorant of the Slovak language. With respect to his spiritual qualities and integrity, the Czechoslovak government did not proceed to deport him from his diocese as had been the case with the bishops of Nitra and Banská Bystrica. Instead, they waited for his future political and religious responses which could now be expressed loyalty. When this did not happen and Papp refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic, he was expelled from the country in 1924. He left for Hungary where he became apostolic administrator in Miskolc.²⁰

The task of filling the Olomouc archbishopric throne in Moravia went relatively smoothly. In November 1919, Lev Skrbenský of Hříště, an aristocrat of Czech origin, whose health was deteriorating and who had not become accustomed to the new conditions, resigned from his post. Pope Benedict XV accepted his resignation in February of the

¹⁸ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 586, ff. 39–46, Micara to Gasparri 2. 4. 1921.

¹⁹ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921, resp. 16. 3. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 21, f. 45, Gasparri to Micara 2. 3. 1922; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 619, ff. 56–64, Valfrè di Bonzo to Gasparri 11. 2. 1921; Jaroslav Coranič, *From the History of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia [Z dejín gréckokatolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku]* (České Budějovice: Sdružení sv. Jana Nepomuckého při Biskupství českobudějovickém a Centrum církevních dějin a dějin teologie Teologické fakulty Jihočeské univerzity v Českých Budějovicích, 2014): 175–195, 222–231.

²⁰ AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 31, f. 29, Micara to Gasparri 20. 1. 1923, resp. ff. 30–56, Micara to Tacci 20. 1. 1923.

following year but the archbishopric throne was not officially vacant until August 1920. In January 1921, the post of archbishop of Olomouc was assumed by the provost and canon, Antonín Cyril Stojan, a popular member of the Revolutionary National Assembly who was agreed upon without any objections by both Czechoslovakia and the Holy See. It is interesting to note that among the candidates of the government for the Olomouc archbishopric throne were also Jan Šrámek and Andrej Hlinka but the Vatican disagreed, allegedly claiming that, as high-profile personalities of political Catholicism they were unacceptable to the Czechoslovak government.²¹

At the time of the creation of Czechoslovakia, the post of bishop of Hradec Králové was held by Josef Doubrava who served briefly as apostolic administrator of the Prague Archdiocese between 1918 and 1919. Several months after his death in February 1921, the canon of the Metropolitan Chapter by St. Vitus in Prague Karel Kašpar, who had served as auxiliary bishop already from March of the previous year, was appointed as Doubrava's successor. The ceremonial consecration was carried out on 11 April 1920. It should be noted, that Karel Kašpar, a close confidant of Nuncio Micara and an important informant of Roman circles, was among the most suitable candidates of the Holy See for the post of Prague archbishop after the establishment of Czechoslovakia.²²

Two Czech dioceses, or rather a Bohemian and a Moravian one, were headed by German ordinaries after 1918. In the diocese of Litoměřice, with two-thirds of the German population, German bishop Josef Gross remained in his post and Antonín Čech became his auxiliary bishop in the 1920s. Although the Holy See was ready to replace the bishop of Litoměřice, Gross eventually kept his post until his death in 1931.

²¹ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 24. 7. 1920; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 613, ff. 51–54, Micara to Gasparri 7. 7. 1920, resp. fascicolo 614, ff. 21–25, Micara to Gasparri 30. 9. 1920; Jitka Jonová, 'Negotiations on the Appointment of Archbishop of Olomouc after the Resignation of Archbishop Leo Cardinal Skrbenský of Hříště as Seen Through the Eyes of the Holy See' [Jednání o obsazení arcibiskupského stolce v Olomouci po rezignaci arcibiskupa Lva kardinála Skrbenského z Hříště z pohledu Svatého stolce], *Studia Theologica* 15, no. 3 (2013): 149.

²² AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 576, ff. 53–54, Micara to Gasparri 28. 2. 1921, resp. f. 55, Gasparri to Micara 17. 4. 1921; Pavel Marek and Marek Šmíd, *Archbishop František Kordač [Arcibiskup František Kordač]* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2015): 28, 66.

Similarly, Norbert Klein, a nationally moderate German, remained in his office in the diocese of Brno which was mostly Czech until the mid-1920s.²⁵

An exceedingly difficult debate in Czechoslovak-Vatican negotiations concerned the new demarcation of dioceses which was necessary to implement especially in the east of the country in order for the diocesan boundaries to correspond with the state borders. In this respect, both sides – the Holy See and the Czechoslovak government – were in agreement as they considered the situation after 1918 as a completely new experience of unprecedented significance. Especially in the east of the country, the adjustment of diocesan borders became of crucial importance. In Bohemia and Moravia, parts of dioceses with their residences were in neighbouring countries, namely the parishes of Archdioceses of Wrocław and Vienna and the Dioceses of Regensburg and St. Pölten although these were not large territories. After 1918, the Prague Archdiocese was given the region of Kladsko which had been separated from the Czech lands and annexed to Prussia together with most of Silesia in the middle of the 18th century. In 1919, the Diocese of České Budějovice was enlarged by the addition of Vitoraz and the Diocese of Brno was granted the region of Valtice. A year later, the region of Hlučín was included into the Archdiocese of Olomouc which only prolonged the difficult process of legal settlement of the property of the (arch)dioceses.²⁴

Regarding Slovakia, which represented the main focus of negotiations on the demarcation of diocesan borders, it was necessary to wait for the signing of the Treaty of Trianon, which was to set the borders of the new Hungarian state as a successor state to Austria-Hungary. The

²⁵ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 11. 11. 1920; AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 36.

²⁴ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920–1921, Krofta 31. 5. 1920, resp. 30. 9. 1921; Damián Nèmec, ‘Modus vivendi of 1928 from the Point of View of the Canon Law’ [Modus vivendi z roku 1928 z pohledu kanonického práva], *Dialogue Europe* [*Dialog Evropa*] 14, no. 1–4 (2004): p. 29; Miloš Trapl, ‘The Changes in the Church Administration in Moravia and Silesia as a Result of Modus Vivendi of 1928’ [Změny církevní správy na Moravě a ve Slezsku v důsledku Modu vivendi z roku 1928], in *The Development of Church Administration in Moravia. The 27th Mikulov Symposium, October 9–10, 2002* [Vývoj církevní správy na Moravě. XXVII. mikulovské symposium 9.–10. října 2002], ed. Emil Kordiovský and Libor Jan (Brno: Státní okresní archiv Břeclav, 2005), 151.

treaty was signed in June 1920.²⁵ The most difficult issue of removing the Slovak parts of the Esztergom Archdiocese from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the archbishop of Esztergom and the primate of Hungary János Csernoch was only resolved in the late 1930s.

Another acute problem was the matter of separation of Church and state which had already been raised during World War I when Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, leader of the Czechoslovak foreign resistance movement, had discussed the matter with American Catholics of Czech origin at the Catholic congress in Washington in June 1918.²⁶ In the post-1918 situation, the Holy See was naturally concerned about a radical form of separation which could endanger the interests of the Catholic Church.

Therefore, the Holy See refused the radical proposal for separation from the pen of left-wing politician and lawyer Theodor Bartošek which was also not supported by the Czechoslovak government but they were willing to consider foreign minister Beneš's plan of separation which promised the Catholics to maintain Church property. The Brazilian and French separation laws became a subject of consideration in the Czechoslovak-Vatican negotiations although both sides were in favour of an amicable settlement of Church-state relations. The Catholic Church was thus reluctantly preparing for the separation as it was promoted by political authorities in the country, namely by the president, foreign minister and the government, but the separation should take place in the French manner, not the Brazilian one.²⁷

The Czechoslovak government wanted to prepare a draft of the separation law and submit it to the Holy See which would unwillingly accept it as state secretary Pietro Gasparri had suggested during the negotiations. In the post-war atmosphere and with a strong left-wing representation in the government, it was impossible to plan for concluding a concordat with Czechoslovakia. In addition to the separation law, the government also wanted to prepare a special treaty that would

²⁵ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 28. 2. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 588, f. 1, Micara to Gasparri 15. 11. 1920, resp. f. 15, Gasparri to Micara 19. 12. 1920.

²⁶ Marek Šmíd, *The Vatican and the Czech Lands 1914–1918 [Vatikán a české země v letech 1914–1918]* (Brno: CDK, 2020), 138.

²⁷ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 18. 12. 1920; AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, III periodo, fascicolo 3, ff. 11–14, Micara to Gasparri 1. 10. 1920, resp. AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 10, fascicolo 40, ff. 150–159; Dejmek, *The Beginning of Diplomatic Relations Between Czechoslovakia and the Vatican*, 235–236.

grant Czechoslovakia the same rights as other states enjoyed while regulating practical Church matters, such as the appointment of bishops. The Czechoslovak side found inspiration in the Portuguese separation, which, although relatively radical, allowed Lisbon to maintain the Portuguese embassy to the Holy See.²⁸

The matter of separation of Church and state was closely related to the question of Church property. The Holy See was afraid that the removal of the financial base would make it impossible for priests and monks to continue their service, although the idea of limiting the property of some monasteries was not completely strange to them. They were willing to agree to the sale of vast Church estates but demanded that the proceeds from the sale should remain with the Catholic Church. In any case, the Czechoslovak government did not seek to confiscate Church property without compensation but considered the option of establishing a Church fund in which the financial means from the sale of Church estates would be gathered. The Church would manage the funds under state supervision which even Prague Nuncio Micara approved of. State Secretary Gasparri, by contrast, was not in favour of this solution as he had a terrible experience with the Church fund in Italy.²⁹

It may be surprising that Church dignitaries did not protest against the sale of Church property but demanded that the estates should be sold for an adequate sum and the money kept for the administration and benefit of the Church. The estates of foreign (arch)bishops, whose parishes were situated in Czechoslovakia as well as Czech parishes abroad brought about many complications. These complex issues required time so that a comprehensive solution could be reached not just a temporary fix. These estates included, for example, the estates of the Wrocław Diocese situated in Czechoslovakia. They could not be recognized as the property of the Czechoslovak Catholics of the Wrocław Diocese, as they belonged to the diocese as a whole, not only to the faithful in Czechoslovakia. The government suggested either

²⁸ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1920, Krofta 18. 12. 1920; Marek Šmíd, ‘Negotiations of Jan Šrámek in the Vatican in the 1920s’ [Jednání Jana Šrámka ve Vatikánu ve dvacátých letech 20. století], *Journal of the Moravian Foundation [Časopis Matice moravské]* 131, no. 1 (2012): 65–88.

²⁹ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 16. 3. 1921, resp. 31. 10. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Austria-Ungheria, III periodo, fascicolo 28, resp. Austria, IV periodo, fascicolo 20.

selling the estates and paying the proceeds to the Wrocław diocese or placing the money under the administration of a joint commission of representatives of the state and the Church and subsequently dividing it. Regarding the estates of the German diocese in Wrocław, it was in any case necessary to wait for the final recognition of the borders of Czechoslovakia which delayed the issue even further.⁵⁰

During his negotiations with the Vatican, Kamil Krofta also dealt with the dramatic political-religious situation that the post-war development in Europe brought about. It is logical that he paid more attention to the events in Central Europe as they directly influenced the situation in Czechoslovakia. The monitoring of the situation in neighbouring countries well demonstrates the interest of the Holy See in the welfare of the Church, particularly in Austria and Hungary, reflecting their nostalgia for the fall of Austria-Hungary. It was no secret that, already from the Great War, State Secretary Pietro Gasparri along with many other Cardinals had sympathized with the Habsburg monarchy and Pope Benedict XV had sought to preserve it until the last days of the world conflict.⁵¹

Czechoslovak-Vatican relations were also temporarily exacerbated by the incident in Hungary when the former Austrian Emperor Charles I returned to Budapest incognito during Easter 1921 and attempted to restore the monarchy. However, after a week's stay in Szombathely in western Hungary, he realized the futility of his efforts and returned to Switzerland. State Secretary Gasparri was sceptical about Charles I's attempt at a coup d'état – he believed that his risky endeavour was doomed to failure as he had no support among Hungary's political elite. Kamil Krofta was informed that the archbishop of Esztergom János Csernoch who was not trusted in Czechoslovakia was Charles I's confidant. Charles I's downfall would make Csernoch's position in Hungary even more difficult. After the failure of Charles I's coup d'état, the state secretary was pleased that there had been no bloodshed.⁵²

Although the Vatican took no part in the ex-emperor's attempt, they would not object to the return of the Habsburgs to the Hungarian throne. When Charles I of Habsburg repeated his attempt to regain the

⁵⁰ AAV, Nunziatura Cecoslovacchia, busta 12, fascicolo 46.

⁵¹ Marek Šmíd, *The Vatican and the First World War. Transformation of the Foreign Policy of the Holy See in 1914–1918 [Vatikán a první světová válka. Proměny zahraniční politiky Svatého stolce v letech 1914–1918]* (Brno: CDK, 2016), 26.

⁵² AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 12. 4. 1921.

throne in October 1921, the Holy See was again very reserved about his *adventure*. The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* ran only agency reports on the affair, refraining from making any comments and expressions of sympathy for the ex-emperor. The secretary of state considered his endeavour as a naïve, ill-conceived action of a young risk-taker, and thus did not understand the overreaction of Czechoslovakia who feared a Hungarian military invasion of Slovakia.⁵⁵

Diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Holy See underwent a dramatic and turbulent change at the turn of the 1910s and 1920s. The most acute questions to discuss included the filling of Czech and Slovak bishopric thrones, the Church administration in Slovakia and the matters of Church education while the filling of the bishopric thrones in the Czech lands and Slovakia proved to be of crucial importance for the proper functioning of the Church administration in Czechoslovakia.

The posts of residential bishops in Czechoslovakia were mostly held by Church leaders of aristocratic origin, conservative mindset and pro-Habsburg orientation. Therefore, these dignitaries often regarded the fall of the pro-Catholic Habsburg monarchy as the loss of a firmly established confessional society and the end of state support for religion which they perceived as a tragedy and personal defeat. Prague Archbishop Pavel Huyn and Olomouc Archbishop Lev Skrbenský of Hříšně embodied these concerns. It is thus understandable that they acted with considerable hostility towards Czechoslovakia. They perceived the democratic modernization processes that were set in motion as an extremely dangerous and harmful turning point. Therefore, they often called for rigidity and for the strengthening of a retarded approach that would preserve the doctrine of the Church and prevent the dangerous seductions of the liberal-democratic First Czechoslovak Republic.

Only after 1918, the appointment of new bishops, who came from 'the humble strata of Czech and Slovak society', such as Šimon Bárta in České Budějovice, Ján Vojtaššák in Spiš, and Marián Blaha in Banská Bystrica, transformed the static Church community into a dynamically journeying people. Since the bishops who were reserved and disloyal to the republic either died or resigned until the mid-1920s, as time progressed and after the dramatic upheavals in society and within the

⁵⁵ AMFA, fund Political reports – Vatican, 1921, Krofta 31. 10. 1921; AA. EE. SS., Cecoslovacchia, IV periodo, fascicolo 44, ff. 17–25, Micara to Gasparri, sine dato,

Church, the Catholic clergy gradually became reconciled to the republic and accepted it as its own.

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