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THE ARMENIANS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Introduction

The first part of the article will briefly introduce the Armenian history, including the cornerstones of the Armenian culture, recall the events that led to the formation of the Armenian Diaspora in the world and in the Czech Republic, and focus in more detail on the Armenian-Czech community and its activities. This paper does not primarily deal with the history of the Armenians and Armenia itself, but, in order to understand some of the character traits of the Armenians, their views and motivations, one must have at least a basic understanding of the Armenian identity. The latter very strongly reflects the Armenian history and culture; in every Armenian household one encounters the Armenian national and religious symbols, elements of the Armenian culture (e.g. music or food), and virtually any conversation with Armenians will sooner or later touch on a phenomenon related to the Armenian history.

As will be shown later, Armenian history being an important factor in shaping the identity of the Armenian society and each individual, is actually the reason for the Armenian diaspora.

The Armenian minority in the Czech Republic is considered a young community. The first Armenians began to arrive in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Over time, the Armenian community began to grow and the number of Armenians coming to the Czech Republic is still increasing.

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A Brief History of Armenia from its Beginnings to the 19th Century¹

The present-day Republic of Armenia, Հայաստան (Hayastan) in Armenian, is situated in the mountain range called the Armenian Highlands, the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. The country covers an area of 29,743 km² and borders on Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Georgia. The republic itself has a very homogenous population of around three million people: 98% are Armenians and the remaining 2% are collectively the Russians, Yezidis, Kurds, Assyrians and other nationalities. For a variety of historical reasons to be discussed below, the Armenians are among the peoples with a large foreign diaspora, with the total number of Armenians in the world estimated at about eleven million. The Armenians and their culture have very ancient roots, and they have inhabited their homeland continuously for several thousand years.

The Armenians are an Indo-European people who probably came from the Balkans around 1200 BC and settled in the Middle East around Lake Van and Mount Ararat. They inhabited this territory until the end of the 19th century. To this day, the Armenians still call themselves Hay, and their country Hayastan derived from the name of the mythical hero Hayk who, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, settled in the Armenian valley known as Hayoc Dzor, located between Mount Ararat and Mount Aragats. This is also where Yerevan, the current capital of Armenia, is located. Mount Ararat has become an important symbol of the Armenian homeland, and its image can now be found in the centre of the Armenian national emblem (and on the walls of virtually every Armenian household around the world). However, since the deportation of most Armenians in the early 20th century from their original homeland which had been expropriated by the Ottoman Empire, Ararat still lies in sight, but just beyond the completely closed Turkish-Armenian border. Today, Turkey is also home to Lake Van, another symbol of the Armenian homeland. In today's Armenia, both places have been replaced by Mount Aragats and Lake Sevan, but in the Armenian culture, Ararat and Van retain an irreplaceable symbolic value. Armenia got its poetic name from the Nairi tribal union, which appeared in the area in the 13th century BC. Though the name probably came from the Assyrian, it is still seen today as a symbol of a lost homeland.

¹ Brentjes 1976, 211; Košťálová 2012, 315; Redgateová 2003, 424; Šaginjan 2001, 209.

In the 9th century BC, a state formation called Urartu appeared in the valley of Mount Ararat, and in 782 BC its capital, the fortress of Erebuni, was established. Now an important archaeological site near Yerevan, it represents important evidence of Armenia's antiquity in the Armenian culture, although the first written references, containing the name Armenia do not appear until the 6th century BC. It is also found in the records of the Greek historians Hecataeus, Xenophon and Herodotus.

With the consent of the Roman Empire, the first independent Armenian state was established in 190 BC, lying on the border between the Romans and the Parthians, later the Persians. The state reached its peak during the reign of King Tigranes II, the Great (1st century BC), when Armenia stretched between the three seas: the Mediterranean, the Black sea and the Caspian sea. This important part of the Armenian culture illustrates the glory and greatness of the Armenian nation. According to a legend, in 301, during the reign of King Trdat III, thanks to Grigor Lusavorich (translated as the Illuminator, later the most important Armenian Saint), Armenia became the first country in the world to embrace Christianity as its official state religion. Even if there is no evidence for this year, and it probably could not have happened until after the Edict of Milan in 313, by which Emperor Constantine I proclaimed freedom for the Christian religion in the Roman Empire, the perception of the Armenians as the world's First Christian Nation became one of the fundamental pillars of the Armenian culture and identity. Grigor Lusavorich became the supreme head of the Armenian Church, viz. Catholicos, with his seat in the Temple of Etchmiadzin, founded in 302, still the center of the Armenian Church to date, Etchmiadzin has acted as the support and the unifying authority for the Armenian nation throughout its history.

The invention of the Armenian script in 405, which tradition claims was created by the monk Mesrop Mashtots, was another event of fundamental importance for the Armenian culture. Subsequently, the first liturgical texts written in Armenian and the first translation of the Bible were produced. These codified the Armenian language, as no earlier Armenian texts had been found. The 5th-century Armenian language known as Grabar, Old Armenian, is still used exclusively in the Armenian worship today, although it is difficult for contemporary Armenians to understand.

In the centuries that followed, independent Armenia disappeared as its western part became part of the Byzantine Empire, the east was absorbed by

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Persia, and the 9th, 11th and 13th centuries saw it face invasions by the the Arabs, Turkish Seljuks and the Mongols. On the Mediterranean coast, the independent Armenian kingdom of Cilicia was maintained from 1080 to 1375. The modernization of Grabar gave rise to the so-called medieval or Middle Armenian, which was used as a literary language until the 19th century. From the 16th century, the west of former Armenia was part of the Ottoman Empire, while the east was part of Persia until it became part of Russia in 1828.

The Modern Armenian, called Ashkharhabar, was formed as a language in the 19th century and is still divided into Western Armenian spoken by the Armenians originally having lived in western Armenia under the Ottoman Empire, and Eastern Armenian spoken by those living under the rule of Persia and later Russia. Eastern Armenian, now the official language of the Republic of Armenia, is spoken with only few exceptions by all Armenians in Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Given the origins of the Czech Armenian minority, to be discussed later, Eastern Armenian is also spoken by all Armenians in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Western variant is then used by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire who found themselves in the diaspora (mostly in France, Cyprus, Lebanon, the USA, South America, etc.) as a result of the Armenian Genocide during the First World War. The two language variants are mutually intelligible, differing mainly in pronunciation and regional word borrowings, so most often a speaker of the Western Armenian language will not understand borrowings from Russian.

Armenia in the 20th Century and the Emergence of the Modern Armenian Diaspora

The Armenian migration stems from the two catastrophes that struck Armenia in the 20th century, nearly wiped out the Armenian nation and forced the survivors to leave their homeland, creating a diaspora, or spjurk in Armenian. The first catastrophe was the Armenian Genocide of 1915, carried out by the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. The second catastrophe comprised a natural disaster, the devastating earthquake of 1988, followed by the protracted war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The modern Armenian diaspora began to form in the late 19th century, when the first Armenians facing state-led oppression in the Ottoman Empire's Western Armenia region started exodus, particularly to Russia and to the United States.

The emigration of Armenians massively increased and reached its peak in 1915, when the Ottoman Empire decided to systematically exterminate the Armenian people on its territory, due mainly to economic and religious reasons, but also fears that the Armenians would join the hostile Russia as a fifth column. There followed the controlled deportation of the Armenians to the desert regions of the present-day Syria and Iraq, accompanied by the mass murder of men and elites in particular, with the elderly, children and the sick mostly not surviving the hardships of the journey. Of the approximately two million Armenians, probably only a few hundred thousand survived (estimates usually put the number of survivors between 100 and 500.000), and most of them ended up in the territory of the neighbouring states after the creation of modern Turkey.

However, the overall impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Armenian community was quite devastating and the number of human casualties is far from quantifiable. The attempted liquidation of the cultural, political and religious elites, the loss of property, the burning of churches and demolition of houses, the expulsion from places that had served as homes for more than two thousand years, the attempt to completely erase all traces of the Armenian culture, the trauma of the survivors, all of these virtually annihilated the ancient Armenian culture in the Ottoman Empire and left indelible scars on the Armenian nation.

A new independent Armenian state was established in the region of eastern Armenia at the end of World War I with its capital in Yerevan, but it soon "voluntarily" came under the protection of the Soviet Union. There, Armenians had to cope with events that affected the entire Soviet Union, such as the collectivisation of agriculture, the Stalinist purges and deportations to Siberia and Central Asia. The Armenian soldiers took part in World War II, fighting in the ranks of the Red Army. A relatively peaceful period of life in the Soviet Union followed the war. After the catastrophe of the early 20th century, however, another natural disaster awaited the Armenians. At the end of 1988, a devastating earthquake struck Armenia, affecting almost half of its territory, destroying homes and all infrastructure and impacting approximately one million people, 25.000 of whom died in the earthquake. At the same time, however, the catastrophe sparked a previously unprecedented level of solidarity and international humanitarian aid in the Soviet Union, to which the Armenian diaspora from all over the world contributed significantly.

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In the late 1980s, an ethnic conflict escalated in mostly Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh, which was officially part of Soviet Azerbaijan. In 1990, Armenia declared independence, which was officially recognised a year later after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1992, an armed conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh erupted, resulting in the loss of some 30.000 lives on both sides combined and over a million refugees, 300.000 Armenians and 800.000 Azeris. The liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh and its practical, if still unrecognised, independence have been bought only at the cost of the considerable isolation of Armenia, whose borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey remain closed while Armenia still maintains no diplomatic or commercial relations with them.

The events of the late 1980s and early 1990s brought about significant deterioration in the fledgling Armenian Republic's economic and security situation, a decline in its standard of living, and another wave of mass emigration of the Armenians, particularly to friendly Russia, to relatives in the USA, or even to countries the Armenians knew from their compulsory military service in the Soviet army, including Czechoslovakia and Ukraine. Most often, of course, these were young people of reproductive age who left for a better social and political situation or to escape compulsory military service in Nagorno-Karabakh. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, more than one million of its citizens have reportedly left Armenia, and this tendency is continuing, with up to 40% of Armenians now preferring to leave the country².

The Armenian diaspora today counts more than three-quarters of the Armenians³, three million living in the homeland, today's Republic of Armenia⁴. There was even a Ministry of the Armenian Diaspora in Armenia⁵. Large Armenian populations abroad are found in Russia, the USA, France, Georgia, Ukraine, Iran and other countries. Since the Armenian diaspora places great importance on its original homeland, of which only a much-truncated form remains today, a large number of international funds and collections work to preserve and repair historical cultural monuments and to support people in need

² **Keshishian**, 2011, URL: http://www.keghart.com/Keshishian_Emigration, retrieved 2023-12-02.

³ **Karapetjan, Mezhlumyan, Nersisyan** 2022, 14.

⁴ Worldmeters, Armenia population, URL: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/armenia-population/>, retrieved 2023-12-02.

⁵ Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia, URL: <http://diaspora.gov.am/en>, retrieved 2023-12-02.

or soldiers in the trenches of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia's economy is heavily dependent on remittances and financial aid.

The Armenian Minority in the Czech Republic

The Armenian minority in the Czech Republic does not have a long tradition; the first Armenians began arriving here in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Before that, the Armenians living in the Czech Republic were a rarity. Over time, the Armenian community has grown and the number of emigrés coming to the Czech Republic to work or study has steadily increased. In recent years, there has also been an increasing influx of the Armenians coming from Russia to study, thanks to mutual agreements between the Czech and Russian universities.

The first Armenian in the Czech lands is said to have been a merchant known as Gevorg of Damascus, who lived and worked here for some time on his trade route in the 18th century. Then, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Armenian Artin Aslanyan appeared here and founded a carpet manufactory. In the 1920s, almost fifty Armenian students studied at the Czech universities⁶. Apart from the few individuals mentioned above, and despite very strong and widespread Armenian migration, the Czech Republic saw few Armenians settle here until the early 1990s. The roots of this migration can be seen as early as the 1980s, when individual Armenians began to arrive in the former Czechoslovakia when doing their compulsory military service in the Soviet Union's army. Some of them returned to the Czech Republic or Slovakia after the collapse of the Soviet Union because they were partly familiar with the local environment and felt relatively close to it in terms of language and culture. As one informant says: "I served in Rimavská Sobota. I really liked it here in the Czech Republic. It was the most advanced country in the socialist bloc. Also the language barrier was less. If you know Russian, it's not such a big problem to understand Czech, at least on the communication level. I went back to Armenia after the war, got married there,

⁶ **Ghanalanyan**, 2013, URL: http://www.noravank.am/eng/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=6841, retrieved 2023-12-02.

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and my wife and I came to the Czech Republic after the earthquake in the early 1990s”⁷.

According to the Czech Statistical Office, the historical development of Armenian migration to the Czech Republic (as of 31 December 2020) proceeded as follows:⁸

1994	1996	2000	2004	2010	2013	2015	2020
438	1004	1081	1246	2183	1926	1720	1932

The table shows by year the corresponding number of Armenians registered in the Czech Republic for citizenship. However, this criterion does not include ethnic Armenians with other citizenships (e.g. Russian, Ukrainian or Georgian), that did not count an insignificant number of Armenians. The table reveals how the number of Armenians in the Czech Republic steadily increased from the 1990s, peaked in 2010 and then, somewhat surprisingly, began to decline. However, the decline in Armenian citizens is mainly due (for the older generation) to their having gradually acquired Czech citizenship, which the Armenians living here became entitled to after a long-term residency or through marriage. Until 2014, they had to renounce any further citizenship when acquiring Czech citizenship. Children born in the Czech Republic to at least one parent with Czech citizenship are not counted among foreigners. Thus, the Armenian community is practically not growing in terms of the citizenship criterion, so the number of Armenian citizens is actually decreasing, although the number of people with Armenian nationality continues to increase in real terms. On January 1, 2014, an amendment to the Law on State Citizenship came into force, allowing for dual citizenship⁹. Thus, newly Czech Armenians can retain their original citizenship even when acquiring the Czech citizenship. Information from the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia shows the number of applicants for dual citizenship

⁷ Respondent Aram, Czech Republic, December, 2019, Res. “ Preferences in partner selection within members of the Armenian community in the Czech Republic”, Interviewer Marta Mezhlumyan.

⁸ Czech Statistical Office: data - number of foreigners, 2012, URL: https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/4-ciz_pocet_cizincu, retrieved 2022-03-12.

⁹ Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky: Informace k novému zákonu o státním občanství ČR. Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, 2012, URL: <http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/informace-k-novemu-zakonu-o-statnim-obcanstvi-cr.aspx>, retrieved 2017-07-11.

increasing and includes those who had to renounce their Armenian citizenship before 2014¹⁰.

Like the Armenian diaspora around the world, those in the Czech Republic are trying to maintain a sense of Armenianness, identifying with their ethnicity and cultural roots in their community and instilling them in their children who were born in the Czech Republic or immigrated here at a very young age. "Ethnic consciousness is most often carried by several basic attributes of collective ethnic identity, namely: mother tongue (and its transition to the next generation; hence the emphasis on endogamous marital unions), relationship to a territory understood as the legitimate homeland of a given nation, confessional identity, shared traditions and customs, shared history, ethnic myths and symbols, etc."¹¹. Armenians display both a kind of national pride typical of peoples originating from the Caucasus region in general and an existential desire to preserve their national identity to the maximum extent, this being typical of peoples with a strong diaspora who then also try to resist assimilation. Parents try to pass on these values, traditions and norms to their children outside their homeland as much as possible¹². This defence is especially important to Armenians, originating in a shared tragic history where the entire nation has had to face attempts of total annihilation. Moreover, since these attempts have still not been universally recognised internationally, it faces these efforts all the more fiercely today.

One of the distinctive features of the Armenian diaspora is the effort to establish an Armenian church in the host country. This usually starts with a single priest (the Archimandrite of the Armenian Church) who performs regular Armenian masses and important church rituals such as baptisms and wedding ceremonies. Archimandrite Barsegh Pilavchyan represents the Armenian Church in the Czech Republic. He originally started out in Hungary to serve the Armenian minority there, where he managed to officially register the Armenian Church. Then he was put in charge of the Armenians in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. He first began to hold masses in Catholic churches in Prague, Brno and Bratislava, with St. Giles Church serving that purpose in Prague. "For a long time I tried to establish the Armenian church in Prague. Finally we managed to rent the

¹⁰ Information from Anna Avetisyan, the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Prague, 2019.

¹¹ **Kokaisl** 2010, 94.

¹² **Pedersen** 2011, 117–138.

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Church of the Holy Spirit in Prague. It was a huge success. I think we managed to bring the spirit of the Armenian Church into the Church of the Holy Spirit. Every Sunday I perform mass there. The church is open to everyone all day long. You can come here to light a candle”¹³.

In recent years, many changes have taken place in the Czech Armenian community, mainly due to the activities of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, which was established in Prague on June 30, 2011 (until then, the Czech Armenians had to go to the embassy in Vienna). The first Ambassador was His Excellency Tigran Seiranian, who mainly focused on deepening the diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and Armenia. For example, a Khachkar was brought and unveiled in the garden of the Church of St. Henry and St. Kunhuta in Jindřišská Street in Prague. Furthermore, thanks to the embassy activities, the Armenian artists, theatre artists and musicians regularly perform in Prague. Another important step is the effort to resume offering university-level Armenian studies currently not systematically taught anywhere in the Czech Republic. The Institute of East European Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University has so far managed to organise the teaching of subjects such as History of Armenia, the Armenian language or Armenian liturgy, the aim being to gradually introduce the Armenian studies as a specialisation and eventually as an independent field of study. Thanks to the embassy involvement, the extensive legacy of Armenian books of the translator Ludmila Motal has also begun to be processed and made accessible after having for many years been practically inaccessible and forgotten in the possession of the Faculty of Arts. The Jan Palach Library of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University today has an Armenian collection of about a thousand books, most of them classical Armenian literature from the estate of Ludmila Motalova along with a smaller collection of Armenian books from the estate of the recently deceased leading Czech Caucasian scholar Václav A. Černý.

Another very important activity of the Armenian diaspora world-wide is the opening of Armenian schools, usually called Sunday schools, where children can be taught the Armenian language at least once a week, learn to read and write the Armenian alphabet and learn about the Armenian traditions, history and culture. Last but not least, they may meet other members of the diaspora among whom they will find friends and, ideally, a future life partner. In the Czech Republic, the

¹³ Interview with Barsegh Pilavchyan, the Archimandrite of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Czech Republic, 2019.

Armenian Sunday School is again operating in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Celetná Street. It is attended by about ten to fifteen children, and each year it ends with a festive celebration.

An important connecting feature of the diaspora is, of course, Armenian culture and the organisation of cultural events such as exhibitions, theatre, music or dance performances, whether by artists living in the local diaspora or invited from Armenia, who then often give a series of performances for the diaspora in several European countries. Diaspora activities also include publishing a magazine, a newspaper or maintaining an Armenian-language website that provides information about Armenia and Armenian life around the world and, of course, about the diaspora in the host country. In the Czech Republic, it is the magazine *Ozer*, founded by journalist Hakob Asatryan, which is very active in reporting on the Armenian minority, as well as on events throughout the diaspora and news from Armenia.

Currently, there is also activity on social networks, as well as a Facebook group of the Armenian Youth Association of the Czech Republic (AYAC). These pages share events related to the Armenians organised by the community itself and by the public. Active cultural participants include young students who organize, for example, a joint New Year celebration, film screenings or watching the Eurovision Song Contest, or discussions on various current issues facing Armenia and the diaspora, whether in support of young soldiers in Nagorno-Karabakh or an Armenian language summer school. The students also organise political protest actions, again focusing on the ongoing crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh and the reluctance of international organisations to effectively address it. Of course, they also join the annual commemorations of the Armenian Genocide.

The most important day of the year for the Armenian diaspora worldwide is April 24, the Genocide Day, when Armenians commemorate the beginning of the mass murder of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. In the Czech Republic, the Armenians have been organising a parade for several years now. Since the centenary in 2015, under the official slogan "I remember and demand", it has intended to both commemorate this event and call on international organisations and the Czech Republic to officially recognise the Armenian Genocide. Despite historical evidence, this has so far proved rather elusive in the Czech Republic and elsewhere, due to Turkey's strong international influence.

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The Armenian diaspora in the Czech Republic is not nearly as large as in Russia, the USA or France. In such countries, the diaspora is so active that local Armenians can choose between the Armenian schools, churches or concerts and films. An example is the Armenians living in Los Angeles, California. After those in Russia, American Armenians are the second largest Armenian community in the world, with around 360.000 Armenians¹⁴ living in Los Angeles alone. Of the world's cities, only Moscow and Yerevan have larger Armenian populations. Los Angeles is home to nearly 30 Armenian Apostolic churches, dozens of schools, countless cultural events, and regular performances by leading Armenian artists, especially in the Glendale neighborhood, where the Armenians make up about 40% of the population. Glendale is home to Armenian theatres and cultural venues, Armenian shops, bakeries, café's and restaurants with Armenian service, Armenian doctors, lawyers, taxi drivers, travel agencies, several TV stations, Armenian billboards and advertisements, and cars with Ararat or Hayastan license plates.

The ethnic niche model also operates in the Armenian diaspora: "An ethnic niche is created when an ethnic group is able to colonize a particular employment sector in such a way that its members have privileged access to the newly created jobs, thereby restricting entry of others. Ethnic niches develop in market societies where jobs are formed and filled according to the principles of importance and availability"¹⁵.

This principle appears mainly in larger and more numerous diasporas. There are several commercial enterprises in the Czech Republic that have preferred to employ someone from their own community. In most cases, where there is a language barrier or little chance of finding employment with the majority population, the company prefers a member of its own community¹⁶. When setting up a company, founders often directly invite friends or acquaintances from their home country to join the company. They often state the main reasons that they know them well and can rely on them, who are also happy to go abroad. Further, both parties can still communicate with each other in their mother tongue.

¹⁴ Haias: Armenian population in the world, URL: http://www.haias.net/news/_armenian-population.html, retrived 2023-02-02.

¹⁵ **Drbohlav, Uherek** 2007, 125–141.

¹⁶ **Uherek** 2003, 193–216.

Another model that is often found in larger diasporas is network theory, an example being the Chinese, Italian or Armenian neighborhoods in the aforementioned Glendale and Los Angeles. When migrants arrive, it is often these interconnected networks that they use to integrate in their new environment, to find work and a new home¹⁷. For Armenians in the Czech Republic, but also in the global diaspora, often one member of the family, in most cases the male, travels first, and once settled, invites other family members, then to create a family business in which the whole family participates. All the immigrant family members, whether they are close or distant relatives by Czech standards, live in one town. The informant Artur provides an example: "I came in the 1990s, then I gradually invited my wife and children to the Czech Republic, then my parents. Usually after the children, the wife and the parents are invited and then the sister and her family or the brother and his family follow. In my case I invited both families from my sister's side and my brother's side, then they invited their relatives and children and a big family was formed, we call it *gerdastan*. I have a company, some of my relatives work here"¹⁸.

A large number of Armenians in the Czech Republic run small businesses and often work in the construction industry. It is relatively rare for the Czech Armenians to be classic employees in a non-Armenian or state-owned company. The Brno Armenians have largely concentrated their business in the fruit and vegetable trade. In Prague, on the other hand, there is a large concentration of Armenian artists and visual artists who run their own businesses or galleries. As is perhaps the case with all ethnic groups around the world, there has been a drive to open a catering business, an Armenian restaurant, café or bistro¹⁹. Caucasian cuisine, and Georgian cuisine in particular, is relatively well-known and popular elsewhere, especially in Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union, but in the Czech Republic these efforts have mostly been short-lived and ended in failure. "I opened an Armenian café. In the window I had a picture of Mount

¹⁷ Uherek, Korecká, Kojarová 2008.

¹⁸ Respondent Alik, Czech Republic, December, 2019, Res. "Preferences in partner selection within members of the Armenian community in the Czech Republic", Interviewer Marta Mezhlumyan.

¹⁹ Maroušek 2002.

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Ararat and a map of Armenia. However, after two years I had to close the café²⁰. Another businesswoman says: "A long time ago I opened an Armenian restaurant in Prague, but soon I had to close it. I think most Czechs don't like to try new cuisine, they like to stick to what they know. It was impossible to do business because of the few visitors. It was typical Armenian cuisine"²¹. Today the situation is a little better. There are several Armenian restaurants and bistros across the country. One bright star in the Czech Republic is Gevorg Avetisyan, the operator of Marlenka in Frýdek-Místek, who has succeeded in using the Armenian recipes to produce honey cakes now known to practically everyone in the Czech Republic²².

Conclusion

The Armenian community in the Czech Republic is considered a young community. The first Armenians began arriving in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Armenians integrated into the Czech society quickly and successfully. Over time, the Armenian community began to grow with an increasing number of Armenians arriving in the Czech Republic. Signs of the expansion of the Armenian community include: the introduction of a Sunday school, the building of a khachkar, Armenian religious services, the operation of an embassy in Prague, the operation of Armenian restaurants, and the sale of Armenian food products in both brick-and-mortar and online stores.

Resources

The article contains excerpts extracted from a text that has already been published as a thesis:

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²¹ Respondent Hripsime.

²² **Avetisyan, Horskáková** 2013, 91.

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ՀԱՅԵՐԸ ՉԵԽԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՈՒՄ

ՄԵԶԼՈՒՄՅԱՆ Մ.

Ամփոփում

Քանալի բառեր¹ մշակույթ, ինքնություն, սփյուռք, համայնք, փոքրամասնություն, ներառում, հայերը Չեխիայում

Չեխիայի հայկական համայնքը երիտասարդ է: Առաջին հայերը Չեխիա են եկել 1990-ականների սկզբին՝ Խորհրդային Միության փլուզումից հետո: Հայերը կարողացել են արագ և հաջող ինտեգրվել չեխ հասարակությանը, և ժամանակի ընթացքում նրանց թիվը աճել է՝ համալրվելով նոր տեղափոխված հայերով: Հայկական համայնքի ընդարձակման ցուցանիշներն են՝ Կիրակնօրյա դպրոցի բացումը, խաչքարի տեղադրումը, հայկական հոգեւոր արարողությունները, Պրահայում դեսպանատան առկայությունը, հայկական ռեստորանների առկայությունը, ինչպես նաև հայկական սննդի արտադրանքի վաճառքը՝ մանրածախ առևտրի և առցանց խանութների միջոցով:

АРМЯНЕ В ЧЕШСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКЕ

МЕДЖЛУМЯН М.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: культура, идентичность, община, диаспора, меньшинство, интеграция, армяне в Чехии.

Армянская община в Чешской Республике является сравнительно молодой. Армяне обосновались в Чехии в начале 1990-х годов, после распада Советского Союза. Армяне быстро и хорошо интегрировались в чешское общество. Со временем армянская община расширилась за счет миграции все большего числа армян. Свидетельством роста армянской общины стали воскресные школы, возведение хачкаров, наличие армянских религиозных служб, а также посольства в Праге, функционирование армянских ресторанов и продажа армянских продуктов в розничных и в интернет-магазинах. Сказанное свидетельствует об интеграции армян в чешское общество.