

CZECH CATHOLICISM AFTER THE FIRST WAR FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HOLY SEE

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Soon after Czechoslovakia had been founded, the Bohemian Lands witnessed a strong anti-catholic current, the aims being secularization of public life, a separation of church and state and an eventual emancipation of the nation's own church. Pope Benedict XV reacted to this crisis by striving to establish contacts with the new state as soon as possible. By 1919, the extent of the reform demands was perceived by the Vatican as being equivalent, in the most radical variant, to the conversion of the Catholic church into a separate ecclesiastic organisation of the new nation. The reasons of the crisis were located in changing political and spiritual values, in the legacy of the Austrian state religion, in an influence of the protestant, positivistic outlook on history, but first and foremost in the clergy lacking appropriate training. Gradually it dawned upon those in charge that in the laicist republic, the future of the church was dependent upon the discipline of the clergy. At this point, a decision was made to examine to what extent the Jednota movement, a grouping of priests outspokenly demanding reforms, could be adapted to the new situation. Finally, after the Czechoslovak National Church had been established, "Jednota" was disbanded. In spite of further attempts at mediating, in the course of 1920 the Vatican gradually reached the conclusion that not by making concessions, but only by drawing very clear lines between the Catholic Church and other parts of society and by the church reforming from within could the crisis be overcome.