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FROM CATACOMBS TO FREEDOM

UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN FACE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (LATE 1980S – EARLY 1990S)

ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes the details of the movement for legalizing the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which acquired a special momentum in face of socio-political changes in the USSR and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The UGCC, which was officially liquidated by the Soviet government in 1946, managed to form underground structures and continue pastoral activities. In the 1980s, the human rights organization Committee for the Protection of the Ukrainian Catholic Church (UCC) was formed and began to actively seek the official legalization of the UGCC. Western politicians and the Ukrainian diaspora became important factors influencing Soviet power. A combination of various factors, both internal and external, at the end of 1989 resulted in the authorities being forced to recognize the right of Greek Catholics to legally register their communities. Thus, a long 'catacomb' period came to an end and the UGCC received an opportunity to develop.

Keywords: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, legalization, Committee for the Protection of the Ukrainian Catholic Church

Słowa kluczowe: Ukraiński Kościół Greckokatolicki, legalizacja, Komitet Ochrony Ukraińskiego Kościoła Katolickiego

1991 is an important year for the UGCC, as it was then that the Charter of the UGCC was officially approved. At the same time, the Primate of the Church, Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, returned to Ukraine from the exile and finally received permanent residence permission, which was the official end of the UGCC's underground period.

The article's objective is to analyze the details of the UGCC's exit from underground conditions at the time of the political and social transformations in the countries of the communist camp. With this end in mind, it is necessary to present the main prerequisites for the legalization, trace the nature and forms of Greek Catholics' struggle for their rights, outline the mutual influences of religious and socio-political life in the USSR, and reveal the problems and challenges the UGCC faced during the restoration of the Church infrastructure.

The materials for the article were taken from the resources of regional commissioners of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR from the state archives of Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil regions. The documents from the Central State Archive of Public Organizations of Ukraine (fund 1: Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Kyiv) and the Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Management of Ukraine (fund 4648: Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR) were also utilized. Valuable material for researching the period of the legalization rests in the resources of the Branch State Archive of the SBU, namely, the information on the activities of dissidents and political prisoners who were involved in the church-religious movement in Ukraine. Oral testimonies of the participants of the Greek Catholic underground, which are kept in the archive of the Institute of Church History of the Ukrainian Catholic University, supplement the factual material, bringing individual perspectives and emotional coloring of the processes and events of the 1980s – early 1990s. Church periodicals, such as the magazine *Patriarchate* or the newspaper *News from Rome*, are important in analyzing legalization issues as well. The self-published journal of the Committee for the Protection of the UCC *Christian Voice* (1988-1989) was republished collectively by the publishing house of the Ukrainian Catholic University with an introductory article by Fr. Ivan Datsko, who was the secretary of the Primate of the UGCC Supreme Archbishop Myroslav Ivan in those years and played a key role in the revived Church.

Many researchers, both Ukrainian and foreign, have discussed the legalization of the UGCC. In particular, this article uses the works by the Canadian-Ukrainian historian Bohdan Botsyurkiv, Bishop Borys Gudziak, the national historian Viktor Pashchenko, the British researcher Michel Bourdeaux, the founder of the scientific center Keston College, and others.

Many researchers focused on the analysis of the political and national component of the revival of the UGCC, where the movement for the legalization of the UGCC was perceived as an integral part of the fight for the Ukrainians' right to their own state.¹ The

¹ V. Sergijčuk, *Neskorena Cerkva. Podvižnictvo greko-katolikiv Ukraïni v borot'bi za viru i deržavu*, Kyiv 2001, p. 464.

dissident and political prisoner Myroslav Marynovich noted that it was public religiosity that 'fueled' the Ukrainian 'velvet' revolution of 1989-1991; before putting forward political slogans, the people began to talk about religious issues.² The Ukrainian scientist from Harvard University Roman Shporlyuk offered a so called civilization approach to the problem of the USSR collapse. He said, *the Soviet project as an alternative version of the world civilization was defeated in the Great Competition with the capitalist West*.³ In the Soviet and post-Soviet world, religion played an important role. Thus, according to him, the transformations that took place in the sphere of relations between the Church and the state are evidence of the desire to preserve one's 'civilization' and return to the one experienced in the 19th century. In the Russian Empire, the paradigm was based on three 'keys' ('Orthodox, Autocratic, People's Republic'). In particular, Shporlyuk noted, *the rehabilitation of Russian Orthodoxy in the modern Soviet context is a revival of the old imperial legacy – the tsarist policy of denying separate identities of Ukrainians and Belarusians, including religious identities*.⁴ On the other hand, Greek Catholics have always identified with the Catholic West, which, according to B. Botsyurkiv, was one of the reasons for the liquidation of the UGCC in the 1940s.⁵ In this sense, according to the researcher Oleg Turiy, the inter-confessional conflict that began after the UGCC emerged from the catacombs focused not only on the right to own Churches, but also in the context of national, political and ecclesial self-determination of the Churches in Ukraine.⁶ This period in the history of the UGCC has already become the object of interest of many scientists, however, it still needs more detailed and meticulous study.

As a result of the Soviet authorities' repressive measures, the UGCC officially 'ceased to exist' at the non-canonical Lviv Council on March 8-10, 1946 being 'reunited' with the Russian Orthodox Church. According to recently declassified documents of the former KGB, the state security agencies of the USSR were involved in liquidating the Greek Catholic structures and holding this pseudo-Council. By that time, the entire hierarchy headed by Metropolitan Joseph Slipyi had been arrested. The Greek Catholic clergy were forced to choose between signing the conversion to Orthodoxy with the possibility of pastoral work or not signing it, which meant inevitable repressions. Many Greek Catholic priests who resisted this violent 'Orthodoxizing' were arrested and sentenced to long imprisonment. The process of 'reunification' covered the whole of Western Ukraine, whose territory became part of the USSR. Thus, along with the Lviv, Stanislavov and a part of the Przemyśl dioceses (the other part was under the Polish power), the Greek Catholics of the Mukachevo diocese were also subjected to forced 'Orthodoxizing'.⁷

² M. Marinovič, *Ukraïns'ka ideâ i hristiânstvo abo koli garcûtût' kol'orovi koni apokalipsisu*, Lviv 2003, pp. 296-297.

³ R. Šporlûk, *Împeriâ ta nacii: z istoričnogo dosvidu Ukraïni, Rosiï, Pol'si ta Bilorusi*, Kyiv 2000, p. 199.

⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵ B. Bocûrkiv, *Ukraïns'ka Greko-Katolic'ka Cerkva i Radâns'ka deržava (1939-1950)*, Lviv 2005, p. IX.

⁶ M. Tomko, O. Turij, *Vîra pislâ ateïzmu: religijne žittâ v Ukraïni v period demokratičnih peretvoren' i deržavnoï nezaležnosti*, Lviv 2004, p. 35.

⁷ B. Bocûrkiv, *Ukraïns'ka Greko-Katolic'ka...*, pp. 199-200.

However, the initiators of the liquidation did not manage to destroy the Church, since all the bishops as well as some priests and faithful did not recognize the decisions of the non-canonical Council and continued the ecclesiastical and pastoral work despite repression, prohibitions and underground existence. As a result of the political revision of the regime after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, most of the repressed Greek Catholic priests received an amnesty and in 1954-1958 began to return to Western Ukraine. The easing of state pressure allowed the clergy to prolong their priestly service in underground conditions. So, for example, at a meeting of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church on October 25-26, 1957 in Moscow, concern was expressed about the increased activity in the Western Ukrainian regions of Greek Catholic priests returning from exile, the facts of dragging the 'reunited' back to the GCC were noted.⁸

The Primate of the Church, Metropolitan Joseph Slipyi, with the support of Pope John XXIII, was granted amnesty in 1963 by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of January 26, 1963, and released to participate in the Second Vatican Council. The Soviet authorities flatly forbade him to return to Ukraine to fulfil the Ministry of the first hierarch of the 'non-existent Church'. Before leaving for the West, the Metropolitan took care to preserve the hierarchical structure in the underground conditions. In a Moscow hotel, he held a secret consecration of Fr. Vasyl Velichkovsky, an ordained bishop of Lutsk and administrator of the Lviv Archdiocese. The newly ordained bishop served as guardian of the Head of the UGCC from February 1963 to January 1969. In turn, bishop Vasyl, who was proclaimed Blessed Holy Martyr of the UGCC by Pope John Paul II in 2001, ordained a fellow Redemptorist Fr. Volodymyr Sterniuk, who served as guardian until 1991.⁹

The presence of Metropolitan Joseph Slipyi at the council, and also his active participation in meetings and the image of a faith confessor, caused a significant resonance in the Catholic Church and the world community. Given his great authority in the Catholic community, he launched a campaign in support of the 'silent church'.¹⁰ During the Second Vatican Council and after its completion, the Catholic Church made active ecumenical dialogues, trying, in particular, to start direct contact with the Russian Orthodox Church, which is influential in the Orthodox world. Therefore, the issue of Greek Catholics began to be considered in the context of inter-Church, and even inter-state relations between Moscow and the Vatican. Slipyi's active work primarily aimed at bringing constantly attention to the Greek Catholics, who were oppressed in the Soviet Union, but at the same time, he sought to form and strengthen the Church in the West (recognition of the patriarchal structure for the UGCC, the means to unite the Ukrainian diaspora, and the development of internal Church infrastructure.)¹¹

⁸ The State Archive of Lviv region (DALO), fr-1332, op. 2, spr. 25, ark. 299-302.

⁹ S. Dmitruh, *Žittâ âk podvig dlâ Hrista*, Lviv 2007, p. 36.

¹⁰ G. Teodorovič (ed.), *Hristiâns'kij golos. Zbirnik pam'âtok samvidavu Komitetu zabistu Ukraïns'koï Katolic'koï Cerkvi*, Lviv 2007, p. 14.

¹¹ *Bud'mo sobotû: žittâ i zapovit patriarha Josifa Slipogo*, Lviv 2017, pp. 26-28, 51-65.

The death of patriarch Joseph Slipyi on September 7, 1984 was a heavy loss for Greek Catholics around the world. However, patriarch Joseph's successor, Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, actively continued the campaign of his predecessor for regaining the rights by Greek Catholics in Ukraine.

For over four decades, the structures of so-called the Silent Church involved twenty bishops, and several hundred priests. All existing monastic congregations and ranks continued with their existence. Moreover, the Church managed to organize underground training of candidates for priests: there were underground theological seminaries as well as new vocations to the monastic state. The faithful were gathered in underground communities under the pastoral care of Greek Catholic priests. Interestingly, many bishops in the modern structure of the UGCC got their formation and training during the underground period, for example, metropolitans of Lviv Igor Voznyak, Ternopil-Zboriv Vasyly Semenyuk, and Ivano-Frankivsk Volodymyr Vyiťshin.¹²

The existence of the UGCC underground structures and the active support by the Church diaspora showed the determination of Greek Catholics to reject their official status quo. That is why the struggle for the religious freedom of the UGCC representatives never ceased during the four decades of Soviet power in western Ukraine.

In the second half of the 1980s, the socio-political situation in the USSR slowly began to change. A new political course proclaimed by M. Gorbachov was not intended to make any changes in the church-religious sphere.¹³ However, very soon the issue of the Church and religion became one of the key ones. This was caused by the West's influence, as more and more calls were made to the Soviet leadership demanding to ensure the rights of citizens to freedom of religion. A very 'loud' voice criticizing the USSR for religious persecution of believers was coming from Pope John Paul II, a native of communist Poland, who knew from his personal experience the realities of the Church's existence under a totalitarian regime. He presented his position on the UGCC in two letters to patriarch Joseph Slipyi in March 1979, in which he stressed the need to *ensure the right of existence and citizenship for Ukrainian Catholics in their home land*.¹⁴

In view of the preparations for celebrating the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Rus, the issue of religion was increasingly on the agenda. The authorities were concerned that, along with the churchmen in the USSR, the anti-Soviet forces on the other side of the Iron Curtain were seeking to use that purely ecclesiastical holiday in their interest.¹⁵ Very quickly, Gorbachov and his team concluded that in this situation it was better to allow and control the entire celebration process. The General Secretary himself began to emphasize in his speeches that Christianity not only had a positive impact on the formation of the statehood of Kyivan Rus but also allowed the peoples

¹² The Metropolitans' biographies can be reviewed on the official website of the Synod of the UGCC: *Diŭci  piskopi*, at <https://synod.ugcc.ua/bishops/active/>, 15 April 2022.

¹³ *Materiali XXVII z řzdu Komunističnoi Partii Rad ns'kogo So zu*, Kyiv 1986, pp. 194-197.

¹⁴ "Zastanova na miř c' l tij," *Visti z Rimu*, no. 2 (1987), pp. 1-2.

¹⁵ V. Mahin, "Hrestik na řii," *Vil'na Ukra na*, 4 April 1985, p. 4;  . Duluman, " k  hrestili   Rus'," *Vil'na Ukra na*, 28 September 1985, p. 4; T. Piskors'ka, "Hreřenn  Rusi: pravda i vigadki," *Vil'na Ukra na*, 29 September 1987, p. 4.

of Russia to enter the pan-European context.¹⁶ According to him, in recent years, the Communists succumbed to the illusion of the 'non-existence' of believers, which prevented finding adequate solutions to the problems between the state and the Church.¹⁷ Therefore, pompous celebrations with numerous foreign delegations were held with the permission and control of the authorities. In this situation, the Russian Orthodox Church, taking a loyal position towards the authorities, took the most advantage of the new trends in state policy.¹⁸

The celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of Rus caused a significant resonance and was held with great attention by the global community, which, in turn, contributed to the growth of M. Gorbachov's popularity in the West¹⁹ and was also a manifestation of the revival of Russian nationalism and the establishment of 'special relations' between the Kremlin and Zagorsk.²⁰

Unfortunately, the changes that concerned the Russian Orthodox Church did not extend to Greek Catholics in any way. They were denied in the community registration and Church legalization. In general, Ukraine remained under the control of the old 'Brezhnev' apparatchiks headed by Volodymyr Shcherbitysky. The Republican Party apparatus blocked the democratic changes promoted by Moscow. To reduce tension in the western region of Ukraine, the party leadership loyally registered communities of the Russian Orthodox Church. For example, from 1988 until mid-1989s, about 1,300 religious associations of the Russian Orthodox Church were registered in Ukraine.²¹ Registering communities of the Russian Orthodox Church began to acquire more and more features of the 'anti-Uniate struggle'. Thus, in Stryk, the Ivano-Frankivsk region, Orthodox believers requested the right to use the other temple in the village, which was claimed by the local Greek Catholics. The Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs M. Derevyanko and the local executive committee recommended registering another Orthodox community in this situation.²² A similar situation was in the village of Gvizd, where due to the activity of Uniates, the Nadvirnyansky district executive committee transferred the other (closed) church to the Orthodox community as a chapel for performing rituals.²³

In the context of perestroika, Greek Catholics stepped up their activities. On August 4, 1987, an active group of priests and laity of the UGCC, led by the underground

¹⁶ M. Gorbačev, *Perestrojka i novoe myšlenie dlja našej strany i dlja vsego mira*, Moskva 1987, pp. 200-201.

¹⁷ A. Tamborra, *Katoličeskaâ cerkov' i russkoe pravoslavlje. Dva veka protivostoâniâ i dialoga*, Moskva 2007, p. 554.

¹⁸ *Russkaâ Pravoslavnaâ Cerkov' v sovetskoe vremâ (1917-1991). Materialy i dokumenty po istorii otnošenij meždû gosudarstvom i Cerkov'û*, Moskva 1995, t. 2, pp. 222-223.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁰ V. Êlens'kij, *Religiâ pislâ komunizmu. Religijno-social'ni zmîni v procesi transformacij central'noi shidnoevropejs'kih suspil'stv: fokus na Ukraïni*, Kyiv 2002, p. 79; M. Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, London-Sydney 1990, p. 170.

²¹ Central State Archive of Public Organization of Ukraine (CDAGO), f. 1, op. 32, spr. 2659, ark. 5-6.

²² The State Archive of Ivano-Frankivsk region (DAIFO), fr-388, op. 2, spr. 216, ark. 72.

²³ *Ibid.*, ark. 73.

bishop Pavlo Vasylyk, sent an appeal to the Pope and M. Gorbachov that they should come out of the underground.²⁴ The statement was mostly declarative, but it testified to the mood within the Greek Catholic underground.

Also, 1987 was marked by the events around the small village of Grushiv, the Drohobych region, where, according to the villagers, the revelation of the Virgin took place to a local girl. This event aroused considerable interest in many believers, who rushed to Grushiv. Officials of various ranks admitted that the events around Hrushyv exemplified the ineffectiveness of atheistic propaganda.²⁵

Given the general situation, Greek Catholics began to increase their pressure on state authorities. In fact, as early as 1982 the illegal religious human rights organization Committee for the Protection of the Ukrainian Catholic Church,²⁶ founded by the political prisoner Josyf Terelya, started operating²⁷. In 1987, after the founder fled to the West, the committee was headed by the political prisoner and dissident Ivan Gel. As even admitted by officers of the Secret Services, the reformed Committee for the Protection of the UCC became an important link in the forces opposed to the Soviet government.²⁸

It should be noted that towards the end of the 1980s 'informal' public organizations resumed, or began, their active activities in Ukraine, bringing the attention of Soviet society to linguistic, cultural, and environmental issues, the need to cover the so-called 'blank spots' in the history of Ukraine, and so on. For example, the Ukrainian Helsinki Union resumed its activities, the youth 'Lion Society' (1987) operated to revive and preserve cultural traditions; the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society aimed at the preservation and popularization of the Ukrainian language. In the environmental sphere, perestroika manifested in Green World (1988); while in the political sphere, in "Ukrainian initiative group for the release of prisoners of conscience" (1987), and the discussion group Ukrainian Cultural Club (1987), which in due time, at the end of 1989, came to be the basis of the first opposition to the Communist Party of Ukraine, the party of people's movement of Ukraine for Perestroika.²⁹

Ivan Gel, as the new chairman of the Committee for the Protection of the UCC, managed to bring to the movement a comprehensive vision of the problem – not only the need of registering individual parishes in a village or city, but the struggle for legalization and rehabilitation of the entire Church. To this end, he launched a large-scale campaign to disseminate information about the reorganization of the Committee and the use of new methods of fighting for the rights of Greek Catholics.³⁰ According to

²⁴ *Hresnoŭ dorogou: funkcionuvannâ i sprobi likvidacii Ukraïns'koï Greko-Katolic'koï Cerkvi v umovah SRSR u 1939-1941 ta 1944-1946 rokah*, upor. M. Gajkovs'kij, Lviv 2006, pp. 612-613.

²⁵ The State Archive of Ternopil region (DATO), fr-3241, op. 2, spr. 125, ark. 43-45.

²⁶ The Ukrainian Catholic Church is the UGCC's name used in the West.

²⁷ *Mižnarodnij biografičnij slovnik disidentiv kraïn Central'noï ta Shidnoï Ėvropi j kolišn'ogo SRSR*, Harkiv 2006, t. 1, no. 2, pp. 984-985.

²⁸ Branch-wise State Archive of Security Service of Ukraine (GDA SBU), f. 16, op. 14, spr. 8, ark. 35.

²⁹ V. Nahaylo, *The Ukrainiane Resurgence*, Toronto–Buffalo 1999, pp. 92-93.

³⁰ G. Teodorovič (ed.), *Hristiâns'kij golos. Zbirnik...*, pp. 70-71.

Gel, it was important to 'wake up' the Ukrainian society and free it of the fear of potential persecutions.³¹ He sought to do that with a number of measures. First of all, the Committee members continued the traditional sending petitions to the Soviet authorities with requests to legalize the UGCC.³² Besides, in 1988-1989, signatures were collected under an appeal in support of the official recognition of the UGCC, which I. Gel officially presented to the highest authorities of the USSR as well as to international organizations (about 120 thousand signatures were collected).³³ The Committee began publishing the samizdat magazine *Christian Voice*, which was published in the West by the editorial board of *News from Rome*. Representatives of the Committee gave interviews and organized meetings of the underground episcopate with representatives of Western mass media. Active contacts between the Committee members and Western politicians made it possible not only to present objective information but also to influence the Soviet government in this way on the issue of Greek Catholics.³⁴

The Committee also began organizing worship services attended by crowds in the cities and villages of Western Ukraine. This form of struggle helped not only to mobilize believers but also to clearly demonstrate to the Soviet authorities the attitude of the population to religious issues. Another initiative was a hunger strike of Greek Catholics in defense of their rights on the Arbat in Moscow. This action was started by bishops Pavlo Vasylyk, Sofron Dmyterko, and Philemon Kurchaba in the Secretariat of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on May 18, 1989, and later it was taken up by the clergy and laity. The hunger strike lasted for five months in 1989 and caused a great response in the Soviet Union and the world.³⁵

The largest in terms of number and significance was the march along the streets of Lviv to the Cathedral of St. Yura on September 17, 1989, which gathered over 100 thousand people with the aim of granting religious freedom for Greek Catholics. Later, the chairman of the city executive committee, Bohdan Kotyk, noted that this action was a turning point in regard to the legalization, it showed a massive support for the Catacomb Church by the people and was a kind of 'last warning' for the authorities.³⁶ Bohdan Kotyk was one of those representatives of the Soviet government who proposed to review the policy regarding the legalization of the UGCC.³⁷

³¹ The interview with Ivan Gel, 21.X.2003, Lviv. The Interviewer T. Bublyk, Archive of the Institute of Church History (AICH), f. 1, op. 1t, spr. 29, ark. 34.

³² G. Teodorovič (ed.), *Hristiâns'kij golos. Zbirnik...*, pp. 98-101.

³³ *Sobor Sv. Ūra. 22 sičnâ 1989 roku. Dokumenty i spogadi*, upor. Ĺ. Kalinec', Lviv 2011, p. 118.

³⁴ V. Ėlens'kij, *Religiâ pislâ komunizmu...*, p. 480.

³⁵ V. Pašenko, *Greko-katoliki v Ukraïni (vid 40-h rokiv XX stolittâ do naših dniv)*, Poltava 2002, pp. 484-486; The interview with Yaroslava Ludkewych, 25.I.1993, Lviv. The Interviewer S. Smoluk, AICH, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 94, ark. 19; A. Kamins'kij, *Na perebidnomu etapi: "glasnist'" "perebudova" i "demokratizaciâ" na Ukraïni*, Mûnhen 1990, pp. 533-534.

³⁶ *Sobor Sv. Ūra. 22 sičnâ...*, p. 119; Ĺ. Gel', "Bogdan Kotik buv duže mudroû lûdinoû..." «Katakombna Cerkva»: statti i materiali, Lviv 2009, p. 94.

³⁷ Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine (CDAVO), f. 4648, op. 7, spr. 442, ark. 137.

The growing pressure of Greek Catholics on the Soviet government resulted in forcing the government to recognize their right to freedom of religion. The key event in the legalization of the UGCC was the meeting of M. Gorbachov with Pope John Paul II on December 1, 1989 in Rome. The Pope repeatedly emphasized that *without the legalization of the Ukrainian community, the process of democratization will never be completed*.³⁸ Therefore, on the eve of the meeting, the Council for Religious Affairs issued a statement, dated November 20, 1989, according to which Greek Catholics were granted the right to register their communities. That was an important event: the ban period officially ended. However, the authorities sought opportunities to control Greek Catholics, who were still deprived of guardianship. In one of his studies, a Canadian researcher B. Botciurkiw said that the party apparatus expected to take over the process of reviving the UGCC as much as possible, to stop the dynamics of the Greek Catholic movement, to minimize the 'losses' of the Russian Orthodox Church, and separate Greek Catholics from the National Democratic Movement, while using bureaucratic red tape when registering communities.³⁹

It was important for the authorities to set apart the faithful from the anti-Soviet movement, however for Greek Catholics at that time, Church and national-political problems were organically intertwined. Ivan Gel said about this combination of the religious and the national: *I was almost the first to realize that the combination of the struggle for the legalization of the Church with the struggle for the state has surprisingly important results: we had the widest social base because the Liturgy and active rallies afterwards gathered the largest number of people. Potential participants hesitated whether to attend a political rally or not, but they did not hesitate to attend the Liturgy with a rally*.⁴⁰ It should also be noted that there were many dissidents and political prisoners among the activists of the movement for the legalization of the UGCC. In particular, Yaroslav Lesiv, twice convicted of anti-Soviet activities, became a member of the Committee and at the end of 1988 was ordained a priest; Stepan Khmara, a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, known as the coordinator of the hunger strike; Nikolai Muratov, a Russian human rights defender, became the official representative of the Committee in Moscow, it was in his apartment that press conferences were held with Western journalists, they were participants of the hunger strike.⁴¹ It should be said that some representatives of the Greek-Catholic clergy sometimes expressed a cautious attitude to the cooperation with political actors. Thus, Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, while blessing the activities of the UCU Protection Committee, warned the participants against excessive politicization.⁴²

³⁸ "Slovo papi ĭvana Pavla ĭĭ vigołošene do vladik učasnikiv VI Zvičajnogo Sinodu 5 žovtnâ 1989 roku," *Visti z Rimu*, no. 10 (1989), p. 3.

³⁹ B. Bociurkiw, "Ukraiński Kościół katolicki w ZSSR za Gorbaczowa," *Więź* no. 11-12 (1991), pp. 150-171.

⁴⁰ ĭ. Gel', "Bogdan Kotik buv...", p. 91.

⁴¹ *Muratov Mikola Fedorovič*, at <http://museum.khpg.org/1301922214>, 15 April 2022.

⁴² Ā. Gul'ko, V. Sterniuk, "Šob nihto ne viddav zlom na zlo," *Lúdina i svit*, no. 4 (1991), pp. 14-19.

Although Greek Catholics were not satisfied with the statement of November 20, 1989 about the registration of their communities, the restoration of Church infrastructure began at the end of 1989. The parish network was formed by existing communities' emerging from the underground, forming the new ones, and transferring parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church to the jurisdiction of Greek Catholic Bishops. Thus, according to official statistics, as of January 1, 1990, 298 communities were registered, and a year later (January 1, 1991) they were 2001. However, it should be said that Greek Catholic communities were practically absent outside four western Ukrainian regions (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and Transcarpathians).⁴³

Greek Catholic priests also came out of the underground, and the Orthodox clergy joined the ranks of the UGCC. An important factor in strengthening the leadership and establishing the legal hierarchical structure of the Church was the invitation of the underground bishops to visit the Pope in Rome on June 25-26, 1990. As a canonical consequence of the trip, all secretly ordained Greek Catholic bishops were included in the lists of bishops of the Catholic Church in 1991. Finally, on March 30, 1991, the head of the UGCC, Myroslav Ivan Lubachyovsky, arrived in Ukraine, what completed the restoration of the Church structure.⁴⁴

As early as 1990, the Theological Seminary in Lviv resumed its activity, with over 300 candidates expressing a desire to enroll.⁴⁵ Seminaries in Ivano-Frankivsk, Drohobych and Ternopil also started teaching. Seminarians from Ukraine were allowed to travel to the West and receive higher spiritual education.⁴⁶ Along with theological schools, male and female monastic communities returned to normal life, regaining the premises of former monasteries from the authorities. In Lviv, in January 1990, the local authorities returned the monastery of St. Onufriy to the Basilian nuns and monks.⁴⁷ It was symbolic for Greek Catholics to get back the Arch-Cathedral of St. Yura in Lviv. On August 12, 1990, Greek Catholics, desperate after months of waiting for an official decision from the authorities of the Republic, marched in thousands to the walls of the cathedral and forced officials to transfer it to the UGCC. A week later, on August 19, the first solemn Episcopal Liturgy was served there.⁴⁸

It should be said that the process of reviving the UGCC was taking place in the context of an acute interfaith conflict. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church

⁴³ O. Krivenko, "Z točki zoru cifr," *Postup*, no. 5 (1991), p. 4.

⁴⁴ "Promova patriârha Mirosława Ĺvana (Ĺbubačivs'kogo) na uročistomu mitingu bilâ Opernogo teatru u Ĺvovi," *Cerkovnij visnik*, 21 April 1991, p. 13.

⁴⁵ The interview with rev. Yaroslav Chuhnij, 9.V.2000, Lviv. The Interviewer O. Zarichynska, AICH, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 38b, ark. 5.

⁴⁶ S. Keleher, "Out of the Catacombs: The Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine," *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 19, no. 3-4 (1991), p. 263.

⁴⁷ The interview with rev. Mykola Kostjuk, 12.II.1993, Stryj. The Interviewer B. Gudziak, AICH, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 358, ark. 74.

⁴⁸ *Sobor Sv. Ūra. 22 sičnâ...*, pp. 127-129; The interview with Ihor Kalynets, 17.IX.1997, Lviv. The Interviewer L. Kupchyk, AICH, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 737, ark. 32.

still accuse Greek Catholics of *conquering three Orthodox dioceses*.⁴⁹ In 1990, several meetings were held, which were attended by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the UGCC. However, the escalation of the conflict could not be stopped, as Greek Catholics demanded to recognize the non-canonicity of the Lviv pseudo-Council of 1946 and return all the property of the UGCC⁵⁰ whereas the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church accused Greek Catholics of extremism and seizure of Orthodox churches.⁵¹

In fact, the opposition vector was a slightly more complex. At the end of 1990 and in 1991, the issue of negotiations between the UGCC and the Russian Orthodox Church subsided, since, according to the commissioners' reports, in the three regions of Western Ukraine the main disputes over churches were between the communities of the UGCC and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (resumed in 1989). In particular, in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, at the end of August 1990, 381 communities of the UGCC, 304 of the UAOC and only 27 of the UOC were active.⁵² In March 1991, the executive committee of the Tysmenitsya district was informed about the conflicts arose exclusively between the faithful of the UAOC and the UGCC.⁵³ The same conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of community registrations in the regions at the beginning of 1991: the vast majority of 'the divided' localities consisted of supporters of Autocephaly and Greek Catholicism.⁵⁴ Local authorities, already democratic at that time, offered to resolve disputes over churches by transferring them to the use of the majority community, and the minority community was given the right to use them according to the principle of an alternation.⁵⁵ That did not solve the conflict. According to approximate statistics in 1990, only in the Lviv region in over 800 localities, religious communities clashed with each other over the right to use existing churches.⁵⁶ In the times of independent Ukraine, the inter-Church conflict gradually ended, though.

The UGCC, illegal in the USSR for over forty years, did not recognize its own liquidation. After creating an effective underground structure in Ukraine and with the support of the Ukrainian Diaspora, the UGCC declared its refusal of the non-canonical

⁴⁹ "Kolonka redaktora," *Patriârhat*, no. 3 (2016), at <http://www.patriyarkhat.org.ua/statti-zhurnalu/kolonka-redaktora-22>, 15 April 2022.

⁵⁰ "Zaâva êpiskopatu Ukraïns'koï Greko-Katolic'koï Cerkvi v Ukraïni v spravi peregovoriv Čotiristoronn'oi komisii pro vidnosini miž greko-katolikami i pravoslavnymi," *Lenins'ka molod'*, 22 March 1990, p. 4.

⁵¹ "Zaâvlenie Svâshennogo Sinoda Moskovskogo Patriarhata ot 10.04.1990," *Žurnal Moskovskoj Patriarhii*, no. 7 (1990), pp. 14-15.

⁵² DAIFO, fr-388, op. 2, spr. 220, ark. 49.

⁵³ Ibid., spr. 230, ark. 57-58.

⁵⁴ Ibid., spr. 235, ark. 6-10; DALO, fr-221, op. 3, spr. 1247, ark. 232-237.

⁵⁵ "Pro religijni konfesii na L'vivsinî. Rišennâ L'vivs'koï oblasnoï Radi narodnih deputativ," *Vil'na Ukraïna*, 6 May 1990, p. 1.

⁵⁶ S. Boruc'kij, *Deržava. Cerkva. Lûdina. Deržavno-cerkovni ta mižkonfesijni vidnosini u dzerkali sučasnosti 1992-2002*, Lviv 2003, pp. 22-26.

decisions of the Lviv pseudo-Council of 1946 and the repressive policy of the Soviet government. The most favorable time for developing the movement for the legalization of the UGCC was the second half of the 1980s, known as the time of Gorbachov's perestroika in the history of the USSR, when in almost all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, forces and developments were directed against the hegemony of the USSR and communist ideology. It was at that time the UGCC created an organization with the task of achieving the legalization. In 1988-1989, a large number of the UGCC believers were no longer afraid and began to attend services and demonstrations organized by the UGCC Committee and clergy in parks, squares, in front of closed churches, etc. Western politicians and diplomats began to receive alternative information about the situation of believers in the USSR, contradicting Soviet officials, who continued to claim there was no such Church. In the end, the most significant support for Greek Catholics came from Pope John Paul II, who demanded from the beginning of his pontificate that the Soviet authorities ensure the right to freedom of religion for Greek Catholics. It is symbolic that the authorities allowed the UGCC to register its communities right before his meeting with M. Gorbachov.

This was only the beginning, however, because Greek Catholics faced many problems related to the restoration of normal ecclesiastic life. At the same time, it should be noted that the revival took place against the background of a rather complex inter-Church conflict in the western regions of Ukraine. It is obvious that the underground period was a difficult test for the UGCC, but at the same time, that experience enabled the dynamic development of the Church in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

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