

Between Here and There: Religious Ukrainian Immigrants in the Czech Republic

Denisa Sedláčková, Sociology Ph.D. candidate, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University

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Abstract

The paper deals with religious Ukrainian immigrants in the Czech Republic. With long established history of migration between both countries, Ukrainians are the second biggest immigrant group in the Czech Republic. Even though, integration of immigrants is not smooth process. Many of the incomers consider themselves religious and they often join churches to seek spiritual help in turbulent times of post-migration. But it is not only spiritual help they can get on church meetings. Churches might be places where immigrants can gain quick access to social capital, language and other competences. However, different Churches have distinct notion of their role in integration process of immigrants and therefore provide different 'services' for them. The paper will thus address the integration potential of two Christian Churches – Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church - in the Czech Republic. Based on in-depth interviews with Ukrainian immigrants and Churches representatives, different integration strategies and potentials are revealed. But it is not only help with integration that churches can offer. The paper also focuses on the questions of transnational religious connection. The paper argues that churches' link with Ukraine serve as a platform for transnational ties and offer their believers with ready-to-use "phone line" that provides two-way connection between believers in Ukraine, Czech Republic and other countries. This line facilitates culture of the homeland, knowledge about the situation in all countries involved and also social remittances. This integration potential and ability to develop and sustain transnational ties depends on different conceptions of Churches and their understanding of their role in both processes.

In 1990s, after the fall of Iron Curtain, the countries of former communist bloc underwent economical downturn which has larger impact in those countries that are today not part of European Union. This was the case of Ukraine which was struck with mass unemployment; about 50 to 60% of all employable people were without work. However, government stated different numbers in official statistics – around 5% (Bedzir 2001). The uncertainty, poverty of people and widespread corruption lead many Ukrainians to seek work and living outside the borders of Ukraine. Emigration is nothing new to Ukrainians; the emigrants of the 1990s and early 2000s are in fact part of the fifth wave of emigration. Even though previous migration waves brought Ukrainians to the United States, Canada, Australia or Argentina, many of the fifth-wave migrants choose countries closer to their homeland moving to east (Russia), west (to former communist countries like Czech Republic) and into southern Europe (Solari 2006).

The migratory bond between Czech Republic (or former Czechoslovakia) and Ukraine is also nothing new as both countries are connected with migration flows for decades. Moreover, throughout the first half of 20th century part of Ukraine, Carpathian Ruthenia, belonged to Czechoslovakia. During First Republic period (1918 – 1938) Czechoslovakia became the center of Ukrainians who fled the Bolsheviks. After the World War II most of the ties with Ukraine were severed for almost fifty years (Zilynskyj 1995). However, connections once made on the institutional, communicational or family levels were solid. As some authors (Castles, Miller 1998; Castles, Davidson 2000) show such ties and networks tend to persist over time even after the conditions of their creation ceased away. Therefore, it is no coincidence that after the fall of communist regime migratory flows from Ukraine were re-established, as is no surprise that most of the incomers comes from western regions of Ukraine.¹

Migration from Ukraine is mostly explained by economic motivations and economic theories of migration. In this paper I focus on more subtle and intimate part of migrant experience - on religiosity of immigrants and churches they visit to show the role religion and religious institutions play in the process of migration with main stress on the post-migratory phase of integration into hosting society and developing ties with homeland. I draw upon an ongoing qualitative research among Ukrainian in the Czech Republic (more specifically in the South Moravian region) and clergy and representatives of two Churches mostly visited by immigrants (although not only Ukrainians) – Greek Catholic Church in the Czech lands and Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The paper focuses on their potential to integrate newcomers and their potential/ability to develop and maintain ties with the homeland(s) of their followers.

Economic migration or migration with memory? Reasons to migrate

According to the Czech Statistical Office (2010) there were around 125 thousand Ukrainians living in the Czech Republic. This number shows very likely just a small part of Ukrainians living, working and praying in the Czech Republic². Ukrainians remains second biggest immigrant group for almost two decades now and also group, whose motives to migrate are often seen purely in economic terms. Such understanding of the reasons behind Ukrainian immigration is not only present in Czech media (via the image of Ukrainian laborer) and integration policy of the state but is also supported by several researches mainly from social science and social geography background (see Drbohlav 2003, Drbohlav et al. 2000, Leontiyeva 2005).

Relying on economic explanations for migration from Ukraine is convenient: language and geographical proximity together with no visa requirements (in the 90s) and economic conditions appear self-explanatory and self-evident. However, assuming that economic benefits and losses are the main factors in the decision to move, to stay or to return would mean to neglect deeper understanding of what is going on. By this I do not want to deny relevance of economic factors; I want to put them into an important context and also allow

¹ There are no solid data that would prove such observation, however, most of the researchers came to this conclusion (Keryk 2004, Bezdir 2001, Drbohlav 1997; et al. 2000)

² Estimation is somewhere between 150 thousand and 220 thousand, depending on season as many Ukrainians return to Czech Republic cyclically for seasonal work.

other (also important) factors to be seen. Moreover, purely economic explanation seems to fail when looking on the current situation in Ukraine. Statistical indexes show that the economic situation in Ukraine is improving and with the introduction of visa policy towards Ukraine in 2000 and joining the Schengen space in 2007, Czech Republic is not supposed to be the fourth most frequent destination for Ukrainian immigrants (Malynovska 2006). Conversely, the number of Ukrainians is increasing. This development can be explained with the concept of the culture of migration. Ukrainians are considered among the most migrating population of the world (*Ukraine and Ukrainians Throughout the World*) with almost 20 millions emigrants (Pawliczko 1994) and many of migratory flows from Ukraine persist over generations (as is also the case of the flow between Ukraine and the Czech Republic). Such scope and stability allows us to use the concept of the culture of migration (Kandel, Massey 2002). Those who are leaving abroad send or bring back their stories, experiences and also practical tips which later become part of the generally shared knowledge and behavior patterns establishing institutions and transnational networks for the actors to draw upon. Emigration becomes one of the possible life trajectories and its possible choosing is higher in those communities than in others where culture of migration is not present. One of my respondent, Rinat, comments: "This [migration] was quite common, one neighbor went here, and other went here, half of the village."

The culture of migration creates habituses more open to such a strategy. This is the example of western Ukraine where the core of current migration to the Czech Republic lies. The concept of the culture of migration can explain why Ukrainians belong to one of the most migrating nation; however, it does not explain why Czech Republic belongs to one of their favorite goals.

From the point of current events, history of the Czech(oslovakia) and Ukrainian relationship is an important factor in decisions to migrate. Albeit as already mentioned above, connections between both countries were severed after Second World War, once established they survived fifty years. Today, this connection is no longer based on institutional or communicational ties. What remains are social ties, less based on family bonds and more based on imagined communities (see Anderson 1991). Nekorjak (2009) shows two different demarcations of such an imagined community. More narrowly is related to Ukrainian identity; broader delineation steams from the existence of joint state. In both cases, the actors refer to themselves as members of imagined community and they build their mutual relations on this sentiment. The narrow demarcations represent strategies based on contacts among newcomers and Ukrainian Diaspora in the Czech Republic. The broader conception connects Czechs with people from Carpathian Ruthenia and can be understood as based on memory, as bearers of this identity are too old to be part of today's migration. The memory of once established imagined community remains strong and appears frequently in the narratives of immigrants.

Current migration from Ukraine to Czech Republic is predominantly labor (and in some cases circular) migration with significant illegal component (Leontiyeva 2006, Nekorjak 2006 a 2009, Drbohlav, Jánská, Šelepová 2001). This affects their options of integration into hosting society and, with respect to the topic of this paper, their opportunities to engage in the life of religious institutions they used to visit in Ukraine. The immigrants of the after-1991-flow³

³ The regaining of Ukrainian independence after the fall of communist regime.

tend to not associate and are not involved with others. Hard work with no free time hardly allows them to participate in any cultural activity, church meetings no exception.

We work every day, whole day; weekdays and weekends, we don't have time to go there [church], although we want to. But there's always work to be done. (Marfa)

Such high work effort improves over time as immigrants get better language competences and they advance on the job market. As Leontiyeva (2006) points out, the older Ukrainian Diaspora (those who came before 1989) does not feel comfortable about newcomers. Majority's negative attitudes towards Ukrainian "gastarbeiters" fueled by stereotypes in media cause growing social distance between old "non-problematic" and well-integrated Ukrainians and newcomers.

Welcome, integrate and keep in touch with homeland: classic tasks of immigrants' churches

The role of religion in the migration process was studied by scholars mainly in the American context and for a long time was more or less limited to Smith's thesis about migration as a "theologizing experience" (Smith 1978). Immigrant churches were looked at as settlement institutions that either helped or hindered integration, or better, assimilation (Solari 2006). In United States especially, immigrant/ethnic churches were seen as main assimilation engines and also as institutions that allows immigrant to exercise their ethnic identity (Hammer, Warner 1993). Predominant economic theories saw migration as rational decision of individual causing faith to escape their attention, as too abstract, irrational, and strictly private matter of individual.⁴

Only turning away from the prevailing economic theories of international migration and adopting the transnational perspective allowed scholars to investigate further the role of religion and religious institutions in the process of migration

As many researchers (Hagan & Ebaugh 2003, Hirschman 2004, Levitt 2003 and 2007, and others) suggest, migration remains theologizing experience, however, it is difficult to determine exactly what the relationship of migration and increased religious participation is; whether the stimulus is the act of migration itself or whether it is social capital and other benefits that result from the membership in Church. Conversely, Connor (2008) is somewhat skeptical about unconditional acceptance of "theologizing experience" thesis. He points out that post-migratory participation is influenced by contextual factors. The very context determines whether the faith and religious affiliation of incomers will be preserved (and under what conditions) or whether it will fade away. Immigrants are expected to adapt to political, economical, social, and cultural conditions of host country, which often means to give away their (at least in public) language, citizenship and sometimes some aspects of their way of life. It does not necessarily mean to give up their religion. Religion can then play

⁴ Such view was also supported by the predominant secular thesis paradigm in the sociology of religion

important role in the integration process or in turn may act as a (supposed) barrier to integration, particularly in secularized countries in Europe.⁵

In American context, immigrant Churches tend to be more ethnically homogenous (see Hirschman 2004; Ebaugh, Hagan 2003 and others), connecting immigrants with the same ethnic background and the same faith/affiliation. Ethnic Churches present familiar places in the new and often unwelcoming environment. There are many reasons why to be active in the life of the church community. Churches are important when it comes to community building. They can provide newcomers with the safety net of social relations and social capital very quickly after their arrival. Churches can also be sources of the social and economical support (George 1998, Hirschman 2004). According to Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) religious communities are often places of alternative identities establishment for migrants who are very often excluded from the citizenship and participation in main economic institutions. Ethnic and immigrant churches are places of cultural reproduction, mediating the culture of homeland to second or third generations. The contact with homeland-based churches allows for flows of people, ideas and news between both countries (and all countries involved). The transnational nature of most religions support such contacts and enables immigrants to stay in touch with their homeland and/or follow believers worldwide and utilize those network for their wellbeing. Ethnic and immigrant churches (and also synagogues, mosques, and temples) in USA seeing through the settlement model are institutions that have important role in the integration of immigrants and they are also places, where their ethnic identity can be exercise, re-negotiated and sustained.

Czech Republic, as part of the former Soviet bloc, offers different setting for religious immigrants. The country is ethnically homogenous (97% people claim to be ethnic Czechs in censuses) and quite secular (only around 25 to 30% consider themselves religious, Lužný & Navrátilová 2001). Religion of immigrants is omitted by state immigrant policy as well as by many NGO's which focus on immigrants. Religion of immigrants if only mentioned in migration policy or public discourse, is considered private matter of individual that has little or no impact on preferable levels of integration.⁶ Yet, at least part of the immigrants coming to the Czech Republic are religious (see for example Pavlíková, Sládek 2009, Leontiyeva 2005, Drbohlav et al. 2000) and they often join churches to seek spiritual guidance and other help. Religion thus remains one of the very few consolidating forces of Ukrainians abroad.

In what follows, I will focus on different factors which influence the possible integration potential of Churches. Next, I will look into different ways both churches understands their role in the developing transnational ties with Ukraine/other countries. But first I turn to the data, and brief introduction of both Churches.

Researching Ukrainians

This paper is based on an ongoing qualitative research conducted from spring 2012. I also draw upon some data from my previous research (2009 – 2010) among Ukrainians in South

⁵ This paper focuses on Christian religions. Migrants from countries with distinct religion background are often perceived by the public discourse as a threat to social cohesion – in Europe this is the case of islam (Roy 2006).

⁶ The exception is Islam, in public discourse seen as threat.

Bohemia region. My goal here is not to offer analysis done but to introduce some preliminary findings and show the potential of the research for future.

I am conducting in-depth interviews with religious Ukrainian immigrants who visit (at least occasionally) either Greek Catholic or Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic. I also speak with Churches' representatives, in some cases immigrants from Ukraine themselves. In addition, I apply other diverse research techniques: participant observation, document analysis and analysis of Churches' web pages.

I carry my research in South Moravian region with overlap to other regions where Ukrainian community is more concentrated (mainly Central Bohemia). South Moravian region has second biggest Ukrainian population (around 12 thousand people) after Central Bohemian region (almost 20 thousand people; source: Czech Statistical Office). There are several parishes in South Moravian region of both churches which makes them more available than in other region (again with exception of central Bohemia).

As already mentioned above, I focus on two Churches in the Czech Republic – Greek Catholic in the Czech lands and Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia⁷, who are visited predominantly by migrants. Although, there are no data available that would prove such a claim, it is based on observations of researchers (see Pavlíková & Sládek 2009, Leontiyeva 2005), churches' representatives and participants themselves. Both Churches are Czech-based, registered, and with over hundred years long history and refer to even older history on the territory. It is their historical development and doctrine that affect their rhetoric, current understanding of their purpose, their politics, their cross-border ties and ethnic/national composition of their followers. For that reason, I consider it to be necessary to mention, at least briefly, important facts about their histories.

History of Greek Catholic Church in the Czech lands goes back to 1818 founded eparchy in Presov, Slovakia. Greek Catholic Church consist of the Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine (Constantinopolitan) liturgical tradition and are thus in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. Eastern Catholic Churches are autonomous, self-governing (*sui iuris*). Together with the Latin Church, they compose the worldwide Catholic Church. According to 2011 census there are 9, 927 Greek Catholics in the Czech Republic.⁸ However, it is necessary to add another tens of thousands foreigners – with working permit and/or permanent stay, illegal workers and seasonal workers (mainly Ukrainians and Slovak) who attend church meetings if they have free time. According to censuses from years 1991, 2001, and 2011 the Church is growing every decade (which goes against the current trend of decrease among established Churches in the Czech Republic).

The Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia is a self-governing body of the Eastern Orthodox Church that territorially covers the countries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Czech lands, the first autonomous Orthodox Church was formed in 1870s in Prague. Czechoslovak Church was created out of reformation movement in Catholic Church shortly after Czechoslovakia gained independence.

⁷ In the following text I will use the term Orthodox Church only for Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. If I refer to another Orthodox Church, I will mention it specifically.

⁸ This is a large increase compared to 2001, when there were 7675 Greek Catholics, according to census. (Czech Statistical Office)

After the Czech and Slovak Republics separated into independent republics in 1993, activity continued in each country as separate legal entities: in the Czech Republic as the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and in the Slovak Republic as the Orthodox Church in Slovakia, but canonical unity was maintained as the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Orthodox Church is also growing: from 19354 followers in census in 1991 to 23 053 followers in 2001. Numbers from 2011 census show slight decrease (20 628 followers)⁹. In South Moravian region there are currently 1956 followers of Orthodox Church (one fourth of the number of Orthodox believers in Prague).

After the 1989 revolution and 1993 separation of Czechoslovakia both Churches continue to grow mainly thanks to migration. They remain different in size and also ethnic composition of those who visits them more or less regularly differs. There are no quantitative data that would show us the proportion of particular ethnicities or nationalities of believers; nevertheless, we can draw the picture of religious makeup of both Churches from their web sites and proclamations of priest and other personnel (and observations of researchers). It will not give us the precise numbers but I believe that it will help us to get the bigger picture. Even if the quantitative data would be available, the situation in both Churches is 'complicated' with the constant flow of seasonal (and often illegal) immigrants who move back and forth over the borders. They too visit churches when in the Czech Republic, usually irregularly, and they use some of the services (legal, social etc. or social capital churches can provide them; see Pavlíková, Sládek 2009, Sedláčková 2010). Those could not be found in any statistics.¹⁰

Go and Integrate. About the integration potential of Churches

There are several factors that influence the interaction of Greek Catholic and Orthodox clergy with their Ukrainian churchgoers. The essential difference between Greek Catholic Church and Orthodox Church is the fact that both of them adhere to different religious tradition, even though under the umbrella of Christianity. In spite of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches' common roots in the Holy Roman Empire, difference in doctrine and tradition began to develop even before the Great Schism in 1054 that caused division of Western and Eastern churches. The most significant difference in doctrine (for the purposes of this paper) lays in understanding of salvation. For Orthodox Church the salvation is received and offered through the celebration of the liturgy. For (Greek) Catholic, it is "good work" that is necessary for the salvation (Solari 2010) which is supposed to encourages the social work (Greeley 1989, Menjívar 2003). Although for Orthodox Church, social work is not essential condition for salvation, most of the saints are honored for helping the poor (Ware, 1993).

As Solari (2010) suggests, other factor that influence clergy interaction with churchgoers is the ethnic composition of parishes and the Church in general. Parishes with multiple ethnicities/nationalities tend to create some type of cultural unity or go with a majority

⁹ which might be caused by the 2007 registration of new Orthodox Church – Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow patriarch prosecution (*podvorje*) and the whole Russia in Carlsbad, in parish with the temple of the foremost saints Peter and Paul, to which 5844 believers are registered (Mrázek & Vojtíšek In Dingir http://www.dingir.cz/nove_registrace.shtml#8)⁹.

¹⁰ In case of Ukrainian immigrants the number of those seasonal and illegal workers is estimated to several thousands (see for example Leontiyeva 2005, Drbohlav 2001).

culture (Wellmeir 1998). Menjívar (1999) in his study of Roman and Evangelical parishes in the Washington, D.C. area showed, that even though some Churches have developed transnational structure and therefore have optimal condition to support and organize transnational connections and transnational interests of their parishioners, they do not do that. Particularly this was the case of multi-ethnic parishes that instead choose to act on creating “panethnicity”.

The situation in both Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church is moreover complicated with the fact that both Churches are Czech, with both Czech and “foreign” clergy, and both Czech and “foreign” parishioners. Such position in the Czech religious market together with ethnic composition of their churchgoers might play in the favor of both Churches when it comes to integration of immigrants – they are recognized and supported by the state, being Christian Churches and with long tradition on the Czech territory make them part of Czech Christian tradition¹¹. The fact that they are visited also by Czechs and part of the clergy are also Czech seems to provide them with optimal conditions for being integrating and settlement institutions. The question remains whether the Churches use this potential and if so, in what social group they integrate immigrants.

Orthodox Church

Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia considers itself a multi-ethnic church formed by multiple national traditions. This stems from history – Orthodox Church was never ethnically bounded (unlike Greek Catholics) and even in Czech lands its believers were ‘recruited’ from multiple nationalities – especially after WWII and its merge with Serbian Orthodox Church (and other orthodox Churches). Multi-ethnic rhetoric is present in the presentation of the Church itself. To the multi-ethnic composition of believers, Orthodox Church comments: “it is sometimes difficult, but at the same time rare, because it gives us the opportunity to show the width and universality of pure Christian God news and its openness towards all cultures.”¹² Parishes with multiple nationalities tend to create some type of cultural unity or go with a majority culture (Wellmeir 1998) and downplay national interests and links to community of origin (Menjívar 1999), which is also case of Orthodox Church. Multi-ethnic church composition should according to Menjívar (1999) lead toward more stress on the settlement practices of newcomers. However, the universality of pure Christian God news and openness towards all cultures do not translate into settlement practices of the Church. Church representatives understand their role as those who provide religious guidance and religious training. The main task of the Church is to mediate and maintain the Orthodox tradition. It is the religious training that the Church understands as the binding force which tie parishioner with multiple national backgrounds together. This does not involve any (organized) help for immigrants.

¹¹ this mean they are not “visible” and stigmatize as for example Islam – even though Orthodox Church still have hallmark of Eastern pro-Russian Church

¹² Orthodox Church welcomed the repatriation of so-called Volynian Czechs, people moved from Czech lands to the Volynia region in the second half of 19th century and were invited to repatriate after the WWII and at the beginning of 1990s. The question remains how many of Volynian Czech actually joined the Orthodox Church in Czech Republic as Volynia is region predominantly Greek Catholic (<http://www.pravoslavnacirkev.cz/historiecirkev.htm>).

The Church acknowledge multi-national makeup of their churchgoers by organizing services in different languages - although Czech and liturgical Slavonic (*staroslověština*) prevail, masses are served also in Greek, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian, and English, depending on the particular parishes and their ethnic composition (Greek, Ukrainian and Russian are most common in parishes)¹³. On one hand, such arrangement helps integrate newcomers quit quickly into the church community, because they do not have to overcome language barrier, on the other hand it leads to the fact that different national group within the church community do not meet. The community of believers within one parish is consequently connected together and other believers around the world with (imagined) linkage consisting of the Orthodox tradition and teaching. Any help immigrants can get on the grounds of the church is therefore unintended from the part of the Church and come in form of the help from fellow co-ethnic believers.

Greek Catholic Church – Doing integration on the hot soil

Conversely, Greek Catholic Church appears to be more ethnically homogenous, which can partly be ascribed to the historical interconnectedness of religion and Ukraine ethnic and national identity. The officials of the Church declare that their believers are composed mainly of Ukrainians and also, that even though the numbers from polls and census are not big; they provide services for hundreds or thousands of seasonal or illegal Ukrainian workers. The languages of services are Czech and Ukrainian. Greek Catholic Church also celebrates religious holidays according to the both Gregorian (used in Czech Republic) and Julian (used in Ukraine) calendars. Important source of information is magazine called *Zpravodaj* (Correspondent, written in Czech). *Zpravodaj* contains information and reports from other parishes (from Czech Republic, Ukraine and other parishes worldwide), address spiritual matters and brings interviews with clergy. Part of each issue is a series of articles entitled Differences between Catholic and Orthodox Church.

Similarly to the situation in Orthodox Church, language and calendar arrangements support quick integration of incoming immigrants into the church community, however after some time, might be seen as an obstacle to integration into hosting society. Apart from spiritual guidance and help, Church meetings are place where information about Ukraine are heard, news and job offers are exchange. Church runs social and legal advisory office which help mostly immigrants. Help with settlement is seen by clergy as important part of their work, and also as important task of the Church, steaming from the doctrine regarding the path to salvation. Yet, “doing” integration sometimes means to be moving on the hot soil.

Even though, Greek Catholic Church in Czech Lands can be consider as Czech based Church¹⁴ and a branch of the Catholic Church, it is still significantly influenced by its origin in Eastern Europe and in case of Ukrainian by its connection with the national idea (compare with Solari 2006). Looking back into the history Greek Catholic Church occupied particular position in creating the idea of Ukrainian people. According to Mitrokhin (2001) it played important role in the development and sustenance of Ukrainian “national idea”. This is mainly due to historical, social and even geographical circumstances. It was Greek Catholic Church and its clergy which developed, consolidated and sustained the idea of Ukrainian (or at the time Rusyn) people in the absence of educated elite and under the rule of Austro-

¹³ <http://www.pravoslavnacirkev.cz/>

¹⁴ Both Greek Catholic Church in Czech lands an Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia refer in its tradition to Saints Cyril and Methodius, first missionaries in the Czech lands.

Hungarian Empire (Mitrokhin 2001). In the past it was Greek Catholicism that created groups' (and even geographical) boundaries. It differentiated its carriers from western Roman Catholics¹⁵ (especially Polish) and from eastern Orthodoxy. Therefore Greek Catholic Church enabled its clergy to develop imagined community based on religion and culture. People from western Ukraine were those who played a fundamental role in the dissemination of the idea of Ukrainian statehood. By claiming themselves Greek Catholics and by celebrate mass according to byzantine rite they clearly marked frontiers. This also connected Greek Catholic Church thanks to historical development and also geographical location¹⁶ with Ukrainian ethnicity (Mitrokhin 2001, Krindatch 2001).

The interconnection of Greek Catholicism and ethnic/national consciousness even in emigration surfaced in 2003 when consecration of new non-Ukrainian bishop in Prague triggered protests from Ukrainians who now make up the vast majority of the participants in the St. Clement church. Those protests were supported by regular churchgoers, believers who do not attend church regularly and even sympathizers. This conflict even bonded members of old Diaspora and newcomers. They appealed to the fact that, as the largest ethnic group of the Greek Catholic Exarchate in the Czech Republic they have right to Ukrainian bishop who will pray in their native language and will understand their problems (Porohy 3/2003, 2/2004, Leontiyeva 2006). The conflict was not solved, but was partly subdued. This conflict shows somewhat difficult position of clergy. Instead of focusing strictly on Ukrainian immigrants in Church, the Church tries carefully to be there for both Czechs and Ukrainians. Today's rhetoric of the Church and some of their bishops translates into the idea of "pan-Slavism" by linking followers of Greek Catholic Church (Eastern Church) together. What it also shows is the fact, that while the Church is active in settlement practices, and supports and helps immigrants not only in questions of faith, it is able to mediate rather the bonding social capital (see Putnam 2000) which connects co-ethnic believers and is not so successful at providing them with bridging social capital – within their bi-ethnic community of believers or hosting society. However, since then, the Church expanded even more its activities (Centre for family, Evenings for singles, trips, Centre for youth etc.) offering more potential opportunities for all to get involve with other parishioners.

Calling home – God's line to Ukraine?

With some exceptions, religions was always crossing borders of state formations and welcoming new members. However, contemporary migrants extend global ties of religion(s) by transnationalizing everyday religious life (Levitt 2004). Transnational ties are not new but they have become more pronounced and of greater interest in recent decades. Thus, religion is increasingly viewed as transnational phenomenon and according to Levitt (2007) it is key social arena of transnationalism. Although it exists in local communities and is distinctively influenced by a national cultural and political context, religion has connections with the wider world and is influenced by these relations (Wuthnow, Offut 2008). Levitt (2007) says that religious communities stand at the intersection between global and local. They are influenced by broader global political and economical trends as well as local

¹⁵ Even though Greek Catholic Church recognizes Pope as the head of the Church, they differ from Roman Catholicism in the way they celebrate mass – according to byzantine rite.

¹⁶ There were very few parishes of GCC outside Ukraine (Krindatch 2003).

conditions. They are also structured and operating across borders. Not only people move among them but religious communities also channel flows of ideas, rituals and values in both directions (Wuthnow & Offut 2008).

As Drbohlav, Jánská and Šelepová (2005) point out Ukrainians in the Czech Republic shows considerable traits of transnationalization and are very often oriented toward homeland. Most of the immigrants, in particular those coming in the fifth wave, continue to be in contact with their homeland. Churches can provide them with different levels of connection with homeland.

On the level of institutional connections, Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic remains apolitical and focuses on developing and sustaining cross-border ties with other communities of believers. Probably due to its multiethnic composition and Czech “nature” Orthodox Church is not involved with national projects of its churchgoers and thanks to its understanding of their position in the lives of believers (as providers of religious training, Orthodox culture and tradition) the Church’s cross-border and transnational activities are carried strictly along the religious and communal lines.

Also Greek Catholic Church is active in cross-border connection in the name of connecting western and eastern culture. However, its connection (historical as well as present-day) with Ukraine is only rarely explicitly pronounced. As above mentioned conflict around consecration of non-Ukrainian bishop showed, a lot of Ukrainian immigrants continue to recognize Greek Catholic Church as Ukrainian Church. Such recognition is usually not explicit and appears in times when it is threatened. The Church is still careful not to establish the connection with Ukraine on the basis of nationality/ethnicity, but follows more pan-Slavic rhetoric.

This situation differs from that in other Greek Catholic Churches in Europe or elsewhere. Solari (2009) who conducted ethnographic study of Ukrainians in Rome describes Greek Catholic parishes as with strong transnational agenda and focus on national consciousness building. Italian Greek Catholic priests understood Ukrainian immigration as temporal and one of their goals was to enable immigrants to keep in touch with Ukraine. Besides, not only they developed ties with Ukraine (and also other Greek Catholic Churches worldwide), they also utilize immigration for their political goals. Greek Catholic priests expected immigrants to return to Ukraine someday and wanted them to bring back with them a Greek Catholic vision of the Ukrainian nation.

Nothing like that can be found in Greek Catholic Church in the Czech Republic. In Churches documents and magazine *Zpravodaj* transnational ties are expressed as those among Greek Catholics worldwide, with no explicit reference towards Ukraine as Church’s “homeland”. This can be ascribed to the fact, that even though the ethnic makeup of the Church is prevalently Ukrainian, the Church still considers itself to be “Czech Church”. The presence of Ukrainian priest remains one of very few pronounced connection with Ukraine.

However, quite aside from the understanding of transnational religious connection in terms of political or cultural projects of the institutions, on another level the pure fact of the existence of a Church as transnational institution and religion as transnational phenomena can support individual’s life in multiple social fields (see Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004). The very existence of the imagined community of believers worldwide connects individual believers

across borders and attending the same Church as they did before migration create a feeling of interconnectedness with homeland. In my ongoing research I would like to focus on the ways religion and religious practice allows immigrants to move between different social fields and live according to the rhythm of two or more states. In this understanding of the relations between religion and transnationalism, such practices as celebration of religious holidays according to different calendars can be seen as transnational and help social actors to live according to two different times.

Conclusion

Migration from Ukraine to the Czech Republic is very often framed in terms of economic reasons and labor migration. In this paper I focused on more intimate part of this migration – on religiosity of immigrants and Churches they visit to show the role religion and religious institutions play in the process of migration with main stress on the post-migratory phase of integration into hosting society. Higher religiosity remains one of the characteristics of Ukrainian in Czech Republic and many of the immigrants seek, sooner or later, church to attend. As overseas studies show religious institutions might be important engines in the settlement process. However, the situation in the Czech Republic is bit different from that in the United States.

Even though Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church have both the institutional and human capital to be important integration institutions for religious immigrants from Ukraine, they do not fully act on. Orthodox Church's understanding of salvation affects its attitude towards immigrants. The Church does not consider settlement practices as part of Church's task, which is seen strictly as transmission of faith and Orthodox teaching. Even so, those immigrants who get involved with church meetings can benefit from them as it is place where they can meet with other churchgoers (for some of them it might be the only informal contact with other people, especially shortly after immigration). Such help is unintended from the part of the Church. On contrary, Greek Catholic Church sees settlement practices as one of its tasks. Help of the Church's representatives and volunteers exceeds spiritual guidance, and psychological support and consolation. However, their effort to help immigrants has rather the dimension of social work or spiritual counseling than of bridging the difference between immigrants and members of the majority (see Pavlíková, Sládek 2009 for comparison).

For the future research I would like to focus more on the religious transnational practices of both Churches and the relationship between religion and transnationalism. So far, my findings show difference in the development of transnational ties on the institutional level of Churches, though, I would like to explore other forms of this relation. How does the transnational nature of religion and religious institution affect everyday lives of believer? Does it provide them with tools to move and live within different social fields that cross state borders? How does the sense of belonging to the global community of believers influence the migratory experience? Those are question for the further research.

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