

# Emerging Mission from the Czech Republic

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

'Czech churches now send missionaries to several countries in Europe and around the world.

This is an answer to prayer and will hopefully also generate spiritual vitality on the home front.'<sup>1</sup>

According to Operation World data, in 2010 there were twenty-eight Czech missionaries, serving through six agencies in nine countries. Even though this might be a tiny piece of the mosaic in the global contribution to world mission, it displays an increased interest in the global aspects of Christianity and a progressive practical involvement. Despite the fact that the contemporary Czech Republic is considered a mission field<sup>2</sup> rather than a missionary sending country, in the last decade the mission action has increased, as Czech missionaries<sup>3</sup> are being sent with the help of more than ten mission agencies or directly as church initiatives.

This paper argues for missiological reflection corresponding to the Czech contemporary mission, with a special focus on the international mission<sup>4</sup> from the Protestant<sup>5</sup> churches since 1989<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mandryk 2010: 299. The Operation World data are to be approached with certain dose of doubt, since it is not clearly stated how exactly they are gathered. Additionally, in line with the purpose of the book, which serves as a prayer tool and provides material on all existing countries and territories, it tends to yield towards unsubstantiated optimism.

<sup>2</sup> The Czechs are popularly proclaimed one of the most atheist nations in the world, even though atheism is actually a minority worldview of the Czech people today (Halík 2000: 145). Most people label themselves as "without confession" (Václavík 2010: 213) and they are 'adherents of the more or less clearly articulated conviction that there most probably is "something" above us' (Hošek 2015a: 26). The majority society holds an anti-religious sentiment or are lukewarm in their relationship to any institutionalized faith. Less than 15% of the 10 million of the Czech population is Christian, both practising and nominal (Škrabal 2014: 5).

<sup>3</sup> The Christian intercultural workers are referred to as missionaries (Wright 2006: 23).

<sup>4</sup> I operate with the terms in compliance with the view that international mission is not something theologically separate from the mission in the home country, as the missiologist David Bosch stated, 'the difference between home and foreign missions is not one of principle but of scope' (Bosch 1991: 10). My starting point is that the international or intercultural mission work is legitimate. The Great Commission is still valid today, as the world's population grows. Missiologist Ralph Winter argues that there remains a genuine need for intercultural missionaries, first of all because the task is not finished and there are no local Christian workers who would evangelise in many places (Winter 2009: 350-353). The dynamics of foreign and local workers labouring together can be very beneficial – the intercultural workers might help

Section (2.) investigates a range of missiological publications: topics by Czech authors which are not directly related to the international aspect of mission, international mission to Czechs, Czech Catholic international mission, and mission from countries with similar geographical-historical contexts. This is to lay the foundations what will inform the subsequent discussion in section (3.) which analyses the insufficiency of scholarly engagement with the cross-cultural aspects of Czech mission, both in and outside the Czech Republic. The concluding section (4.) argues for the missiological reflection on international Czech mission.

## 2. SEARCHING FOR “CZECH” AND “MISSION” TOGETHER

### **An introduction to missiological themes in the Czech context**

Starting generally, some of the topics and concerns of the missiological works of Czech authors are ecumenism and unity as means of mission, holistic mission and the reverse mission – blessing from the field. Pavel Černý<sup>7</sup> from the Brethren Church<sup>8</sup> in his historical text-based research analysed World Council of Churches documents that emphasize Christology and soteriology (Černý 2006a). His fields of interest are ecumenism<sup>9</sup> (Černý 2015) and interreligious dialogue (Černý 2004), the relationship between theology and practical missiology (Černý 1999, 2006b, 2007), and missiology in the secular environment of the Czech Republic (Černý 2011). Vít Hlásek, from the

the local workers discover blind spots and vice versa (Wachsmuth 2013: 76). The argument for the legitimacy of international mission could be followed further and expanded, yet it is out of the scope of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> I cherish both the Catholic and Orthodox church, yet these are outside of my scope. The Protestant church has been the most active sending branch of the Czech Christian community since 1989. Additionally, as a Protestant, I am most familiar with this branch of Christianity.

<sup>6</sup> The year 1989 was decisive for Czech and Slovak history – it was the year of the “Velvet revolution” when the Communist regime fell. For this reason, I choose to focus on the period from November 17<sup>th</sup> 1989 till the present.

<sup>7</sup> Černý studied in the early 1970s at the Komenský Evangelical Theological Faculty in Prague and did his PhD at the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague. His thesis was published as “Christ’s Work of Salvation as a Foundation and Imperative for Mission: Activities of the World Council of Churches” (Černý 2006a). Pavel Černý could be labelled as one of the pioneers of Czech missiology, both as author and missiology teacher.

<sup>8</sup> The Brethren Church (*Církev bratrská*) is a Czech evangelical denomination. It tends to be mistakenly confused with another denomination Evangelical church of Czech brethren (*Českobratrská církev evangelická*) and sometimes even with Unity of Brethren (*Jednota bratrská*).

<sup>9</sup> Another Czech scholar with a focus on ecumenism is the Catholic Robert Svatoň who finds an interrelation of mission and ecumenism when unity is supposed to be a testimony to the nations (Svatoň 2014: 79).

same denomination, follows in Černý's footsteps when in his Master thesis, "Missio Dei: Laying a Foundation for a Missional Ecclesiology of the Church of the Brethren" (Hlásek 2017), he proposes a reformulation of the Brethren Church statement. It is a practical implementation of the theoretical ground Černý prepared concerning the incorporation of Missio Dei<sup>5</sup> and holistic mission<sup>6</sup> aspects into the contemporary church structures. Still, not everyone from the Czech context is on the same wavelength, e. g. Martin Huňát,<sup>7</sup> who in his working paper, "Holistic Mission with Respect to John Stott's Contribution" (Huňát 2012), challenges the equality of evangelism and social action in his critique of John Stott whom Pavel Černý calls 'our teacher and theological father' (Černý 1999: 25).

Other authors focus on contemporary Czech society and home mission. "A Czech Perspective on Faith in a Secular Age", edited by Tomáš Halík<sup>8</sup> and Pavel Hošek<sup>9</sup>, has the goal of developing a corresponding missiological approach for the church's dialogue with contemporary seekers. Hošek himself recently published two books that contribute to understanding the contemporary Czech religious situation: "Gods Return: Religious Changes in the Postmodern Time" (Hošek 2012) and "Islam as a Challenge for Christians" (Hošek 2016). The former looks at how to approach a contemporary Czech person with the Gospel – through a better understanding of the specifics of Czech identity. The latter book looks at how Islam can serve as a mirror to Czech believers and non-believers. This mirror might help them understand who they are or who they are not and to re-embrace the Christian faith. Both useful publications engage Czech identity related to home mission.

### **Mission by expatriates in the Czech Republic**

The first of the selected publications about mission to Czechs is, "Will We Survive

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<sup>5</sup> The missiological concept of God's mission, which has been used especially since 1950 (Moreau 2000: 631), is supposed to remind us that it is a privilege to participate in what He is already at work at and this realisation should make us humble in our attitudes and mission methods (Wachsmuth 2013: 77).

<sup>6</sup> Or "mission as transformation" (Samuel & Sugden 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Martin Huňát is a younger generation scholar from the Pentecostal denomination Apostolic Church (*Apoštolská církev*). He finished MA studies at Mattersey Hall in Nottinghamshire in the UK, along with several other leading Czech Pentecostal scholars. It needs to be added that Huňát's position on social action as a natural accompaniment of evangelism does not represent the position of all Pentecostals in the Czech Republic.

<sup>8</sup> Halík, the Templeton Prize winner in 2014, is a leading Czech scholar of religion. The influence of this Catholic author, priest and sociologist can be seen in the generation of younger authors, such as Hošek.

<sup>9</sup> Pavel Hošek is a leading Czech Protestant scholar of religion.

Western Missionaries? Reflections of a Czech Pastor on Meeting the Western Missionaries” by Dan Drápal<sup>10</sup> (Drápal 1997). It was written soon after the initial influx of Western missionaries to Czechoslovakia and to the Czech Republic in the early 1990s. In this pioneering work, he notices a disparity in Christian foreign missionaries: those who ask locals what to help with or those who come with their own agenda (Drápal 1997: 39). What is interesting with Drápal is that he begins to see the connection between western missionaries in the Czech Republic and the challenges of Czech missionaries to be sent:

‘Since the Czech Republic belongs neither to the richest nations or the poorest nations, we can make experience both ways. I realized that I can easily become condescending when meeting Christians from the Ukraine or Albania – especially when I see they make mistakes or hold erroneous views which we dealt with a long time ago. But don't they have something positive which I do not even see?’<sup>16</sup>

Drápal does not say ‘going for mission to Ukraine and Albania’, but the idea behind it is of the same nature.

The next decade witnessed two mutually similar works by theologians from the Brethren Church while studying at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.<sup>11</sup> In the Master thesis, “A Critical Examination of Mission in Czech Evangelical Churches: Context, Reality, Roots, and Vision” (Novák 2004), the author notices the tension of Czech workers and foreign missionaries (Novák 2004: 37, 65-66). What Novák mentioned briefly served well his colleague Daniel Fajfr, who deepened it. The goal of Fajfr’s Master thesis, “A Critical and Evaluative Study of the Roles and Partnership of Expatriate Christian Workers and Czech Evangelicals” (Fajfr 2005), was to help the

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<sup>10</sup> Dan Drápal, along with Černý, finished his Master studies at the Komenský Evangelical Theological Faculty in Prague in the early 1970s. He is a remarkable person with regards to the spiritual awakening in 1980s in a local church he pastored in Prague Holešovice and to its ties with the spiritual awakening in the Czech society in the early 1990s. In 1991 he was one of the founders of the Christian Mission Society (*Křesťanská misijní společnost*), a Christian inter-denominational organisation active in the Czech society in multiple ways, including sending Czech missionaries. This fact is worth mentioning as it is a Czechoriginated and Czech-led mission society, unlike e.g. OM, YWAM, Wycliffe and other international organisations. <sup>16</sup> Drápal 1997: 40

<sup>11</sup> International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) was located in Prague from 1997 to 2014, when it relocated to Amsterdam. The Prague location helped it produce several Czech graduates, among them Fajfr and Novák.

missionaries and the local Czech workers find mutual cultural understanding to improve their cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

All of the above mentioned, Drápal, Novák and Fajfr, are helpful in adding the aspect of the Western missionaries' influence on developing Czech mission.

### **Czech Catholic international mission**

The Catholic Church is on the official level indisputably mission oriented.<sup>13</sup> As far as relevant reflection on the Czech mission endeavour, the contemporary author Stanislav Balík in his chapter, "Christianisation from the Czech Lands, especially in the second half of the 20th Century", lists several Czech Catholic missionaries after 1989 and analyses the contemporary Catholic mission. Balík's work resembles the research of the contemporary international Catholic Slovak mission (Svätokrižný 2002). Balík briefly comments on not only the priests (Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans or monks of other orders) doing mission, but also the laity. He notices that their work is not primarily evangelistic, but humanitarian (Balík 2011: 339). Even though multiple biographies of Czech Catholic missionaries have been published<sup>14</sup> and the official church politics are pro-mission, Balík underlines the gap in research on Czech missionaries:

'If we have stated in the previous chapter on missionaries in the past centuries that this is an untreated topic, all the more so is this attribute valid for the twentieth century, especially for its second half. Not only no summary study exists, but as of yet, there are still no sufficiently processed biographies of individual missionary characters.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In his work, Fajfr critiques the arrogance of certain foreign missionaries, while commending the humbleness and sacrificial service of others.

<sup>13</sup> Both home mission ("evangelisation") and foreign mission ("missions") are promoted. This is due to encyclicals and exhortations of the three recent popes, 'especially *Evangelii nuntiandi* by Paul VI and *Redemptoris missio* (about the permanent validity for missionary work) by John Paul II and *Evangelii Gaudium* by Francis' (Černý 2017: 611).

<sup>14</sup> This can be documented by recent autobiographical books written by missionaries themselves, such as, "A Czech Physician in the Heart of Africa" (Drlík 2003), rather a popular travelogue autobiography with certain ethnographic and medical remarks. Or another book, "Christians in Indian Country: Cultural, Social and Religious Contrasts of Latin America" (Martínek 2003), a popular publication with certain aspirations to be a contribution to the sociology of religion. The author looks into the Christianisation of Latin America and the syncretism present through to today. There exist other autobiographies or biographies of contemporary or recent Catholic missionaries, e.g. "They used to call me Siphon in Africa: Life Story of a Czech Missionary" (Čížkovský 2003). These are rather non-academic works, with certain scholarly aspirations.

<sup>15</sup> Balík 2011: 329 My translation; original: '*Pokud jsme v předchozí kapitole o misionářích minulých století konstatovali, že jde o nepracované téma, tím spíš tato charakteristika platí pro století dvacáté, zvláště pak pro jeho druhou polovinu. Nejenže neexistuje souhrnná studie, ale ani nejsou prozatím příliš zpracované biografie jednotlivých osobností.*'

Still, the Catholics can be taken by the Protestants as an example in these areas. Josef Dolista's, "The Mission Effort of the Church" (Dolista 2001), noteworthy as the only missiology textbook by a Czech author, was created as study material for a missiology course at the Theological Faculty of Jihočeská Univerzita in České Budějovice and is based on Catholic theology of mission.

### **Emerging mission from Central and Eastern Europe**

Most academic investigation has been conducted by western missiologists (Vlasin 2017: 56). The majority Christian world has been increasingly active in this arena as well although there is a tendency to forget that the "North" consists of nations from both the "West" and the "East". The Ukrainian theologian Michael Cherenkov finds it shocking that this gap in Eastern European or Slavic missiology is not only filled, but not even noticed (Cherenkov 2011: 50).

The most widely recognized work, "Transforming Mission" (Bosch 1991), is a vivid example of this. In spite of a genuine appreciation for David Bosch's work, a careful reading reveals that the word "Slavic" was only once used correctly, yet two times mistakenly. All Slavs, Eastern, Western and Southern, share the same language root, they also have certain common mentality similarities and history bonds. Bosch rightly recognises them as one of the language group, when he discusses '(.....) the Greek, Slavic, Latin or Germanic worlds' (Bosch 1991: 453). Yet at another occasion when mentioning the Greek influence: '(.....) the Greeks would impart this vision to many other peoples as well: Slavs, Russians, and various Asian groups' (Bosch 1991: 211), the author did not recognize Russians as Slavs. Similarly, when explaining the growth of Orthodox mission, the author says that it 'advanced mainly among the Slavonian peoples' (Bosch 1991: 205). Old Slavonian (in Czech *staroslověnština*) of different redactions was used as a liturgical language, yet the people are not to be referred to as Slavonians. Slavonia is historically the eastern historical region in Croatia.<sup>16</sup> This observation is an indication of the poor state of current missiological reflection about this part of the world, including the Czech Republic.

There are several notable foreign and local scholars who reflect on mission from

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<sup>16</sup> It may appear confusing and it is challenging to distinguish between terms, such as Slavonia, Slovenia, Slovakia; Slavonian, Slovenian, Slovak and Slavic. Nonetheless, the exact terminology is essential.

Central and Eastern European (CEE)<sup>23</sup> countries. Anne-Marie Kool<sup>17</sup> from the Netherlands has authored several works<sup>18</sup> related to mission in CEE, yet the mission of the CEE nations to other nations outside their territory is not addressed by Kool until her later publication, “Revolutions in European Mission – What Has Been Achieved in 25 Years of Eastern European Mission?” (Kool 2014). The article is very helpful, Kool distinguishes three time periods so far for mission in CEE: 1. 1989-1998, 2. 1999-2009, 3. Since 2009. She considers the first decade dedicated to importing the western mission paradigms or re-introducing paradigms of the past. The second decade was, according to her, a period of disillusionment and the last decade lasting till now is a time of a ‘new innovative and creative mission paradigms re-emerging’ (Kool 2014: 213). These paradigms are limited in their generalization<sup>19</sup>, yet Anne-Marie Kool is one of the key contributors to the conversation on mission in and from CEE countries.<sup>20</sup> Her American colleague Scott Klingsmith<sup>21</sup>, similarly, recognizes the search for an authentic mission from CEE. In his cross-case analysis of international mission from Poland, from Romania and from Hungary after 1989, “Missions Beyond the Wall: Factors in the Rise

<sup>23</sup> The term Central and Eastern Europe (hereafter CEE) is used in this paper, to help locate the region and to avoid the political connotation of “Eastern Europe”. Both Kool and Klingsmith work with this term as well (Kool 2008a: 24).

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<sup>17</sup> The missiologist Anne-Marie Kool helped establish the Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS) in 2002 in Budapest.

<sup>18</sup> In her article, “Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in ‘Post-Communist’ Europe” (Kool 2008a), she discusses the difference between the mentality of people in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and the Central European FSU satellite states, and the clash of cultures between the Western mindset and the receiving CEE cultures. Similarly, the identity of the missionary is the focus of Kool’s article from the same year, “Leadership Issues in Central and Eastern Europe: Continuing Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology” (2008b).

<sup>19</sup> Kool, herself a Westerner, is quite critical of the West: ‘The new mission paradigm is not a copy and paste variety of the Western mission paradigm, but a new innovative mission paradigm is emerging, characterized by suffering instead of by success, focusing on individual and community, instead of the sole individualistic focus of the west’ (Kool 2014: 22). Even though not all Western missionaries will fall into these categories, it is interesting to notice here the search for mission identity for the CEE context. In her criticism of the stereotypical Western model of a hero missionary who is focused on performance and success, Kool comes to the following conclusion. In her commendable goal to support indigenous mission she distinguishes two types of mission: the “enlightenment paradigm” and the ideal “biblical paradigm” (Kool 2014: 14). Here, the former one portrays the individuality and the focus on success of the West, while the later models the emerging mission from CEE which resembles the original mission from the Antioch church (Kool 2014: 22).

<sup>20</sup> In her recent chapter “A Missiologist’s Look at the Future: A Missiological Manifesto for the 21st Century” (Constantineanu et al., 2017), she considers otherness and exclusion to be the burning issue of today, especially in relation to the Roma and migrants (Kool 2017: 697).

<sup>21</sup> This long-time missionary and missiologist finds several advantages for missionaries from CEE countries in contrast to the Westerners: language adaptability, experience of persecution under Communism, visa situations, stronger sense of relationships, and living standard expectations (Klingsmith 2012: 133-134, 146).

of Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe” (Klingsmith 2012), he points out the challenges of CEE mission:

‘Now that Poles are missionaries themselves, they have to wrestle with the same issues from the other side (.....) They are attempting to avoid the mistakes they perceived when they were the receivers, but recognize that the issues are not as clear-cut as they previously thought.’<sup>22</sup>

Among other scholars reflecting on mission from CEE countries are Malcolm Clegg<sup>23</sup>, who notices the potential of international mission from CEE, and Alison Clarke, who offered a helpful insight into the particularities of the Romanian mission sending movement (Clarke 2011). “The sleeping giant” of Europe, as the Romanian church was at the time referred to (Rițișan & Constantineanu 2017: 345), is taking the lead in CEE in the endeavours of mission practice and reflection. The Romanian Alexandru Vlasin is positive as he notices a shift towards the local initiative in mission (Vlasin 2017: 65). A bright example of this is the Romanian Pentecostal Agency for Foreign Missions (APME). Its past, present and future prospects are addressed by Gheorghe Rițișan and Corneliu Constantineanu (Rițișan & Constantineanu 2017). They do not concentrate exclusively on the Romanian Pentecostals, but aspire to wider findings, such as the factors that hindered sending missionaries from Romania. According to them, it was in the first place the legacy of the Communist system, but also the numerous foreign missionaries coming to Romania which ‘brought the false impression that Romania was a mission field and not a country with real sending potential’ (Rițișan & Constantineanu 2017: 347). In this respect, certain similarities with the Czech sending context are shared, even though the Czech Republic is behind Romania in many aspects of missiological education, research and practice.

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<sup>22</sup> Klingsmith 2012: 131

<sup>23</sup> Clegg 2001. Clegg himself worked as a missionary in Poland for more than twenty years. His dissertation, “Understanding the Times - Research into the Impact and Direction of Christian Mission in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe at the Turn of the Century” (Clegg 2001), in spite of the promising and slightly ambitious title, offers only limited results. He admits that about 60% of respondents are from Poland, and only 23 out of 125 returned the questionnaires. The author does not convince by being grounded in data, but rather works with universal claims.

### 3. INTERNATIONAL CZECH MISSION

The overview above has prepared the ground for further reflection and a step towards the assessment of the state of international Czech mission. To that end, the reflection must now encompass both international mission into and from the Czech Republic.

#### **International mission within the Czech Republic**

‘The Czech Republic has gone through a transformation from an emigration country to an immature immigration country’ (Drbohlav et al., 2009: 99). As of 31 March 2018, 535,970 foreigners have been registered with the Czech Foreign Police. The majority came from Ukraine (120,431), Slovakia (113,177) and Vietnam (60,296).<sup>24</sup> Most foreigners live in the bigger cities, with Prague consisting of more than 10% foreign population (Drbohlav et al., 2009: 75). The numbers are not so high as in the Western European countries, but it can be estimated that the percentage of foreign nationals continuously increases. Apart from the on-going immigration from “traditional” places, such as Vietnam or the former Soviet Union, there is a rise of immigration to the Czech Republic from Muslim countries, including refugees. The issue of refugees has been become a controversial topic since 2015, and Czech society is highly divided on the issue.<sup>25</sup> The missiologist Pavol Bargár addresses the two colliding narratives which are present in the society: on one side is what he calls the “European values narrative” and on the other the “solidarity narrative”.<sup>26</sup> Bargár’s work is helpful in that that recognizes how the presence of refugees challenges Czech identity, mission practice and reflection. He does not end his paper with an activist voice openly calling for mission to the refugees, yet still he includes certain missiological considerations of how Christians can pursue transformation in the public arena, including the current public discourse on migration and refugees in the Czech Republic today.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Available at <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/number-of-foreigners-data> [Accessed 24 Aug 2018]. The detailed data on the number of foreigners and their type of residence in different regions within the Czech Republic are available at [https://www.czso.cz/documents/11292/27914491/1703\\_c01t12.pdf/2be7e60cd3cc-4034-89e0-0f48281f7306?version=1.0](https://www.czso.cz/documents/11292/27914491/1703_c01t12.pdf/2be7e60cd3cc-4034-89e0-0f48281f7306?version=1.0) [Accessed 24 Aug 2018]. It must be added that many foreigners are not legally registered with the foreign police and many from different EU countries do not register at all.

<sup>25</sup> The issue of refugees has been become a controversial topic since 2015 and Czech society is highly divided on the issue.

<sup>26</sup> Bargár 2016: 2. Currently, the “European values narrative” is winning on the political stage and the factor of the geographical approachability of Germany is important – refugees do not choose the Czech Republic as their destination.

<sup>27</sup> Bargár 2016: 7

Mission to Roma in the Czech Republic could also be considered international mission, but this must be done with some caution. It is controversial because the Roma are integrated into Czech society to various degrees: some Roma declare themselves to be Czechs, some declare themselves to be Roma, while others refuse to declare their identity (Covrig 2010: 95). Mission to Roma within the Czech Republic can therefore be considered international mission only to a certain degree. An example of the mission of ethnically Czech-majority churches to Czech Republic-based Roma can be found in the field research of Ondřej Kováč<sup>28</sup>, who recommends steps for Czechs to understand the Roma mentality, to break the stereotypes and to engage alongside the Roma workers in the ministry to Roma (Kováč 2003: 100-101).

Relevant academic reflection on Czechs reaching foreigners with the Gospel in the territory of the Czech Republic is scarce. The gap in literature is similar when it comes to the reverse mission, on e.g. Ukrainian mission to Czechs.<sup>29</sup>

### **International mission out of the Czech Republic**

Literature about mission abroad from the Czech Protestant churches is also meagre. Scott Klingsmith ends his study on Polish, Hungarian and Romanian mission by suggesting further research – pointing to the need for studying the Ukrainian mission, followed by a statement which underlines the gap in literature: ‘In addition, the Czech Republic needs to be studied’ (Klingsmith 2012: 195). Alexandru Vlasin in his smallscale research managed to include only twelve participants of eight CEE countries, regrettably excluding the Czech Republic.

It is true that ‘the last twenty-five years have been marked more by activism, than by reflection’ (Kool 2014:2). In the Czech case, there has certainly been mission action. Stories of missionaries have been regularly published in popular Christian magazines.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kováč finished his theological studies despite being of Roma origin and despite being completely blind. This note might seem unnecessary, yet in the Czech context, where disabled people face challenges in the education system and where racism resides vigorously also in the church circles, it is remarkable.

<sup>29</sup> Pavel Černý notes that ‘Korean, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Japanese and multinational congregations have emerged on Czech soil’ and that they are ‘beginning to evangelize among Czech citizens and are spreading their faith in a country which to them is foreign’ (Černý 2017: 617). It is not clear whether this statement is based on previous research or if it is an observation, but hopefully Černý is right and we may expect more mission practice and more reflection by the representatives of the aforesaid communities in the future.

<sup>30</sup> The examples of such can be the magazine “Life of Faith” (*Život víry*) which is published by the already mentioned Christian Mission Society (Available at [www.kmspraha.cz/zivotviry](http://www.kmspraha.cz/zivotviry) [Accessed 06 Aug 2018]) or “Nehemia Info” which is published by the Endowment Fund Nehemia (Available at [http://nehemia.cz/?page\\_id=7863](http://nehemia.cz/?page_id=7863) [Accessed 06 Aug 2018]).

Still, the presence of scholarly reflection is very low in this specific area, actually almost non-existent (Bargár 2017: 290). The literature on mission from countries with similar context to the Czech Republic is more abundant. Works of Czech theologians are valuable, yet missing an emphasis on the international aspect of mission. Pavel Černý himself only marginally refers to Czechs as missionaries in other cultural contexts. In one of his conference papers Černý appeals to the Czech Christian community: ‘It is time that Czech churches get involved in the international mission. Sending mission workers develops evangelism and diaconry in the world and immensely enriches and strengthens the local church.’<sup>31</sup> This “mission in reverse” (Escobar 2003: 162) is an important aspect of the international mission work, but rather as a side effect.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Having taken into consideration the relevant literature, this paper argues for the need of missiological reflection of mission action in international mission from the Czech Republic. I thankfully am able to refer to useful missiological works, especially by Černý, Bargár, and Kool and Klingsmith, yet I conclude that international Czech mission is understudied and inward-focused, i.e. focused on mission to Czechs. There is an unnegotiable gap in the literature on international Czech mission since 1989. The majority of research depicts general missiological concepts or home mission, while the least is written on international mission in and outside the Czech Republic.

Central and Eastern Europeans are beginning to discover themselves as nations that can actually contribute to the world mission. As they transform within, no matter how slowly and painfully that process may be manifested, it is progressively reflected outwardly. Mission is part of that wake-up from the Communist regime and its mentality. An Eastern European missiologist noted that at this crucial time ‘mission is not an option for the Church. It is an imperative.’ (Parushev 2007: 332). It is time for mission action and mission reflection. This paper calls for the study of outward-focused Czech mission. As the face of Europe is rapidly changing, applicable mission publications need to appear, including ones that substantiate the emerging mission movement from the Czech Republic and other CEE countries.

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<sup>31</sup> Černý 2006b: 10 My translation; original: ‘*Je na čase, aby se české církve více zapojovaly do zahraniční misie. Vysílání misijních pracovníků rozvíjí evangelizaci a diakonii ve světě a nesmírně obohacuje a posiluje místní církve.*’

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