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ARMENIANS OUTSIDE ARMENIA: A SOCIAL PROFILE OF ARMENIANS IN MOSCOW

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It seems obvious that an ethnic group within the borders of its "own" state and outside it exists in essentially different conditions of self-reproduction. In its "own" environment an ethnic group develops in compliance with the norms and requirements of self-preservation and the logic of its own ethnic and cultural evolution. In the milieu of another nation ethnic groups that submit to the necessity of adjustment may be entirely transformed in compliance with the specific character of the country they inhabit. Both phenomena – stabilization and transformation – manifest themselves through the fates of the Armenian people. Within the borders of their republic they now maintain their native characteristics. Beyond the borders of their nation-state the Armenians change, while keeping the attributes of their ethnic identity to some extent and adjust to the milieu of another nation that is mostly Russian. The subsequent changes may be so considerable that in the second and all the more in the third generation many people in the dispersed ethnic groups lose their inherited primary ethnic features and eventually even their national self-consciousness. As a result, their national identity may become quite conventional. That is why many authors have even raised a theoretical question about the nations' "borders" and the correlation between the notions of "nation" and "nationality". Outside a state-republic we deal not with nations, but rather with territorially dispersed ethnic groups covered by the general notion of "people of one nationality". This notion is often quite formal, as this sort of identity proper is not supposed to keep ethnic and cultural features and all the more to express national and state interests. Within this approach, statehood is an essential requirement and characteristic of a nation that differentiates it from an ethnic group, an ethnic group being a more general and larger ethnic entity.

In this context, the research done on the Armenians outside Armenia is of particular significance, as the Armenians belong to those extremely dispersed peoples. According to the census data of 1979 and 1989, more than 30 % of Armenians living in the USSR lived outside of Armenia, whereas all the other nations of the former Soviet republics, including Russians, had more than 18 % of their ethnic group outside of their republics.

The Armenians, who were mostly concentrated in America in the past, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union started to migrate more intensively into Russian cities and outside the former USSR. In 1926 less than a half of Soviet Armenians (47 %) lived in Armenia, in 1989 their number increased to 2/3 (70 %). The 1990-s marked

the beginning of the reverse trend. Its scope will be fully appreciated after the data of the Russian census of 2000 are published. But even now the major quantitative and qualitative changes are obvious. As far as quantitative changes are concerned, the central point is Russia's absolute leadership as the main region of concentration of the Armenian Diaspora. The most important part of the qualitative changes is probably the increasing complexity and social and ethnic multiplicity of the Diaspora, which reveals itself not only in state, but also in local entities at a sub-state level.

For Moscow, we have enough date of specific comparative research showing convincingly that the notion of the Armenian Diaspora is not monosemantic. According to these data, at present there are two rather peculiar Armenian entities in Moscow – old residents and newcomers – that have not yet merged together. The explanation of this fact is quite clear. The old residents who arrived in Moscow before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, concentrated in the capital for reasons that have nothing in common with those of the migrants from post-Soviet Armenia, who are now experiencing severe economic hardships. For the Armenians who arrived in Moscow earlier it was a social springboard, a world cultural centre. The overwhelming majority of those attracted to Moscow were the most dynamic young Armenians, who were able to adjust to the new environment very quickly and started to participate actively in the capital's social life. Most groups which arrive now are absolutely different. They experience grave difficulties in their homeland.

The polarization between the old Armenian residents and the newcomers manifests itself in the whole system of their social and ethnic characteristics. It is enough to say that 2/3 of the old Armenians have received a higher education, whereas their number does not reach more than ¼ among the newcomers. There are also great differences in their respective spheres of employment. Almost one half of the old Armenian residents (41 %) are employed in the sciences, education and culture, and relatively small groups are employed in industry, transport, construction, and in trade. The employment structure of the Armenian newcomers is different. The majority of them are employed in trade, the service sector, industry, construction, transport, communications, and lastly, in education, the sciences, health care, and culture (see table 1).

Table 1.
Distribution of Armenians by spheres of national economy (Moscow, 2000)
(percentage of Armenians population employed)

	Industry, construction, transport and communications	Trade, service sector etc.	Education, science, health care and culture
"Old residents"	29	27	44
"Newcomers"	34	47	19

The specific character of Armenian Muscovites and the "new migrants", who arrived in 1990s, manifests itself in social and property roles. The Armenian Muscovites – predominantly Russian-speaking old residents – are employed mainly in the public sector (57 %) while the number of the Armenian-speaking migrants in this sector is much lower (19 %). The Armenian newcomers tend to work more for various private firms and companies (50%) or are self-employed and have private practice (22 %).

The differences between the two groups of the Armenians also manifest themselves in their general cultural attitudes. The newcomers are mostly drawn to Armenian culture, which separates them from the Armenian Muscovites – "old residents" and Moscow-born Armenians.

Quite a significant index of cultural differentiation among the Armenians in Moscow is their language. All the Armenian migrants of the 1990s think of Armenian as their native language and speak it fluently. Only 1/3 of them also speak Russian quite well. The situation with the Armenian Muscovites is quite different. Most of them speak Russian better than Armenian. Only 38 % of them claim to speak both languages equally well. In essence this is what gives us an opportunity to differentiate the Armenians on a linguistic basis and to attribute one group to predominantly Russian-speaking people and the other to an Armenian-speaking one. As the research of 2000 showed, Russian-speaking Armenian Muscovites think in Russian, 48 % of the Armenian Muscovites even consider Russian as their native language. There is no such category of people among the Armenian newcomers. For all of them (or 92 % to be precise) Armenian is their native language and is the one they use while thinking.

This dualism in culture is all the more vivid in the younger generation: more than 60 % of the Armenian Muscovites' children do not speak Armenian at all, though many of them are registered as Armenians.

It is clear that these two "ethnic" groups of Armenians with peculiarities in culture live their own lives and even have different reference environments. For instance, the Armenian Muscovites' close friends tend to be Russians (53%) and not Armenians, whereas friendly relationships of the Armenian newcomers are usually established between the members of the same group.

The Armenian communities which are intended to unite Armenians in Moscow, seem to be unable to overcome the current situation: only 13-15 % of the Armenians, both old residents and newcomers, keep in touch with the communities and corresponding organizations. The newcomers and the old residents, and particularly Moscow-born Armenians, in fact have no contacts within their ethnic group.

In this situation the persistence of the ethnic features in the majority of the Russian-speaking Armenian population living in the modern non-Armenian environment is often questioned. These doubts seemed even more justified after the results of the research on Moscow Armenians of 2000 were analyzed. The Armenians in Moscow were asked the question: "How do you think of yourself – as a citizen of the world, European, Russian or Armenian?". 1/3 of the Armenian Muscovites questioned identified themselves as Armenians, this choice being less popular with those who had been raised in Moscow. The overwhelming majority of the Armenian Muscovites (66 % of choices) identified themselves as Russian citizens, "citizens of the world" and rarely as Europeans, the percentage of those with Russian self-identification being the highest (44%). This criterion of ethnic identification seems to show the same thing as the other indicators, for example, the idea of the homeland. Only 1/3 of the

Armenian Muscovites perceive Armenia as their homeland, while among those born in Moscow this concept is practically non-existent (16 %). Absolutely different attitudes are typical for the new migrants, i.e. people who have just arrived in Moscow. The homeland in their consciousness is Armenia (80 %) and not Russia.

The Armenian new-comers have vivid memories of the genocide in Turkey and violence in Azerbaijan. Unlike the Armenian Muscovites they view the prospects of the normalization of relations with these countries without any enthusiasm or even negatively (see table 2).

Table 2.
Attitudes towards Normalization of Relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Groups of Armenians	with Turkey			with Azerbaijan		
	positive	negative	cannot answer	positive	negative	cannot answer
Armenian Muscovites	50	25	25	66	19	15
Newcomers	23	35	42	36	31	33

The intensity of ethnic self-identification and correspondingly the expression of national self-consciousness is different for different groups of Armenian Muscovites – old residents and newcomers. As far as the legal aspect is concerned, people with different self-identification have different opinions on whether it is expedient or not to register their nationality. 66 % of the Armenian newcomers, and only 39 % of the Moscow-born Armenians think it is really expedient. Correspondingly, the "geographical" borders of national self-identification revealed to some extent through the idea of homeland change as well. 2/3 of the Armenian newcomers and only 1/3 of the Moscow-born Armenians consider Armenia as their homeland. The same is typical for the belief in special merits of the Armenian nation. The Armenian newcomers attributed 2/3 more merits to their own people than to Russians, while Moscow-born Armenians, though also with higher self-assessment, were much more "modest", the gap being only 30 %. Thus, all the elements of the old residents' national self-identification have a sort of residual nature.

These data show clearly that in the capital's milieu, surrounded by representatives of other nations, the Armenians keep their national self-identification only to a certain extent and change quite a lot. This process can be called the internationalization, if not the fading, of the national self-consciousness. It manifests itself in various spheres of social life, people's actual behaviour and the prospect of their ethnic transformation.

It is not an exaggeration to say that without the constant influx of the Armenian migrants to Moscow, the Armenians who already live there would inevitably identify themselves with the population of the capital. The territorial, professional, business, cultural and other aspects of social identification would not only dominate, but no doubt be self-sufficient for the Armenian old residents. In this case, the Armenian

mass public organizations that aspire to represent the Armenian population in Russia would find it difficult to legitimize their activities in the capital's milieu. One cannot ignore the real situation. If one wants to take care of ethnic groups, he/she should take into account the specific character of their life within a different national environment. There cannot be any universal approach in the process of finding a solution to national problems. National policies are often dominated by mutually opposite stereotypes – imperial and radical nationalist. Both should be rejected for the sake of workable and efficient solutions. Different groups of Armenians outside of Armenia need a different approach in multinational policy.

Literature

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- 2 Ethnic Groups in Their Own and Another Nations' Environment..., p. 7.
- 3 The report will be based on the materials of our research of 2000. The instruments of this research covered the essential aspects of nations' social and cultural development. The selection included 500 Armenian Muscovites and 275 newcomers.