



ARMENIANS IN POLAND IN THE 20TH CENTURY

GRZEGORZ PEŁCZYŃSKI
grzegorz.pelczynski@uwr.edu.pl

As early as the Middle Ages, Armenians had been settling in Russian territories which later

became parts of Poland. Their main settlement centers at the time were Lvov and Kamieniec Podolski, and these settlers concerned themselves predominantly with trade and craftsmanship. In 1630, Armenians entered into union with the Roman Catholic Church and became Catholics, maintaining a separate Archdiocese of the Catholic Armenian Rite in Lvov. The union was conducive to their assimilation, particularly of families that had become ennobled. When Poland collapsed at the end of the 18th century, its territory was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria. Its southeastern areas, where there were clusters of Armenians, were occupied by Austria.

The history of Armenians in old Poland is relatively well known. Scholars, however, have shown less interest in their recent history. It was often thought that the Polish Armenians were completely assimilated; however this was not right as the Armenians in Poland were still there. This article highlights aspects of their history in the 20th century, which was often tragic both for Poles and Armenians.

THE TIMES OF ARCHBISHOP TEODOROWICZ (1901-1938)

During the 19th century the Armenians settled in Eastern Galicia and Bukowina, which were parts of Austria. These Armenians no longer resembled their ancestors from the times of the first Polish Republic, as they already in the 18th century had been extensively integrated and had acquired Western European cultural traits. Neither were they the exotic merchants trading with countries of the East. Some of them had gained noble titles in the previous century while others had managed to do so in the Austrian times (after 1795). As nobles and landowners they had evolved into landed gentry. Most of them, however, became representatives of the intelligentsia. The assimilation process of the Polish Armenians intensified during the 19th century. They identified themselves with the Polish nation while they intentionally preserved some autonomy, which was strongly grounded on their affiliation with the Catholic Armenian Rite.

In 1901 archbishop Józef Teodorowicz, a great Polish politician,¹ became head of the Lvov Archdiocese of the Catholic Armenian Rite (i.e. Catholic Armenian Church). For almost forty years he was also the leader of the Armenian community settled on Polish territory. The Archdiocese which he administered was the oldest and most esteemed institution of the Polish Armenians, having its center in Lvov, where the cathedral was located and the Armenian Benedictine nuns had their convent. The Archdiocese consisted of three deaneries² and nine parishes. The parishes in Lvov and Brzeżany belonged to the Lvov deanery, the parishes in Stanisławów, Tyśmienica and Łyściec were part of the Stanisławów deanery. The Kuteńsk deanery included parishes in Kutu, Horodenka, Śniatyń, and also in Bukowina (which had a parish in Czerniowice and a chaplaincy in Suczawa). The latter two were formally separated from the Lvov Archdiocese after WWI, as Bukowina was ceded to Romania. Nonetheless, the ties between Armenians from Galicia and Bukowina were preserved. Some landowning members of the parishes lived in areas around the settlement centers, while some lived outside Galicia and Bukowina.³

The number of followers of the Lvov Archdiocese of the Armenian Rite was estimated between 5 and 10 thousand, which made it the smallest Archdiocese on Polish territory.⁴ Membership in the Armenian Rite was quite complex. There was no controversy about the affiliation of those whose parents were both followers of the Armenian Rite and always received the sacrament in the Armenian Rite. However, during the leadership of archbishop Teodorowicz this was no longer the rule. Armenians increasingly frequently received sacraments in churches of other rites because of friendly or family-related contacts with the Latin rite followers, and to a lesser extent with Greek Catholics. Thus the process of inclusion into other rites had begun. The matter was more complicated when one of the spouses was not of the Armenian rite. In such cases the spouses had to decide on the rite of the wedding ceremony. They could each preserve their own rite or choose one for them both. In the former case, their children would often choose the rite of the parent of the same sex; however, even if they were formally attached to the Latin rite, they would still in some manner remain connected with the Armenian rite.

The sites of the parishes of the Archdiocese of the Armenian Rite and the number of followers correspond to the location and population of the Polish Armenians. This concerned less those Armenians who came to Poland at the beginning of the 1920s from Western Armenia, escaping bloody Turkish persecutions⁵ or the revolution in Russia.⁶ Their total number was little more than one thousand. They arrived in various parts of the country, often to stay temporarily for a period while en route to the West. On the other hand, those

who settled in Poland slowly integrated with the Armenians who had come earlier or were the descendants of earlier settlers and identified with their Armenian rite.

The Lvov Archdiocese of Armenian Rite managed to preserve the Armenian Rite and other Armenian traditions in the south-eastern Poland of the time and in Bukowina. One of those traditions was the famous St. Anthony's feast held in the very traditional town of Kutu,⁷ which attracted Armenians from all Polish parishes.⁸ The rite was gradually Latinized. Although the liturgy was still performed in classical Armenian (grabar), it was hardly comprehensible to its followers, and gradually more and more liturgical elements stemmed from the Latin rite. The Armenians themselves as well as their rite were highly integrated into Polish society, no longer talking Armenian, marrying non-Armenians, etc..

Polish Armenian cultural institutions were connected with the church. The Józef Torosiewicz Scientific Institution in Lvov, the most renowned, was a dormitory for boys of the Catholic Armenian Rite, who learnt or studied in the town. It was founded in 1865 by Józef Torosiewicz, a well-known philanthropist, and a medical doctor, who donated to it all his capital. The dormitories were paid, but poorer students could receive a scholarship. Thirty to forty boys from various Armenian parishes lived in the dormitory, and their friendly relations were retained long after they had left it, which contributed to their networking and the integration and coherence of the Armenian community. Such strong ties with the Armenian Church were possible as the dormitories were located close to the cathedral and Armenian priests.

A similar institution by the name of the Archbishop Isakowicz, a Catholic Armenian Dormitory, was established by the priest Kajetan Kasprowicz in Czerniowce at the end of the 19th century. After his death, his name became part of the institution's name. Unlike the Torosiewicz institution, the dormitory in Czerniowce enrolled male students of all Catholic rites.

The Public Primary School and Junior High School in Lvov run by the Armenian Benedictine nuns was the oldest female school in Lvov, as it had probably been founded in the 18th century. The Benedictine nuns could not conduct lessons as it was against the rules. Most of the female students came from Polish families, and, therefore, the school had a less Armenian character than the Scientific Institution. The curriculum was the same as in Polish schools. Sometimes, however, the girls were taken to attend mass in the nearby Armenian Cathedral and received visits from the Archbishop.

During archbishop Teodorowicz's time, (early decades of the 20th century) Armenians were called "Kabzany" [pouches], which, according to folk etymology, was associated with the desire for money (lining one's

pockets).⁹ From older times Armenians maintained the "Mons Pius" Public Pawnbroking Company at the Armenian Cathedral in Lvov. This bank, a small but prosperous financial institution, was founded at the end of the 18th century.¹⁰ Armenian landowners or company owners were still enterprising people.

In 1927 Polish Armenians started publishing their periodical *St. Gregory's Messenger* in Lvov. It was published only in Polish, which was the main language spoken by the Armenians, and was edited by Priest Dionizy Kajetanowicz. *Gregoriana*, a theological periodical edited by priest Adam Bogdanowicz, was issued in 1935.

The founding of these periodicals was a reflection of revival within the Armenian community in the newly established country of Poland. The publication facilitated contacts among those who wished to keep Armenian traditions alive in Poland, aware that these traditions were increasingly difficult for the old church structures to uphold. Besides, new challenges requiring new solutions appeared. Discussions among Armenians toward the end of the 1920s paved the way for the idea of founding an association which would unite the dispersed Polish Armenians. The Archdiocesan Association of Armenians (AAA) was founded in 1930 in Lvov, its name intentionally pointing to the close connection of its members with the Lvov Archdiocese of the Armenian Rite. Jan Antoniewicz was the president of the association, while priest Dionizy Kajetanowicz and engineer Henryk Mikuli were vice-presidents. In the mid-1930s, the AAA had already gathered about five hundred members, including Armenians who had recently arrived from Armenia or Russia. The official journal of the association was the "Posłaniec w. Grzegorza" (Messenger of Saint Gregory).

A special Committee of Amusement was designated to organize Armenian Balls, which were among the most spectacular events launched by the association. These were held in the halls of the Artistic and Literary Casino of Lvov and were so spectacular that they were regarded as a part of the Lvov carnival. Both Armenians and the Lvov elite attended them. Funds gathered at these Armenian Balls were allocated to the Torosiewicz Scientific Institute and to needy students and pupils of the Benedictine school.

The AAA was involved in cultural activities too. The editorial board of the *St. Gregory's Messenger* and the Literary-Scientific and Artistic Committee were mainly engaged in this. Their members, in addition to editorial work, organized lectures by experts on Armenian topics as well as concerts by Armenian artists. These events mostly took place on the premises of the AAA in Lvov. Armenian activists also prepared radio programs about Armenians, which were broadcast in 1931 and 1932. But, above all, they organized the

Exhibition of Armenian Monuments in Lvov in 1932, at which there were numerous exhibits showing Armenian history on Polish territory.

THE WAR PERIOD (1939-1945)

The death of archbishop Teodorowicz in December 1938 marked the end of an era in the history of the Polish Armenians. The Pope did not manage to designate a successor before the outbreak of WWII, so Kajetanowicz fulfilled the duties of the administrator of the Lvov Archdiocese during the war years.

The German army entered Eastern Galicia in September 1939 but soon turned it over to the Soviet Union, which did not tolerate the activities of the Armenian institutions and organizations. In 1941 the Archdiocese lost two priests: Adam Bogdanowicz, most probably tortured to death,¹¹ and Bogdan Agopsowicz, who was shot dead while crossing the border in Czeremosz. Most of the Polish Armenians, including prewar civil servants, landowners and entrepreneurs, found themselves in a life-threatening situation. Constituting a social system oppressed by the Communist rule, they were robbed, sent to prisons and labor camps and often killed.

With the reoccupation of Galicia by German troops in June 1941 the Armenians faced new challenges. Although they often entered into mixed marriages, they generally preserved Armenian hereditary physical traits, which made them look like Jews. Hence, German soldiers often harassed Armenians, mistaking them for Jews. Whenever Armenians left their houses, they always had to carry documents to show that they were so-called Aryans. On the other hand, some Jews were saved from death by Armenian priests who provided them with Armenian birth certificates.

German soldiers formed collaborating troops of soldiers of various nationalities. On the other hand, the soldiers of the allied Armenian troops were Armenian nationalists who wished to liberate Soviet Armenia from Soviet control and occupation. The latter were garrisoned near Lvov, where they made contacts with Polish Armenians. These soldiers, mostly non-Catholics, followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, attended mass in the Lvov Cathedral, where Priests Kajetanowicz and Kazimierz Romaszkan conducted pastoral service. Armenian soldiers probably tried to persuade young Polish Armenians into military service, but with no result, since the Polish Armenians did not identify with their goals. In fact, many worked as spies for the Polish government in London.¹²

After the Red Army re-occupied Lvov in July 1944, Romaszkan and Kajetanowicz were accused of cooperation with the Nazis and were sent to Soviet concentration camps. It was a false accusation if one considers the complicated and ever-changing situation in the territories settled by the Armenians during the war.

THE YEARS OF DISPERSAL (1945-1979)

As a result of WWII, Galicia and North Bukovina became parts of the USSR. The Armenians, like most of the Polish population living there, left their houses to resettle farther west in Poland, to become citizens of the Polish People's Republic (PRL). They settled mainly in Upper Silesia and Lower Silesia, but many also settled in Cracow, Warsaw, Tricity (Trójmiasto) and other towns. Some tried to settle where their relatives or acquaintances had lived before WWII. However, they did not manage to create close-knit settlements and were broadly scattered throughout Poland. Such a dispersion affected not only members of parishes but also closest relatives, and contact was often lost.

Although many missed Lvov, Kutý or Śniatyń, some, although hoping for a quick return to their homeland, had to settle in new places. Gradually they became an integral part of the new communities joined after the displacement.

As before WWII, affiliation with the Armenian group was connected to the Catholic Armenian rite. However, in later years membership became a mere formality. In the Soviet Ukraine, both the Armenian rite and the Greek-Catholic rite were abolished.¹³ Kajetanowicz, the administrator of the Lvov Archdiocese, died in exile in Abieź in the arctic in 1954. All Armenian churches were deprived of their sacral character: the beautiful Lvov Cathedral was transformed into a warehouse, the church in Stanisławów was turned into a Museum of Religion and Atheism.¹⁴ These persecutions affected only those Polish Armenians who, for various reasons, remained in West Ukraine, while most had migrated to Poland. There, however, the church authorities, preoccupied with more important issues during the difficult post-war period, did not show enough care to meet the needs of the followers of the Catholic Armenian rite.

In the 1940s two centers for the followers of the Catholic Armenian rite were established, one at the small Dominican St. Idzi church, where Andrzej Łukasiewicz, a priest from Bukovina, served until his death in 1951. His duties were taken over by priest Franciszek Jakubowicz, who, after becoming seriously ill, celebrated mass only in his room, with Archbishop Karol Wojtyła's (later Pope John Paul II) permission. After Jakubowicz's death in 1972, the Catholic Armenian liturgy was occasionally offered by priests commuting from Gliwice.

After WWII, the Armenians in Gliwice became the owners of the small Holy Trinity church, where priest Kazimierz Roszko conducted mass until 1964, before his emigration to Italy, then the USA, Canada and eventually Israel. While in exile, he left the Armenian rite for the Greek-Catholic one. Between 1969 and 1973, the Holy Trinity church was administered by priest

Kazimierz Romaszkan, who had survived the labor camps. After his death, priest Krzysztof Staniecki, previously connected with the Latin and Greek rites, took over his duties and conducted mass for both the Armenians and Greek-Catholics (the Ukrainians) in the Holy Trinity Church until 1985.¹⁵

The third center for the followers of the Catholic Armenian rite was established towards the end of the 1950s on the initiative of Filipiak, the former parish priest of Stanisławów. Filipiak had moved from one place to another for many years. Eventually, he was granted a ruined St. Peter and Paul's Church in Gdansk in 1958, which he renovated and gradually rebuilt by the mid-1970s. However, only one of the chapels was made available for the Armenians, while the main church was designated for the major Roman-Catholic rite. A sanctuary of the Heavenly Mother of Mercy, whose painted portrait Filipiak had brought from Stanisławów, was founded in the church.¹⁶

One of the most noteworthy institutions of the Archdiocese was the Benedictine convent and school in Lvov. The convent, however, was relocated to Poland in 1946, where it stayed in Lubiń for ten years, before finally relocating to Wołów in Lower Silesia. Of the dozen or so sisters who came to Poland not all were of Armenian origin. Over time, not even one Armenian was left, and in 1961 the convent officially adopted the Latin rite.¹⁷

In the pre-WWII period Polish Church institutions could not sustain Armenian traditions. Families, too, could do so only to a certain extent, due to the fact that during the inter-war period endogamy was already in decline, while during the post-WWII decades exogamy became the rule rather than the exception. Consequently, in families where only one of the parents or grandparents was Armenian, Armenian traditions were barely maintained.

Some people, however, did not accept the disintegration of the Armenian community and tried to revive it. These were usually relatives or close acquaintances of priests of the Catholic Armenian rite as well as former activists of the Archdiocese Association of the Armenians, including Stanisław Dionigiewicz,¹⁸ and numerous immigrants from Armenia and Russia still associated with their country of origin. Rebirth of the Armenian communities might have been accomplished at the time, had it not been for their huge dispersion across the territory of the Polish People's Republic. Another obstacle was the lack of democratic rights in the communist state.

In the second half of the 1950s, following political liberalization in the PRL, minority associations began to emerge, and the idea of founding an Armenian organization was revived. Little is known about who started it and where. What has been established is that talks must have been held in friendly circles in several cities. However, the idea attracted only a little attention at first, while most people remained indifferent. Unlike Lithuanians or Ukrainians, Polish Armenians did not seem interested in having their own

organization. In Warsaw¹⁹ one informal group, concentrated around Leon Ter-Oganian,²⁰ emerged. Its members met in restaurants or private apartments to discuss Armenian matters.²¹

THE REVIVAL OF THE COMMUNITY (1980-1989)

For over thirty years Armenians seemed to have been dissolving into the mass of the Polish national majority. However, at the beginning of the 1980s their communal spirit was suddenly roused. At that time their number was estimated at about fifteen thousand, which is a figure difficult to accept²² since it included Polish Armenians and their children, mostly of mixed marriages, and families of the pre-war and post-war immigrants. Irrespective of how large or small the Armenian population was, individuals capable of initiating a revival were at hand.

At the end of the 1970s, the idea of creating the first Armenian organization in the PRL was conceived in Cracow. On March 24, 1980 (i.e. before the August 1980 Solidarity events), the Armenian Culture Circle (KZKO) was founded within the Cracow division of the Polish Ethnological Association (PTL). Those who helped to found it were two ethnographers sympathetic to the Armenians: Anna Kowalska-Lewicka and Janusz Kamocki. The Circle's first president was Michał Bohosiewicz. KZKO was not an independent association, but rather a branch of the PTL, bringing together both professional ethnographers and amateurs. The inclusion of Armenians in this scientific association was possible due to the intellectual ethos of the community.²³

Somewhat later, in December 1980, within the PTL's office in Warsaw an Armenian Culture Circle (ACC) appeared. Its leader was Leon Ter-Oganian, well-known among the Warsaw Armenians. In 1984, a KZKO chapter run by Marian Abgarowicz was established in Gdansk.

The first major undertaking of the Cracow KZKO was a scientific symposium in November 1980 in Cracow. During the two days of sessions a number of papers were presented. The more significant impact of the event, however, was that it triggered the reintegration of the Armenians into one group. The conference was attended by 200 people, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time in decades. The occasion stirred extraordinary emotions among its participants.

* In December 1983, the Cracow ACC/Cracow KZKO organized another scientific session totally dedicated to the memory of archbishop Teodorowicz on the 45th anniversary of his death. This meeting, though successful, was not attended by as many people as the previous one.

After these unprecedented, spectacular events, the activities of the Cracow ACC were formalized. They mainly involved lectures on the history and

culture of the Armenians. During 1980-82, the ACC held Armenian language courses conducted by Andrzej Pisowicz,²⁴ an outstanding expert in Armenian culture. In 1983 interesting brochures and books began to come out in Warsaw – another example of the independent editorial initiatives so characteristic of Poland in the 1980s.

On the other hand, in the 1980s the Catholic Armenian rite underwent a considerable transformation. Filipiak, the only priest of the rite at the beginning of the decade, was looking for his successor. He found two young priests of Armenian origin, who were to be sent to the Papal Armenian College in Rome to learn the Armenian rite. However, due to his opposition activities, priest Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski was refused a passport, and thus, only one priest, Józef Kowalczyk, was granted a passport.

In 1985 Kowalczyk assumed a post in Gliwice at the Holy Trinity Church. Having learned the Catholic Armenian liturgy in Rome and Lebanon, Kowalczyk began conducting it in Gliwice and Cracow, causing consternation, particularly among the older generation of Armenians. The Lvov Archdiocese Catholic Armenian liturgy, thus far faithfully retained by Filipiak, had been vastly Latinized, whereas the liturgy brought by Kowalczyk was Eastern and devoid of Latin elements.

In September 1989, Kowalczyk organized the dedication of the painting of the Łysiecka Heavenly Mother, which was placed in the church in Gliwice. The celebration was attended by the Armenian-Catholic patriarch Hovhannes-Bedros Kasparian XVIII from Beirut and other clerics of the Armenian hierarchy, as well as primate Józef Glemp along with Polish bishops. The event was also attended by a large number of Armenians from across Poland.²⁵ The event helped them gather and see how many of them remained or were interested in their heritage and how significant it was to them.

Somewhat earlier, on December 7, 1988 Armenia had been struck by a major earthquake. The ACCs, particularly the one affiliated to the Warsaw PTL branch, organized aid for the victims of the disaster. They used the media (radio, press, television) to ask Polish society to provide aid to the Armenian nation. Despite the poor conditions of the Polish people, money and other necessary goods were collected for the thousands of earthquake-stricken Armenians in Armenia. Furthermore, a summer camp was organized for children and teenagers from the areas affected by the earthquake. During the same period, Armenia and Azerbaijan became embroiled in a conflict over the Autonomous Region of Mount Karabakh, which turned into a war between both countries.²⁶ Once again Polish Armenian society made efforts to help the war victims.

The misfortunes which Armenia faced at the end of the 1980s triggered a wave of emigration of thousands of its inhabitants. Poland, much renowned at

the time for its contributions in the struggle against Communism, attracted refugees both from Armenia and from other parts of the USSR.²⁷ The Armenians who came to Poland were welcomed by Armenians who had settled there centuries before and helped in their difficult situation as migrants.

THE CURRENT PERIOD

The rebirth of the Armenian community in the 1980s enabled its development during the "Third Polish Republic". In the new Polish society the Armenians became a minority with their own organizations and institutions and a considerable degree of credit. Outside Poland, Polish Armenians began to be treated as part of the worldwide Armenian Diaspora.²⁸

The ACCs affiliated with the PTL did not have legal status, which limited their activities. In September 1990 the Armenian Cultural Society (OTK) was established in Cracow; it was headed by Adam Terlecki, the leader of KZKO in Cracow. On June 15, 1991, the OTK organized the First Polish National Meeting of the Armenian Community. Since then, several such meetings have taken place, similar to the two symposiums organized in the early 1980s. In 1993, the *Biuletyn Ormiańskiego Towarzystwa Kulturalnego* (Bulletin of the Armenian Culture Society), edited by Anna Krzysztofowicz, was issued, inspiring an outburst of publishing activity.²⁹

Alongside the OTK, various other organizations were founded, such as the Archb. J. Teodorowicz Association of Armenians in Poland, with its seat in Gliwice, the Ararat Association of Armenians in Poland and the Association of Armenians in Poland. The latter two were founded by immigrants from Armenia. Of all these, however, the one headed by Terlecki appears to have achieved most.

Another noteworthy organization is the Polish Armenians' Culture and Heritage Foundation founded by Monika Agopsowicz. The aim of the foundation is to protect what has remained of the Armenian communities that once lived in Poland and to preserve the memory of their rich heritage. This was, for example, the objective of the exhibition commemorating archbishop Teodorowicz, inaugurated in the building of the Senate of Poland in 2008.³⁰ On the other hand, the KZKO, now led by Marta Axentowicz-Bohosiewicz, concerned itself with the renovation of old Armenian gravestones in the cemeteries of western Ukraine, mainly in Kutu.³¹ The Ararat Association, in addition to cultural activities, participated in socio-economic initiatives.

The period described here has been particularly unfavorable for the Catholic Armenian rite. Its pre-war tradition was practically terminated in 1992 by the death of Filipiak, the last active minister of the Lvov Archdiocese of the Armenian Rite. After Filipiak's death, the legal status of the Armenians

in the Catholic Church in Poland was regulated, though it still remained provisional.³² Priest Józef Glemp, ordinary of the rite, in 1992 founded the Holy Trinity Armenian-Catholic Rite and parish with its seat in Gliwice. Being a personal parish, it gathered all the believers of the whole territory of Poland. Kowalczyk became the parish priest, whereas priest Cezary Annusiewicz was entrusted with the care of the followers in northern Poland.

Despite his passion and numerous organizational merits, Kowalczyk lost the respect of the majority of his parishioners due to his hard personal character. As a result of an incident on September 8, 1999 in Gdansk, he was excluded from the Armenian community. On that day, along with a group of men, Kowalczyk attacked priest Annusiewicz in St. Peter and Paul's Church in an attempt to seize the painting of the Heavenly Mother of Mercy from the sanctuary founded by Filipiak.³³ The incident was publicized in the media and brought unnecessary shame onto the Armenian community. Filipiak's continual misdeeds and frauds ultimately led to his imprisonment.

These incidents destabilised the organizational structure of the Catholic Armenian rite. Over time, the serving minister became Isakowicz-Zaleski. As already mentioned, he was earlier banned from travel to Rome; now he was involved in charity work as president of Brother Albert's Foundation in Radwanowice. The metropolitan of the Catholic Armenian liturgy became Archbishop Kazimierz Nycz, who in late-2009 established three territorial parishes: a) northern parish with its seat in Gdansk, headed by Prelate Annusiewicz; b) central parish in Warsaw, headed by Artur Awdalian, and c) southern parish in Gliwice, headed by Isakowicz-Zaleski.³⁴

In 2001, the Polish Armenians together with Armenians worldwide celebrated 1700 years of Christianity in Armenia. In June 2001, patriarch of the Armenian-Catholic Church, Nerses Bedros XIX led the ceremonies commemorating the 1700th anniversary of Armenian state Christianity in Poland, performing the Armenian liturgy in several Polish cities.³⁵ Undoubtedly, the anniversary activated Polish Armenians in Poland, both those who had lived in Poland for centuries and the newcomers. By joining the worldwide celebrations, Armenians in Poland demonstrated their affiliation with the Diaspora.

As already mentioned, at the end of the 1980s, Armenians from the Soviet Union began coming to Poland,³⁶ and immigration continued during the next decades. The first groups came from areas affected by the earthquake in 1988 and were joined by refugees from Azerbaijan at the time when their country of residence was in conflict with Armenia over Karabakh. Once in Poland, they were mostly placed in refugee centers. Then came people escaping poverty in Armenia and in other former Soviet Republics. Some stayed in Poland only temporarily before moving to the West. Most, however,

remained longer, ultimately to settle. This produced some problems over their legal status, since Poland was newly gaining experience in immigration policy and the civil service did not always know how to deal with the new situation. Nevertheless, most immigrants found Poland an attractive place to live and were aided by well-organized Armenian societies and institutions as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, which was inaugurated in 1998.

A considerable proportion of the immigrants are involved in common trade.³⁷ However, they do not continue the earliest traditions of their forefathers of importing luxury goods to Poland; instead, they mostly sell inexpensive clothing imported from Asian countries. Armenian salesmen compete with Polish vendors for market share in big cities, which occasionally leads to disagreements and squabbles.³⁸ Other Armenians have set up independent businesses. Armenian restaurants serving Armenian cuisine are worth mentioning.³⁹ Some Armenians are self-employed or freelancers. An exceptional venue is that of the Gagika Persamiana Gallery in Gdansk, which specializes in the sale of Polish Armenians' art work and is involved in the organization of cultural events.

However, not all Armenians are successful in making a living in the country on the Vistula (Poland). Those without jobs, suffering ill-health, devoid of Polish citizenship or a permanent residence permit, live in difficult conditions, while Armenian institutions and organizations are not always capable of helping them, as information about those in need does not always reach them. Such immigrants can only rely on charitable institutions.⁴⁰ It is hoped that with the gradual stabilization of the "new immigration", as these immigrants are often called, the number of those in need of financial support will decrease.⁴¹

An interesting phenomenon is that of Armenian education. Regular Armenian education of children has been possible in Armenian communities that offer more stable conditions, particularly in Warsaw and Cracow,⁴² two cities inhabited not only by a sufficient number of children but also teachers with appropriate qualifications acquired in Armenia. Weekend schools (run by teachers from Armenia who live in Poland) are attended by dozens of children. Not all can be taught in Armenian, the native language spoken at home; those with parents settled in Poland are educated in Polish schools and often become very competitive pupils.

A matter of special concern for Armenians worldwide⁴³ is the already mentioned issue of the mass killing of their compatriots in Turkey, which is also commemorated by Polish Armenians. In the 1980s, their priests remembered the victims while performing Mass, while the Warsaw KZKO issued brochures⁴⁴ about the subject. The level of interest increased during

the "Third Polish Republic", after the new wave of immigrants arrived from Armenia. Thanks to the efforts of Polish Armenians and following the example of parliaments worldwide, on April 19, 2005 the Polish Sejm (parliament) adopted by acclamation a resolution paying tribute to the victims of the genocide and condemning the perpetrators.

A year earlier, at the St. Nicholas Church in Cracow a Khatchkar was erected in order to – inter alia – commemorate the genocide of the Armenians in Turkey, despite the Turkish Embassy's efforts to prevent the initiative. The monument has become an exceptional symbol for Polish Armenians, who gather around it on 24 April, the day dedicated to the victims of the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians during WWI.

Armenians have settled in Poland for centuries, and the Armenian immigrants of the last 25 years have formed an extraordinary community. Both groups maintain their own traditions, which, however, intermesh today in a variety of ways.

CONCLUSION

Armenians in Poland are a small part of the Armenian diaspora. However, their story is very interesting. They played a big role in the history of Poland in the twentieth century. It is a pity that not many people outside Poland know about it.

ENDNOTES

¹ S. Gawlik, *Życie i Działalność ks. Abpa Józefa T. Teodorowicza* [The life and activities of Archbishop Józef T. Teodorowicz], Kraków-Warszawa-Struga, 1988; R. Król-Mazur, *Działalność Polityczna Arcybiskupa Józefa Teofila Teodorowicza w Latach 1888-1923* [Political activity of Archbishop Józef Teofil Teodorowicz in 1888-1923], Kraków, 2013.

² A Deanery is a part of the Catholic Church. Includes several parishes – very often 10.

³ Z. Obertyński, *Historia Kościoła Ormiańskiego w Polsce* [The history of the Armenian church in Poland], Warszawa, 1990, pp. 58-61.

⁴ Cz. Lechicki, *Kościół Ormiański w Polsce* [Armenian church in Poland], Lwów, 1928, p. 153; J. Krętosz, "Organizacja Parafialna Archidiecezji Lwowskiej Obrządku Łacińskiego a Sieć Parafii Greckokatolickich i Ormiańskich Działających w Obrębie jej Terytorium (w XIX Wieku do 1918)" [Organization of the parishes in the Lvov Archdiocese of the Latin Rite versus the network of Greek-Catholic and Armenian parishes within its territory (in 19th century until 1918)], *Studia Lubaczoviensia*, 1984:II, pp. 29-30.

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ՀԱՅԵՐԸ ԼԵՀԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՄԷՋ Ի. ԴԱՐՈՒՆ
(Ամփոփում)

ԿՐԵԿՈՐ ՓԵԼՉԻՆՍԿԻ
grzegorz.pelczynski@uwr.edu.pl

Հայեր վաղուց հաստատուած են հարաւ-արեւելեան Լեհաստան:

ԺԸ. դարավերջէն հարաւ-արեւելեան Լեհաստանի տարածքները կցուեցան Աստորիոյ, իսկ վերակցուեցան Լեհաստանին՝ Ա. Համաշխարհայինէն ետք, երբ այնտեղի հայութիւնը կը հաշուէր շուրջ 5000 հոգի: Հայերը կը բնակէին մանաւանդ Լվովի, Սթանիսլաւովի, Թիշմենիցայի, Շեխաբինի եւ Քուպի մէջ: Անոնցմէ շատեր կալուածատէրեր եւ գործարանատէրեր էին: Որիշներ՝ նշանաւոր մտատրականներ ու արուեստագէտներ, նաեւ՝ քաղաքագէտներ: Անոնց ամէնէն նշանաւորը եղե՛ք Թէոտորովիչն էր՝ Լեհաստանի հայ կաթողիկէ եկեղեցիին արքեպիսկոպոսը, որ նաեւ քաղաքագէտ էր եւ ականաւոր աստուածաբան:

Բ. Համաշխարհայինէն ետք, հայերու բնակած տարածքները գրաւուեցան Սովետ Միութեան կողմէ: Լեհահայերէն շատեր տեղահանուեցան եւ բնակութիւն հաստատեցին Լեհաստանի Ժողովրդական Հանրապետութեան տարբեր քաղաքներուն մէջ: Երկար տասնամեակներ անոնք մշակութային փոքր գործունէութիւն կը ծաւալէին միայն: Շատեր կը կարծէին որ անոնք ծոլուած են այլեւս: Սակայն 1980ականներուն անոնք ազգային զարթօնք ապրեցան, իսկ 1990ականներուն, հազարաւոր հայաստանահայեր հաստատուելով Լեհաստան ստորաբացուցին Լեհաստանի հայօճախը: