

RELIGIOUS RELATIONS OF CZECH EMIGRANTS ABROAD

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U českých vystěhovalců, kteří odešli do ciziny v době od poloviny 16. století do druhé světové války, musíme rozlišovat náboženskou emigraci protestantů v 16.–18. století a hospodářskou emigraci 19. a 20. století. Protestantští exulanti, kteří odcházeli zvláště do Německa, Polska a Uher zůstávali pevně připoutáni ke své víře, jež jim pomáhala udržovat i jejich českou národnost.

Klíčová slova: Emigranti; náboženské poměry

If we study the lives of Czech emigrants who went abroad in the period from the mid 16th century until the Second World War, we must distinguish between religious emigration of Protestants in the 16th to 18th century, and economic emigration in the 19th and 20th century. Protestant exiles who went especially to Germany, Poland and Hungary remained firmly attached to their faith, which also helped them maintain their Czech nationality.

The situation of economic emigrants, the majority of whom formally professed the Roman Catholic Church, was different. After arriving in the new environment, and after breaking the existing strong links with the rural environment, the situation changed for many. This was particularly true for emigrants to the USA, where a large proportion of Czechs were attracted to the liberal atheistic environment. In Russia, where they had originally been promised religious freedom, they were subjected to political and economic pressure of the tsarist government and largely forced to convert to the ruling Orthodox Church.

The old country started to pay attention to the religious needs of the Czech emigrants only after the formation of the independent Czechoslovak state. About one half of the 2 million Czechs and Slovaks outside Czechoslovakia was religious; of them there were about 650 thousand Roman Catholics, 330 thousand Evangelicals and 100 thousand Greek Catholics.¹

In the USA there were 339 catholic priests who spoke Czech or Slovak, and 495 Czech and Slovak settlements with their own church. Of all the destination states, religious conditions in the USA were the best. Where there was a church, there was also a school. In the Czech catholic villages 21,965 children attended school.² In Lisle and Chicago Czech Benedictines built a College; it was followed by a number of academies, specialist schools and boarding houses built thanks to Czech nuns in the United States. In 1910 poor school nurses from Notre Dame in Horažďovice commenced their activities in the USA. In the 1930s they managed an academy in Omaha and had 11 houses, boarding houses and schools. Dominican nuns from Moravia had four houses in the USA. In the Czech settlements in the USA, 594 nuns taught in the catholic schools. Four American bishops and eight papal prelates were of the Czech origin. In the USA there were a great number of catholic associations. In most Czech settlements the National Council of Catholic Charity tended to the Czech emigrants.

As far as Canada is concerned, it was the destination of Czech emigrants mainly after World War I. The settlement Fort William was the centre of Czech Catholics; there was a church with

¹ PLUHAŘ, J.: *Češi a Slováci doma a za hranicemi*. Praha 1935, p. 46.

² National Archive Prague, Czechoslovak Foreign Institute, box. 28.

a priest and St. Peter's School, in which seven sisters taught 495 children. Several other settlements had a church, but no priest. The missionary A. Florián during his tour of Canada in 1928–1930 and in 1934 found a great spiritual poverty and moral decay of our emigrants. He visited 84 settlements; in larger cities he kept coming across suspicion and disregard. He interviewed 4 831 expatriates; he found and visited Czechs even in Alaska. Emigrants were provided with valuable assistance by the new Canadian Catholic order, Sisters of Service. Its members were waiting for the emigrants in ports; in each town they offered shelters to women and girls.

The society of St. Rafael, which was responsible for the care of Czech Catholics overseas, ascertained that the most difficult situation was in Argentina, where there were 10 thousand Catholics without their own church, priest and society. There was only one Czech priest in the whole of Argentina, Father Praclík from Moravia. He held Czech religious services and taught children in the Salesian monastery near Buenos Aires. In Peru, there were four Czech theologians and Salesians, in Brazil, one Czech Jesuit Professor, and one Czech theologian, Salesian.³

In European countries the care for the spiritual life of compatriots was taken by the Apostolate of St. Cyril and Methodius in Olomouc. In France and Belgium the Czechs were tended by the Catholic Mission in France. In France, the Czech compatriots had the Czech priest Rudolf Zháněl, but it did not suffice for all 50 thousand Czech Catholics in 100 colonies and 14 dioceses. To help in this situation, assistant priests were sent from Czechoslovakia to enable the Czech Catholics to join the Holy Communion, especially at the Easter time. In 1929 there were seven priests assisting in this way in France. Also the members of different orders helped out, who were on studies in Western Europe, particularly in Belgium and Holland. In Belgium they had Father Weiss-Nagel, who worked as a voluntary and unpaid catechist for miners' children in Winterslag and Waterschei. In Holland P. Krivánek held missions for Czech miners. There were several zealous Catholics in Sweden, too.

In Austria Czech and Slovak sermons could be attended in eleven Viennese churches. Czech sermons were also given in Linz. Czech Evangelicals in Austria were members of German groups, but established the Union of Czechoslovak Evangelicals in Austria. Czech catholic societies in Vienna were grouped in the Union of St. Methodius, founded in 1865. The Union had two thousand members. The Union owned a Czech church on Rennweg, where the Congregation of the Fathers – Comforters worked. The second oldest catholic society was the Order of St. Francis, which had 1 200 members. Before World War I, the Society of St. Zita was founded. Significant catholic associations were “Československý Orel“ (Czechoslovak Eagle) with one thousand members, or “Mariánská družina paní“ (Lady's Suite for Women) and “Mariánská družina dívek“ (Lady's Suite for Girls).

Compatriots from Prussian Klodzko went to church in Bohemia because the Czech language disappeared from the churches in Klodzko. In terms of the religion, Kladzko belonged to the Archbishopric of Prague, but the archbishop delegated the right to appoint local parish priests to the dean in Klodzko, who also sent German clergymen to Czech locations. A Czech evangelical pastor preached every third week. The Czech Evangelicals sang from the Czech hymn books and used Czech prayer books.

Most of the Moravians around Prussian Glubczyce and Racibor professed the Roman Catholic religion. Czech magazines and books could be found mainly in catholic presbyteries, mainly including the periodicals Catholic Papers and Dominican Rose. The Catholic Papers,

³ VACULÍK, J.: *Češi v cizině 1850–1938*. 2nd edition. Brno 2009, p. 30.

founded in 1893 by local priests, strove to preserve Czech nationality. The area did belong to the Olomouc archdiocese, but at the time of Bismarck's cultural struggle against Catholics in the 1870s the Czech language was banned from schools and churches.

After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic the evangelical Czech Brethren Church also carried out missionary activities among the descendants of Czech exiles in the Strehlen area in Prussian Lower Silesia. In 1920, they were visited by the Secretary of the Biblical Union, Vladimír Mičan from Brno. A youth club was founded in Husinec at his initiative, where children learned religious songs. In 1921 he brought 36 Strehlen Czechs to the festivities at the Rose Meadow, and in 1923 organized a trip of 32 children to Bohemia.⁴

Between the wars, more than 30 thousand Czechs lived in Poland, of whom 57% were members of the Orthodox Church, 24% Roman Catholics and 13% Reformed Evangelicals. The members of the Orthodox Church and Catholics could be found mainly in Volhynia, while central Poland was dominated by the members of evangelical denominations. The Czech Orthodox Church maintained rich relationships with the Orthodox Church in Poland. Increased activities of catholic and evangelical missionaries from the Czechoslovak Republic generated some concerns of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox leaders criticized the conversion of some Orthodox families to Catholicism and considered it an open offensive against orthodoxy, which deteriorated the possibility of cooperation between the two churches. Czechs fell mostly under Russian and Ukrainian clergymen. The Catholics did not have their own Czech clergymen and were attached to parishes with Polish priests. Missionaries from the Czechoslovak Republic tried to strengthen religious feelings of Czech Catholics; among them there was Dr. Josef Beran, later Archbishop of Prague (1946–1969).

In central Poland, the Czechs of evangelical-reformed faith prevailed. They maintained the traditions of Czech Brethren, and through the Czech liturgy cultivated the Czech language, organized education in that language and performed extensive editing. Parishes in Volhynia belonged under the synod in Vilnius, the reformed from Zelov and Łódź belonged under the synod in Warsaw. In Zelov there were 2 709 reformed, 60 free reformed, 997 Baptists and 57 Methodists. The Constance and Missionary Unions from the Czechoslovak Republic took care of the Czech Protestants in Poland.

Yugoslavian Czechs were mostly Roman Catholics, but did not have their own priests. In Croatia they heard sermons in Croatian, in Banat in German. In Yugoslavia there were very few Czech Evangelicals. In Croatian Daruvar, they formed - together with Hungarians - a Calvinist group. The Catholics from the Czech lands brought the cult of St. Wenceslas, St. John of Nepomuk, and Saints Cyril and Methodius. Initially there were very few marriages with someone of another religion. Catholic and evangelical missionaries came to Croatia from Czechoslovakia. In 1929, the Bohemian Brethren pastor Vladimír Mičan from Brno visited the Czech Evangelicals in Daruvar. In 1933 the Czechoslovakian priest Antonín Venc from Brno came to Croatia, as well as the Bohemian Brethren churchwarden Toman and the preacher Josef Procházka. From 1935 catholic compatriots were helped by the Central Apostolate of St. Cyril and Methodius in Olomouc, Society of St. Rafael, and Actions for our people in Volhynia. From that time on Czech catholic priests and missionaries lived in Czech settlements in Croatia, Bosnia and Banat, and founded there a number of catholic youth circles. In 1937 the member of the Redemptorist Order, Vladimír Jeřábek, undertook a missionary trip to Yugoslavia. Before World War II significant successes were experienced by the Catholic Action.

Alois Hanzelka was a catholic missionary in the Romanian Banat in the thirties. The Episcopal Consistory in Timisoara appointed him an administrator in Eibenthal, where 622

⁴ Naše zahraničí, 1923, pp. 178–179.

Czechs lived. According to Hanzelka's report, "our youth grow up without any lead ... Ignorance and godlessness grow in them... already now there is revenge, jealousy, hatred and ruthlessness among them; slowly everything will turn wild here."⁵ The opinion of this missionary was that "the national consciousness can only grow in the church".

At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, Czech Protestant immigrants came to Bulgarian Vojvodovo from Hungarian Banat. From the 1920s they were split into two camps: Methodists and Darbists. Up to the 1920s, there had been no entertainment events in the village. Extreme religiosity prohibited the immigrants from participating in cultural and social life. They did not drink, smoke, read secular literature, sing secular songs, dance, steal, or enter into marriages with members of other religions. The religion was the factor that shaped and maintained the identity of this ethno-confession community. Their cohesion was maintained by their faith.⁶

Shrnutí

Náboženské poměry českých vystěhovalců v cizině

Náboženským potřebám českých emigrantů byla věnována ze strany staré vlasti pozornost až po vzniku samostatného československého státu. Ze 2 mil. Čechů a Slováků za hranicemi ČSR bylo nábožensky cítících asi polovina, z toho asi 650 tisíc římských katolíků, 330 tisíc evangelíků a 100 tisíc řeckokatolíků a pravoslavných.⁷

⁵ National Archive Prague, Czechoslovak Foreign Institute I, box. 28.

⁶ HIRŠ, J. – JAKOUBEK, M.: *Idea krajanského hnutí ve světle konstruktivistického pojetí národa: proměny kolektivní identity vojvodovské náboženské obce*. In: *Český lid*, 92, 2005, vol. 4, pp. 337–366.

⁷ Czech Science Foundation 409/08/0161.