

## Pro Deo et Patria: The Greek Catholic Church and Ukrainian National Life - Past and Present

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# PRO DEO ET PATRIA: THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND UKRAINIAN NATIONAL LIFE – PAST AND PRESENT

BRETT R. MCCAW<sup>1</sup>

In the early months of 2014, global attention turned to the streets of Kyiv as the most pressing crisis in post-Soviet Ukraine unraveled in the course of weeks. What originated as an incidental political protest against president Viktor Yanukovich's last minute renegeing of a long-awaited European Association agreement, soon developed into a mass movement on Kyiv's Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) with ramifications for the entire country. As tensions escalated between protestors and riot police, stirring images of Ukrainian priests in the midst of such confrontations offered Western audiences a noteworthy paradox of the formerly atheistic Soviet republic's strikingly religious civil society.

Once considered as the USSR's equivalent 'Bible Belt,'<sup>2</sup> Ukraine is one of the most religiously pluralistic, if at times confusing, countries in Europe. Though predominated by Eastern Orthodoxy, of which there are three different churches (Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate UOC-MP, Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate UOC-KP, and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church UAOC); Ukraine also has sizable Protestant and Catholic minorities. Yet among the most remarkable and dynamic of religious institutions in post-Soviet Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) maintains a pride of place. As an institution that lies on Christendom's traditional fault line between

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2. SERHII PLOKHY, *THE LAST EMPIRE: THE FINAL DAYS OF THE SOVIET UNION* 286 (2014).

Byzantium and Rome, the UGCC embraces an Orthodox liturgical tradition and ecclesial structure while remaining loyal to the Holy See of Rome. With around five million members in Ukraine and around the world, it is the largest of the Eastern Catholic Churches. As one of the foremost victims of Stalinist repression, the UGCC nonetheless became a primary symbol of silent resistance to the Soviet regime only to re-emerge from its catacombs in 1989 and epitomize newly-independent Ukraine's religious *risorgimento*.

Yet, beyond its 20<sup>th</sup> century experience, the UGCC's connection to national consciousness goes back centuries. Ever dependent on the historical contingencies related to the seemingly endless re-tracing of geopolitical borders of Eastern and Central Europe from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the UGCC has subsequently forged for itself an intensely close bond to the identity and fate of the Ukrainian people. On account of this, it is goal of this paper to more closely consider the privileged role of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church within the development of Ukrainian national consciousness throughout its history, so as to better understand its continued impact within contemporary Ukrainian national life. Namely, how a Church that makes up no more than 10% of Ukraine's contemporary population can still maintain its role as the nation's foremost 'repository of national culture and memory'.<sup>3</sup>

In asserting its Byzantine Christian identity, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, along with the Russian and other Ukrainian Orthodox churches, traces its roots to the original Kyivan Church—first established with the 'Baptism of Rus' at the behest of the leader of the Kyiv-Rus principality, prince Vladimir in 988. With the eventual absorption of much of Kyiv-Rus' territory into the predominantly Roman Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the end of the 14th century and the gradual rise of Muscovy to the east in the 16th century, the Church of Kyiv gradually lost prominence and went into significant institutional decay in the subsequent centuries. The social and religious tumult of the 16th century posed both significant challenges and opportunities for the bishops of the Kyivan (or 'Ruthenian') Church. In the century following the fall of Constantinople in 1453—an event that stood as the effective de-capitation of the Byzantine Orthodox world, the Church of Kyiv was in dire straits with a decrepit institutional structure, intellectually and morally backward clergy, and a lack of effective resources for reform.<sup>4</sup>

As aftershocks of the Protestant Reformation ruminated across the continent, a strong appeal of Calvinism among Polish-Lithuanian elites as well as the aggressive Catholic counter-offensive led by the Jesuits, most

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3. George Weigel, *Troubles in Ukraine*, NAT'L REV. ONLINE (May 26, 2010), <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/229829/troubles-ukraine-george-weigel>.

4. BORYS A. GUDZIAK, CRISIS AND REFORM: THE KYIVAN METROPOLITANATE, THE PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE, AND THE GENESIS OF THE UNION OF BREST 63-65 (2001).

notably the Polish Fr. Piotr Skarga SJ, confronted the Kyivan Bishops with the existential dilemma of either losing the mass of their uneducated lower clergy and flock to Protestantism or eventually being entirely over-run by the forces of counter-reformation Catholicism, which implied a full-scale incorporation into the Latin-rite Church of the Poles.<sup>5</sup> Desirous to secure the future for their Church as well as duly impressed by the vitality of Counter-Reformation Catholicism in the West, the Bishops of the Kyivan Church, along with authorities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, entered into the Union of Brest (1595) which subsequently confirmed their Church's full communion with the Pope of Rome.<sup>6</sup> While promising obedience to the Roman See, the Brest Union nevertheless allowed the Kyivan Church to maintain its Eastern Christian tradition in such practices as married clergy, preservation of distinctive Eastern liturgical ritual, equality with the Latin Church, and the establishment of its own institutions.<sup>7</sup>

While there were expectations for improved political status from the union with Rome, the lot of the Kyivan (or 'Ruthenian') Church did not improve under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Despite a formal blessing from Rome, neither Polish elites nor Polish ecclesial leadership had any intention of raising the dignity of the Ruthenian Church as co-equal with that of the Polish Roman Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> With the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th century, the Ruthenian Church would be split between newly-acquired Austrian and Russian territories. The partition in particular would determine the religious geography and development of what would become known as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church to the present. For the Ruthenian Church on Russian territory, Czarist authorities enacted waves of forced conversions to Russian Orthodoxy that eventually snuffed out eastern-rite Catholicism on its territory. Fierce animosity toward 'Uniate apostasy' on the part of Russian civil and ecclesial leaders as well as suspicion of the Uniate Church as an obstacle to effective Russification of the population motivated such repressions.<sup>9</sup>

However, the experience of the Ruthenian Church within the Austrian crownland was quite the opposite. The period of Austrian rule was a significant turning point for the Ruthenian Church and, by extension, what

5. *Id.* at 79-85.

6. *Id.* at 233-235.

7. *Articles of the Union of Brest* (Articles 9; 3,4,6, 22; 12, 16, 30; & 27 respectively), in BORYS A. GUDZIAK, *CRISIS AND REFORM: THE KYIVAN METROPOLITANATE, THE PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE, AND THE GENESIS OF THE UNION OF BREST* 63-65 (2001).

8. BARBARA SKINNER *WESTERN FRONT OF THE EASTERN CHURCH: UNIATE AND ORTHODOX CONFLICT IN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POLAND, UKRAINE, BELARUS, AND RUSSIA* 32 (2009).

9. BOHDAN R. BOCIURKIW, *THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SOVIET STATE* (1939-1950) 4 (1996). The term 'Uniate' is frequently used within Russian Orthodox circles to denote those Eastern Christians that follow the 'union' with Rome. For many Ukrainian Greek Catholics, it is considered a derogatory term. *Id.*

would become the nascent Ukrainian national movement. In contrast to the Poles, the Austrian government officially recognized the Ruthenian Church as equal in status with the Latin Church of the Austrians and the Poles—granting its contemporary nomenclature ‘Greek Catholic Church’ (*Griechisch Katolische Kirche*) to imply such equality.<sup>10</sup> Vienna’s favorable disposition toward the Greek Catholics was part and parcel with further reforms to improve the welfare of Ukrainians in general—such as, most notably, the emancipation of Serfdom in 1848.<sup>11</sup>

Of all of these reforms relating to the Church, the systematization of theological education for Greek Catholic Clergy proved to be most consequential. Priests who would have ordinarily received informal education from their fathers (the practice of married priesthood often made the clerical life a hereditary profession),<sup>12</sup> now became beneficiaries of Austrian education at seminaries located in Vienna and Lemberg (L’viv) established by the Habsburg government specifically for the formation of Greek Catholic clergy.<sup>13</sup> Greek Catholic clergy soon emerged, along with their families, as the first example of an educated elite class within the overwhelmingly landed, peasant Ruthenian (previous ethnic nomenclature of Ukrainian) community.<sup>14</sup> In addition to their pastoral duties, new generations of classically educated Greek Catholic clergy assumed the roles of educator, ethnic historian, social worker, and political activist—thus becoming some of the first initiators of the Ukrainian national movement in the mid-19th century.<sup>15</sup> These Greek Catholic clergy and their families by extension would remain as the educated elites within Eastern Galicia until the end of the 19th century after which the explicitly clerical influence within the national movement would recede and make way for a national movement that was more secular, if not at times, anti-clerical.<sup>16</sup> Despite this, the Ukrainian national project at this time would maintain the former shadow of its clerical identity as many later secular activists were, ironically, children of clerical families.<sup>17</sup>

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10. John-Paul Himka, *The Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Nation in Galicia, in RELIGIOUS COMPROMISE, POLITICAL SALVATION: THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NATION-BUILDING IN EASTERN EUROPE* 9 (John-Paul Himka, James T. Flynn & James Niessen eds., 1993).

11. *Id.* at 11.

12. SKINNER, *supra* note 8, at 65.

13. Wolfdieter Bihl, *Sheptyts'kyi and the Austrian Government, in MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 16 (Paul R. Magoosi ed., 1989).

14. John-Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867-1900*, Montreal: McGill-Queens U. Press 116 (1999).

15. Himka, *supra* note 10, at 10.

16. ANDRII KRAWCHUK, *CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ETHICS IN UKRAINE: THE LEGACY OF ANDREI SHEPTYTSKY* 21-22 (1997).

17. John-Paul, Himka, *Sheptyts'kyi and the Ukrainian National Movement before 1914, in MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 35 (Paul R. Magoosi

The pinnacle of the Greek Catholic Church's contribution to the Ukrainian national movement came in the remarkable life and work of Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky (1865-1944), who led the Church from 1901 to 1944. Born Roman Alexander Maria Sheptytsky on July 29, 1865 into an aristocratic, Polonized family with Ukrainian roots, young Sheptytsky first sought careers in the Austro-Hungarian army and later Law in accord with his father's wishes. However, despite being baptized as a Roman Catholic, Sheptytsky later decided to join the Greek Catholic Church of his ancestry and subsequently commit his life to the advocacy and spiritual care of the disadvantaged Ukrainian population.<sup>18</sup>

In late 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish aristocratic society, such a decision did not come without a price. Despite the fact that the Sheptytsky line was a prominent clerical family that produced four bishops of the Greek Catholic Church throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; young Roman's decision was deemed as nothing short of a gross abdication of social status and betrayal of his inherited Polish identity—accusations that would continue throughout and after his life.<sup>19</sup> Joining the Greek Catholic Basilian order and taking the monastic name of 'Andriy,' Sheptytsky would have nothing short of a meteoric rise in the Church hierarchy—culminating in his elevation as Metropolitan Archbishop of L'viv in 1901, thereby becoming the de-facto head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church by age thirty-six.<sup>20</sup> Sheptytsky would lead his Church through the very tumultuous, early decades of the twentieth century until his death in 1944.

A church leader with a rare combination of intellectual acuity, profound spirituality, and boundless energy; Sheptytsky's legacy for both the Ukrainian national movement as well as his own Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church are both indisputable as well as irreplaceable. Taking the administrative reins upon his elevation as Metropolitan of L'viv, Sheptytsky immediately invested in the institutional structure of his church for the improved pastoral care to better serve the needs of the expanding size of Greek Catholic population in Eastern Galicia at the turn of the century. Along with his focus on the spiritual needs of his flock, Sheptytsky was also a primary proponent of education—not only in establishing schools and reading rooms in peasant villages throughout eastern Galicia, but also lending support for the establishment of the first Ukrainian-language university in L'viv.<sup>21</sup> In 1928, Sheptytsky would

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ed.,1989).

18. For best biographical sketch on Sheptytsky's early life see CYRIL KOROLEVSKY, METROPOLITAN ANDREW (1865-1944) (Serge Keleher trans.,1993).

19. KRAWCHUK, *supra* note 16, at xv.

20. Bihl, *supra* note 13, at 18.

21. Ann Slusarczuk,, *Sheptyts'kyi in Education and Philanthropy*, in MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI 274 (Paul R. Magocsi ed.,1989).

establish the L'viv Theological Academy, an institution that was the first of its kind as the only Ukrainian-language institution of higher education.<sup>22</sup>

Sheptytsky's devoted fidelity to the Papacy, yet emphasis on the importance of his church's Byzantine, Kyivan patrimony helped to solidify the Ukrainian Greek Catholic identity as both fully 'Catholic' as well as 'Eastern'.<sup>23</sup> In so doing, Sheptytsky helped to mediate decades-old conflicts between 'Latinizing' and 'Easternizing' pressures that had been long present among Greek Catholics.<sup>24</sup> Sheptytsky's encouragement of a Byzantine revival among Greek Catholics at the time also extended to his conciliatory attitude with the Orthodox. Despite historical enmity between them, Sheptytsky sought to affirm commonality between the Orthodox and Greek Catholics with the ultimate hope of achieving ecclesial unity.<sup>25</sup> On account of this, Sheptytsky frequently stressed that Greek Catholic leaders have a continual mission of reconciliation with the Orthodox.<sup>26</sup> Anticipating the Second Vatican Council by almost five decades, Sheptytsky's approach would gain him the reputation among many as a pioneer of Catholic-Orthodox ecumenism.<sup>27</sup>

Sheptytsky's philanthropic efforts were unparalleled for the cause of Ukrainian national development—charitable assistance that spanned from the patronization of the fine arts within Ukraine (establishment of one of the first National Museums of Art in Ukraine)<sup>28</sup> to the social support of the poorest within society. An early and enthusiastic proponent of Pope Leo XIII's social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1893), Sheptytsky sought out ways to implement the newly-articulated Papal teaching within the social and political framework of Austro-Hungarian Galicia at the turn of the century.<sup>29</sup> Given the economic status of the majority of Greek Catholics under his care, Sheptytsky's implementation of the newly-articulated Papal teaching often took on concretized, pragmatic forms such as the establishment of farm cooperatives and credit unions that helped to alleviate the many pressures of poverty for the landed peasant class.<sup>30</sup>

22. SEMINARY, ACADEMY, UNIVERSITY: THE HISTORY OF THE FOUNDING, *Institute of Church History – Ukrainian Catholic University* (L'viv), <<http://www.ichistory.org/Itax/english/sction1.html>>.

23. Victor Pospishil, *Sheptytskyi and Liturgical Reform*, in *MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 201, 214, 219 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., 1989).

24. Himka, *supra* note 14, at 146.

25. Lubomyr Husar, *Sheptyts'kyi and Ecumenism*, in *Sheptytsky and Ecumenism*, in *MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 188, 194 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., 1989).

26. METROPOLIT ANDREY SHEPTYTSKYJ, *JAK BUDUVATY RIDNU KHATU* 39 (L'viv: Vydanytsvo 'Herdan' ed., 2003).

27. Husar, *supra* note 25, at 196.

28. Myroslava Mudrak, *Sheptyts'kyi as Patron of the Arts*, in *MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 290 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., 1989).

29. KRAWCHUK, *supra* note 16, at 3.

30. *Id.* at 17.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 would stand as a hiatus for Sheptytsky's leadership as he would be arrested and forcibly exiled to Russia by the occupying Czarist army, only to return to Ukraine by 1917. Despite regaining his freedom, the conclusion of the war would pose daunting challenges. Most immediate concerns involved the immense devastation and poverty in war-torn Galicia, which required even greater philanthropic dedication. Along with providing assistance from his own family assets, Sheptytsky used the occasion of his international pastoral visits to Ukrainian communities in Western Europe and North America to gather relief funds on behalf of war-wearied Galicia.<sup>31</sup> Particularly pressing was the large number of orphaned children left in the war's wake—an issue to which Sheptytsky drew significant attention during his international visits to North America following the war.<sup>32</sup>

The subsequent redrawing of the geo-political map at war's end in accord with the mandate of the Versailles agreement would pose longer-term political challenges. With the absorption of formerly Austrian Galicia into the newly-sovereign Second Polish Republic, the UGCC had no choice to cooperate with a Polish government that was less than sympathetic to its institutional status and generally hostile toward the Ukrainian national movement.<sup>33</sup> Having regained their long-desired national sovereignty, Polish authorities maintained a seriousness about nation-building that left little room for the expression of ethno-national minority groups, most especially Ukrainians, within Poland's newly-defined borders. Moreover, interwar Polish-Ukrainian relations did not have the greatest of beginnings. In the immediacy of the war's end by 1918, Ukrainian nationalists asserted their own national determination and established the Western Ukrainian People's Republic on the Eastern half of Galicia—territory that was claimed by the Second Polish Republic. A brief, but inflammatory 8-month long war ensued from November 1918 to July 1919. Sheptytsky, as Ukrainian Greek Catholic Metropolitan of L'viv, supported the cause of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic and often appealed to the Wilsonian concept of national self-determination as grounds for international recognition of Ukrainian sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless by July of 1919, the

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31. Sirka, *supra* note 21, at 277.

32. A handwritten letter dated January 30, 1922 from Sheptytsky to Fr. Pomyatshyn, a Ukrainian Greek Catholic pastor in Chicago. After his visit to the Ukrainian Community in Chicago, Sheptytsky thanked the priest for his assistance in gathering funds on behalf of orphans in Galicia “. . . Once more I thank you for your efforts with church collections, I received \$2,534. 83 for the orphansFalse” (Access to the letter provided courtesy of the Ukrainian National Museum of Chicago (IL)).

33. Ryszard Torzecki, *Sheptyts'kyi and Polish Society, in MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 76 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., 1989).

34. Bohdan Budorowycz, *Sheptytsky and the Ukrainian National Movement after 1914, in MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 50 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., 1989).



weakened and poorly organized Western Ukrainian army would surrender to the Poles.

Despite his advocacy for Ukrainian determination, Sheptytsky also recognized the necessity of constructive cooperation with Polish authorities.<sup>35</sup> Such cooperation was far from easy as many within Polish society maintained strong suspicion not only on account of Sheptytsky's perceived betrayal to his inherited Polish identity, but also due to his increasing political stature within the Ukrainian national movement in the inter-war years.<sup>36</sup> In lieu of the general absence of such charismatic authority within the Ukrainian national movement in the inter-war years, as well as the sharp diminishment of Ukrainian governmental representation, Sheptytsky emerged as the de-facto 'Ethnarch' of the Ukrainian nation within Poland during the interwar years—a role that he accepted reluctantly and exercised with corresponding prudence.<sup>37</sup> While stridently advocating for the rights and dignities of the Ukrainian ethnic community against the often times draconic measures of Polish authorities, Sheptytsky also resolutely condemned several Ukrainian nationalist groups in their use of violent methods in carrying out their political aims.<sup>38</sup> Sheptytsky's advocacy was not limited to Greek Catholics either. When Polish authorities confiscated Ukrainian Orthodox Churches and forcibly converted local Orthodox populations to Roman Catholicism as part of a broader campaign of Polish nationalization among Ukrainian minorities throughout the 1930's (*Pacyfikacja*), Sheptytsky vigorously condemned governmental actions as religious persecution.<sup>39</sup>

Though no stranger to opposition and challenge, Sheptytsky's greatest hardships would come in the final years of his life amid the turmoil of yet another continental war. With the initial outbreak of World War II in September of 1939, Eastern Galicia would be ceded to the Soviet Union on the basis of the secretive Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Having unleashed an unrelenting campaign against religion on Soviet Russian territory decades before, Soviet authorities were no less eager to root out religious influences within the newly-acquired territory. While the Greek Catholic Church was able to maintain its de-facto legal status, Soviet authorities carried out aggressive policies against the Church by banning Catholic religious education as well as related civic and youth organizations.<sup>40</sup> Greek Catholic clergy were subject to crippling taxation with many priests arrested on

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35. Torzecki, *supra* note 33, at 87-92.

36. *Id.* at 80.

37. Budorowycz, *supra* note 34, at 66.

38. *Id.* at 56-57.

39. Krawchuk, *supra* note 16, at 132-133.

40. Bodhan Bociurkiw, *Sheptytsky and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church under Soviet Occupation*, in *MORALITY AND REALITY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ANDREI SHEPTYTS'KYI* 102 (Paul R. Magocsi ed., Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies 1989).

charges of ‘social parasitism’.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, NKVD operatives (predecessor organ to the KGB) conducted secretive interrogations on select Greek Catholic clergymen with the hope of gaining informants against the Greek Catholic hierarchy.<sup>42</sup> Knowing that most of what he had spent his life building would likely meet destruction under the Soviets, Sheptytsky wrote to Pope Pius XII, requesting the Pope’s blessing for him to die as a “martyr and confessor” for the Catholic faith, presuming Soviet persecutions would become absolute.<sup>43</sup>

The initial Soviet occupation of Eastern Galicia would be short-lived as by late June of 1941, the German army would capture L’viv and eastern Galicia as result as part of its full-scale invasion of the Soviet Union otherwise known as *Operation Barbarossa*. While a good deal of Ukrainian populace would initially greet the arrival of Wehrmacht troops as a welcome relief from prior Soviet oppression, the veneer of German benevolence toward Ukrainians would soon evaporate into terror. Remarking in a personal letter to the French prefect of the Congregation of Eastern Churches, Eugene Cardinal Tisserant, Sheptytsky described Nazism as “‘diabolical’” likening it to “‘a pack of raving wolves fallen on a poor people.’”<sup>44</sup> In addition to instances of instantaneous violence inflicted upon the general population, Hitler’s “‘final solution’” would target eastern Galicia’s significant Jewish community, which was one of the largest concentrations in Europe. Sheptytsky, who had long cultivated in Jewish culture and the Hebrew language, made significant efforts at opening churches, monasteries, even his own residence to Jews seeking protection from roving SS police. In his pastoral letter *Thou Shall not Kill (Ne Ubyj)*, Sheptytsky stridently and openly condemned Nazi atrocities against the local population—something a majority of church hierarchs throughout Europe were unwilling to do at the time.<sup>45</sup> Sheptytsky’s leadership through the three, very dark years of German occupation has also been marked by seeming contradiction. Despite heroic efforts at protecting the local Jewish community (as well as his own) from the German terror, Sheptytsky’s welcome of German occupation in June 1941 as well as his assignment of Greek Catholic chaplains for the Waffen-SS ‘Galizien’ unit would stand as truly compromising moments. While such gestures are comprehensible in view of the population’s hellish experience under the previous Soviet occupation, they would nonetheless serve as the pretenses for more expansive accusations regarding Sheptytsky’s ‘fascist collaboration’ from

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41. *Id.* at 112.

42. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 9, at 55.

43. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 40, at 104.

44. Excerpt of Letter Found in Serge Keleher, *PASSION AND RESURRECTION: THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SOVIET UKRAINE, 1939-1989* 36 (L’viv: Stauropegion 1993).

45. Text of Andriy Sheptytsky “Ne Ubyj: Pastyrs’ke Poslannja Metropolita Andreja Sheptytskoho” (21 November 1942) <[http://www.cerkva.od.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=1](http://www.cerkva.od.ua/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=146&Itemid=1)>

Soviet authorities.<sup>46</sup> By 1944, Soviet forces re-occupied L'viv and remained, as the modern borders of Ukraine would be determined under the directives from the Yalta conference (1945). With ever-weakening health, Sheptytsky died on November 1 of 1944 predicting on his deathbed not only the mass-destruction of his Church under Soviet domination, but its eventual revitalization.<sup>47</sup>

Sheptytsky was succeeded by his coadjutor bishop and the rector of the L'viv Theological Seminary, Josyf Slipyj (1892-1984). Slipyj assumed leadership as the Greek Catholic Church faced the particularly precarious future of functioning under permanent Soviet authority. Yet despite aggressiveness toward the Greek Catholic Church during its first occupation (1939-1941), Soviet authorities were surprisingly conciliatory in the first year and a half of 're-occupation'.<sup>48</sup> Though under the seeming pretenses of tolerance, Soviet secret police assembled purportedly incriminating evidence against Greek Catholic clergy and hierarchy (including the late-Metropolitan Sheptytsky), in order to accuse of collaboration with Nazi-crimes.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, authorities were also busy in the creation of a clerical initiative that would officially break alliance with the Papacy and effectively merge what remained of the Greek Catholic Church with the state-controlled Russian Orthodox Church—Moscow Patriarchate. Though brutally repressed from the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church was rehabilitated in 1943 under Stalin's orders in the hope of galvanizing Russian patriotism and morale amid the war.<sup>50</sup> The NKVD-run clergy commission steadily gained priest-signatories, mostly through methods of coercion by way of threats as well as torture.<sup>51</sup>

By mid-1945, Soviet authorities launched sweeping arrests of all Greek Catholic bishops along with Metropolitan Slipyj on drummed-up charges of fascist-collaboration.<sup>52</sup> While some bishops faced immediate execution, others, like Slipyj, were sentenced to several years of forced labor in Siberian exile—where many would eventually perish. In the face of torture and death, not one Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishop renounced his loyalties to the Holy See nor signed onto state-imposed Orthodoxy. Having effectively decapitated the Church's hierarchy, Soviet authorities proceeded

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46. See Keleher, *supra* note 44, at 42. Russophile and Soviet-backed Ukrainian journalist Yaroslav Galan published the article "With Cross or Knife?" which accused Sheptytsky and Ukrainian Greek Catholic clergy of collaboration with the Nazis. The first major accusation of Sheptytsky following his death.

47. Ivan Patriyliak, *Andrey Sheptytsky, Lion of Halychyna*, THE UKRAINIAN WEEK (May 10, 2011), <http://ukrainianweek.com/History/22266>.

48. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 9, at 78.

49. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 40, at 115.

50. Nathaniel Davis, *A LONG WALK TO CHURCH: A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY* 17-18 (Westview Press 2nd ed. 2003).

51. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 9, at 142.

52. *Id.* at 114, 162.

to organize an official ‘Council’ held in L’viv’s historic St. George’s Greek Catholic Cathedral whereby the leadership of its clergy initiative, purporting to speak on behalf of the entire Greek Catholic Church, formally rejected the decisions of the 1596 Union of Brest, renounced loyalties to Rome, and ‘returned’ to the ‘Holy Orthodox faith.’<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, as none of the Greek Catholic Bishops were present in the ratification of the council, the L’viv Sobor was nonetheless canonically invalid.<sup>54</sup>

Immediately following the conclusion of the L’viv Council in 1946, Soviet authorities would implement plans for the full illegalization and liquidation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. A plan, according to historian Bohdan Bociurkiw, that was not only determined by Soviet authorities at the very beginning of the war in 1939, but a characteristically Czarist policy going back to Catherine the Great.<sup>55</sup> As all of the Greek Catholic bishops had already been forcibly removed through either exiled imprisonment or execution; all that remained was to fully implement the newly-formed union by forcing the signatures of the remaining priests and religious who had previously resisted signing. Priests who refused to sign ordinarily faced the certainties of additional interrogation and torture, imprisonment, exile, and threats of immediate or eventual execution.<sup>56</sup> The sweeping events of 1946 would thus begin the long, bitter road of persecution for both clergy and faithful, who would remain suppressed on Ukrainian territory for the next 43 years. The Stalinist years from 1946 to 1953 would prove the most brutal as the Ukrainian Church would produce, in terms of ratio of size, more martyrs than any other local church in the 20th century.<sup>57</sup> In his apostolic visit to Ukraine in 2001, Pope John Paul II would beatify twenty-six martyrs from this period. Nonetheless, the total victims from western Ukraine during this time are estimated well into the thousands.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the ferocity of the Stalinist years, the life of the Church as well as its leadership would endure in Ukraine, if only faintly in the underground. In the face of aggressive repression, there was nonetheless a small minority of clergymen who had refused to sign-over loyalties to Moscow and somehow had managed to escape immediate prosecution by authorities. Many of these were monastics as well as other clerics who had made the decision to continue clandestine activities to serve the Church in the underground at great risk to themselves.<sup>59</sup>

53. *Id.* at 170.

54. *Id.* at 181.

55. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 9, at 102.

56. *Id.* at 199.

57. John L. Allen, *A Church with Verve is at Risk in Ukraine*, CRUX: COVERING ALL THINGS CATHOLIC (Sept. 13, 2014), <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2014/09/13/a-church-with-verve-is-at-risk-in-ukraine>.

58. *Id.*

59. Bociurkiw, *supra* note 9, at 190-191.

Stalin's death in 1953 followed by the relaxation of totalitarian repression under Nikita Krushchev's leadership inadvertently provided the conditions for the underground Greek Catholic Church to gain more 'breathing room' to function. While no friend of religion, Krushchev eagerly sought opportunities to overturn the effects of Stalin's misanthropic "cult of personality", thereby making reforms that would make life generally more bearable for all Soviet citizens.<sup>60</sup> Krushchev nevertheless maintained a strident anti-religious policy, which took particular aim at the state-controlled Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>61</sup> As increasing numbers of Russian Orthodox parishes were closed throughout western Ukraine (most of which were Greek Catholic prior to 1946), state-imposed Orthodoxy became a less viable alternative to illegalized Greek Catholicism. This factor, especially combined with the return of many amnestied Greek Catholic clergymen to western Ukraine from their terms of exiled forced labor, ironically encouraged the continued growth and development of the underground Greek Catholic Church—in what would soon become the largest movement of social opposition in the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

After his arrest in 1945, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj (1892-1984) went on to survive the USSR's morbid network of GULAG camps for almost eighteen years. In January 1963, on the basis of an agreement brokered between John F. Kennedy, Pope John XXIII, and Nikita Krushchev related to the easing of tensions of the Cuban missile crisis during the previous year,<sup>63</sup> Slipyj was released from the Soviet prison system on the condition that he would remain in exile, never to return to his episcopal see in Ukraine again.<sup>64</sup> By the time of his release, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic hierarchy had been reduced to two surviving bishops (including Slipyj and Bp. Ivan Sleziuk, underground bishop of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine).<sup>65</sup> With the extinction of the UGCC's underground episcopacy as an ever-looming possibility, Slipyj secretly consecrated (Blessed) Fr. Vasyl Velychovsky (1903-1973) in his room of the Hotel Moskva in Moscow, just moments before leaving the Soviet Union indefinitely for Rome—giving Velychovsky explicit instruction to consecrate more bishops for the survival of the underground church.<sup>66</sup> Arriving in Rome in early 1963, Slipyj would

60. Nikita Krushchev, Speech to 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the C.P.S.U. (Feb. 24-25, 1956), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>.

61. Davis, *supra* note 50, at 35-36.

62. Keleher, *supra* note 44, at 70.

63. For best account of the negotiations leading to Josyf Slipyj's release, see Norman Cousins, *THE IMPROBABLE TRIUMVIRATE: AN ASTERISK TO THE HISTORY OF A HOPEFUL YEAR, 1962-1963* (New York: Norton & Co. 1972).

64. Karim Schelkens, *Vatican Diplomacy After the Cuban Missile Crisis: New Light on the Release of Joseph Slipyj*, 97 *4 The Catholic Historical Rev.* 778-779 (Oct. 2011).

65. Ekspozitsija Instytutu Istorii Tserkvy, *Katakombna Tserkv: Struktura UGCC*, <http://www.ichistory.org/ukrsite/churchex/church19.html>.

66. John Sianchuk C.Ss.R, *Blessed Vasyl Velychovsky, C.Ss.R – Father of the Underground Church in Ukraine*, in *OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON RELIGION IN EASTERN EUROPE* 43 (Vol. XXXIV

participate in the remaining sessions of the Second Vatican Council. Amid Western curiosity concerning his release, Slipyj's biography would soon serve as the inspiration for Morris West's 1968 film, *In the Shoes of the Fisherman*.

Exhausted from the traumas of the Soviet prison system, both Soviet as well as Vatican curial officials likely expected Slipyj to live out his remaining years in the silent convalescence of some Roman 'seminary.'<sup>67</sup> Those expectations, however, were soon disappointed as Slipyj assiduously set about the task of building up his church in exile, preserving its identity, and advocating for its rights until his death in 1984. In the immediate years after his arrival in Rome, Slipyj established the Ukrainian Catholic University in 1963 and completed the construction of Saint Sofia Cathedral in 1968 on land purchased on the outskirts of Rome (Via Boccea). Saint Sofia would become the de-facto mother-church in-exile for Ukrainian Greek Catholics as well as a temporary cultural and institutional center for the global diaspora. Slipyj's university in Rome, established as an exiled successor to Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky's L'viv Theological Academy, which was closed by Soviet authorities in 1945, would serve as the proto-type for the establishment of L'viv's Ukrainian Catholic University in 1994.

Though he was sworn to silence concerning his own experience in the GULAG, Slipyj took opportunities to speak to the broader Church and Western world concerning the life of the UGCC in the underground. Such was the case in his 1981 lecture entitled, "The Church of the Martyrs" delivered at an event organized by the German international charity, 'Aid to the Church in Need.'<sup>68</sup> In his address, Slipyj went into significant detail in describing the underground church's clandestine house liturgies, cellar-ordinations, and hidden monastic communities.<sup>69</sup> While Slipyj's advocacy for his flock behind the Iron Curtain was effective in disseminating to the West greater information regarding Soviet persecution, his most undoubted contribution involved the consolidation of the UGCC as a unified institution spread across the global Ukrainian diaspora. Due to sizable waves of Ukrainian emigration beginning in the late 19th century up through the Second World War, Ukrainian Greek Catholicism had become more or less an international phenomenon with several independent Metropolia and Eparchies (Dioceses) spread across North America, Western Europe, and Australia.

By Slipyj's release in 1963, however, the canonical structure of the UGCC outside of Ukraine remained somewhat unclear. While Slipyj was

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No. 4, Aug. 2014).

67. Cousins, *supra* note 63, at 50.

68. Kardinal Josyf Slipyj, *Kirche Der Maertyrer*, ECHO DER LIEBE - KIRCHE IN NOT OSTPRIESTERHILFE 2 (Maerz 1981).

69. *Id.* at 8-10.

recognized in the eyes of Rome as the rightful ‘Metropolitan Archbishop of L’viv,’ such authority did not necessarily extend to individual bishops and eparchies in the international diaspora. Moreover, as Slipyj was indefinitely exiled from his canonical territory (L’viv, Ukraine), the extent to his authority among Ukrainian Greek Catholics throughout the world remained even more ambiguous. Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops of the global diaspora fell instead under the authority of the Pontifical Congregation for Oriental Churches, one of nine Roman dicasteries, which dealt directly with contacts between the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Holy See. Intimately aware of how close his church had come to outright extinction on Soviet territory as well as the more subtle threats of gradual secularization, assimilation, and marginalization of Ukrainian Greek Catholics in the West, Slipyj sought to ensure the survival of the Church through the establishment of the Ukrainian Church as a patriarchate under his and his successors’ authority.<sup>70</sup> While it is beyond the scope or competence of this paper to go into the depths regarding the full significance of a patriarchal church within Eastern ecclesiology it is worth noting that patriarchal status grants the fullest expression of ecclesial self-governance and that such churches, in the words of Vatican II, have “full right and are in duty bound to rule themselvesFalse. . .”<sup>71</sup> In such case, Slipyj’s insistence on the elevation of the Ukrainian Church to patriarchate would at least ensure his ability to provide proper pastoral care for the millions of Ukrainian Greek Catholics throughout the world.

Slipyj’s most essential structural reform would be the establishment of the synod of bishops for the UGCC, which organized Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops into one, ecclesial, governing body under patriarchal leadership. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian synod would not be approved until 1980 with the blessing of Pope John Paul II, who was particularly sympathetic to Slipyj’s aims.<sup>72</sup> Beyond mere structural reforms, Slipyj’s leadership played an acute role in uniting both Ukrainian Greek Catholic faithful as well as the broader Ukrainian diaspora community throughout the world. Far from remaining a prisoner of the Vatican, Slipyj made frequent international visits to the Ukrainian diaspora throughout Western Europe, North and South America, and Australia.

Much of Slipyj’s work came into clear conflict with the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik* policies at the time, which sought ecumenical rapprochement with the Russian Orthodox Church along with improved diplomatic

70. *A New Reality in Our Church*, PATRIARCHATE 1975, <<http://www.patriyarkhat.org.ua/stat-ti-zhurnal/a-new-reality-in-our-church>>.

71. Pope Paul VI, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum (Decree on the Eastern Churches)*, 5 (Nov. 21, 1964), *available at* [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_orientalium-ecclesiarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_orientalium-ecclesiarum_en.html).

72. George Weigel, *WITNESS TO HOPE: THE BIOGRAPHY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II* 370 (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).

relations with the Kremlin. This new ‘eastern policy’ owed much of its designs to the work of Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, a veteran Vatican diplomat who would go on to serve as Vatican Secretary of State under Pope John Paul II. Breaking with the Vatican’s stalwart opposition to the Soviet Union that was epitomized by the papacy of Pius XII, the *Ostpolitik* proscribed far more conciliatory gestures toward the Soviet Union with the significant aim of easing pressure on Catholics within the eastern bloc as was especially the case for suppressed local churches in Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Utterly concerned about the future viability of Catholicism amid unbearable conditions of state oppression, Cardinal Casaroli considered it necessary for the Church to arrive at a conciliatory ‘modus vivendi’ with local Communist governments so as to ‘save what could be saved’ and thus ensure the continuation of the Church’s life in the proceeding years.<sup>73</sup>

As the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine had already been formally liquidated by the Kremlin in 1946, there was really nothing left for the *Ostpolitik* policies to save in such case. Soviet authorities continued to insist that the UGCC had simply ceased to exist as an institution. In light of this, some of Paul VI’s decisions with regard to improving relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, such as his agreement to allow Ukrainian Greek Catholics without churches of their own to receive Holy Communion in Russian Orthodox churches, seemed only to give implicit agreement to Moscow’s aforementioned assertions.<sup>74</sup> Given the specific context, Slipyj’s persistent advocacy on behalf of the persecuted UGCC only served to reveal the mendacity of Soviet leadership and the perilous naïveté of the Vatican.

Not surprisingly, Slipyj’s activism also put Pope Paul VI into the difficult situation between offering solidarity with the beleaguered Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and pursuing normalized relations with Moscow. Paul VI, a conscientious as well as conflicted leader, sought to recognize Slipyj’s service to the Church by making him a cardinal in the 1965 consistory—making public what had already been decided ‘in pectore’ by Pope Pius XII in 1949.<sup>75</sup> However, in 1971, Paul VI refused to grant Slipyj’s request in establishing the UGCC as a patriarchate and instead granted Slipyj the title of “Major Archbishop,” a manufactured title that had neither significance within Eastern Ecclesiology nor precedence within the Latin Church. Exasperated with the Vatican’s response during Paul VI’s reign, Slipyj continued his work yet not without vocalizing his frustrations even to the point of declaring leadership within the Vatican Curia to be “‘blinded and lead by Russian Communists,’” who with the

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73. George Weigel, *THE END AND THE BEGINNING: POPE JOHN PAUL II – THE VICTORY OF FREEDOM, THE LAST YEARS, THE LEGACY* 62 (Image 2010).

74. *Id.* at 181.

75. Weigel, *supra* note 72, at 240.



Kremlin desired “the complete and fast disappearance of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from the earth.”<sup>76</sup>

With the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978, attitudes would change within the Vatican regarding the Ukrainian Church and Josyf Slipyj, in particular. As the first Slav to assume the papacy and more importantly, one who came of age as a young priest and bishop under the iron fist of Communism in his native Poland, John Paul II bore an acute understanding of and sympathy toward the fate of the Ukrainian Church and its beleaguered leadership. Moreover, despite his intense Polish patriotism, the pope did not seem to be prone to the traditional chauvinism against Ukrainians that was fairly common among his fellow clergymen in Poland.<sup>77</sup> John Paul II’s sympathies toward the UGCC would become visibly apparent almost immediately, such as the case in the Pope’s official meeting with Slipyj on November 20, 1978, less than a month after his papal inauguration.<sup>78</sup>

A particularly consequential gesture would come with John Paul II’s official letter to Slipyj in March of 1979, whereby he invited the Ukrainian prelate along with his faithful to prepare for the millennium celebration of the baptism of Kyiv-Rus’ in 1988.<sup>79</sup> Beyond mere ‘well-wishing,’ John Paul II was keenly aware of the significance and power that such a commemoration could have. Having participated as a young bishop in Cardinal Wyszynski’s *Great Novena* in the nine years leading up to Poland’s own millennial celebrations in 1966, John Paul II witnessed first-hand the unique historical opportunity for reclaiming a genuinely Christian past over and against the monotony of authoritarian Marxist rhetoric.<sup>80</sup> For the Pope, the issue of ‘1988’ not only provided the opportunity to remind eastern Slavs currently living under an atheistic regime of their Christian patrimony, but the particular occasion in which to raise the question of religious rights for the still-illegal UGCC.

The Pope’s 1979 letter to Slipyj also indicated the degree of his esteem for the UGCC—not only honoring the suffering of Greek Catholics under Soviet persecution, but explicitly lauding the ‘abundant fruit’ of the 1596 Union of Brest.<sup>81</sup> The latter point is particularly notable as it would indicate John Paul II’s regard of the UGCC as a genuine manifestation of ecumenical unity between East and West. Such a perspective is nonetheless strikingly at odds with a viewpoint that would otherwise deride the 1596 Union as the mere historical accident of ‘Uniatism’—a point held in

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76. Josyf Slipyj, *Vyslovi Patriarcha Josyfa - iz Poslan', Propovid', i Promov* (1984).

77. Weigel, *supra* note 73, at 274.

78. *Id.* at 93.

79. Pope John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness to Cardinal Joseph Slipyi for the Millenium of Christianity in Rus*, (Mar. 19, 1979), available at [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1979/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_19790616\\_1000-crist-rus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19790616_1000-crist-rus.html).

80. Weigel, *supra* note 72 at 204.

81. John Paul II, *supra* note 79, at ¶ 5.

common by both the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) as well as the Vatican's council for ecumenism as evidenced in the 1993 'Balamand Statement.'<sup>82</sup>

Josyf Slipyj died in 1984 at his residence in Rome and was buried in the crypt of St. Sophia's Cathedral, the exiled mother-church for Ukrainian Greek Catholics in Rome that he had commenced building two decades before. His remains would nonetheless be transferred back to L'viv and laid to rest in the crypt of St. George's Cathedral in 1992. Slipyj's contribution to the UGCC, especially amid its bleakest period of existence throughout the horrors of the twentieth century, was both invaluable and irreplaceable. His steadfast defense of the rights for his church as well as his role in building up its accompanying institutions undoubtedly provided an institutional foundation for the UGCC with which to take up the work of rebuilding the Church and related institutions in post-Soviet Ukraine less than a decade after his death. Slipyj was succeeded by Ivan Myroslav Lubachivsky, who previously served as the Ukrainian Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia. Lubachivsky fled western Ukraine as a young priest at the end of World War II, —eventually settling in the United States. Shortly after assuming leadership of the Ukrainian Church, he would be made Cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 1985 and would continue to lead the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in exile from Rome until eventually returning to L'viv in 1991.<sup>83</sup>

By the mid-1980's, the underground Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine had achieved relative stability as a clandestine network of bishops, priests, religious, and devoted laity that had not only survived its worst trials, but expanded despite its status of illegality. At the time of Archbishop Slipyj's release in 1963, the underground church was left with only two bishops (including Bishop Velychovsky, whom Slipyj secretly consecrated hours prior to his departure for Rome in 1963). By 1986, the Church had eight bishops in the underground<sup>84</sup> as well as administratively primitive, albeit functioning eparchies in both L'viv and Ivano-Frankivsk which sustained a network of pastoral care for lay faithful, strong contacts between religious order communities, and expanded opportunities for informal theological study for candidates to the priesthood.<sup>85</sup> The growing vitality of the

82. Catholic-Orthodox Joint International Commission, *Unitatism, Method of Union of the Past and the Present Search for Full-Communion* (June 23, 1993), available at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/ch\\_orthodox\\_docs/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_19930624\\_lebanon\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19930624_lebanon_en.html).

83. Institute of Church History, *Major Archbishop and Cardinal Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky* <http://www.ichistory.org/pages/guests/guests22.html>.

84. Institute of Church History, *Ekspozitsija Institutu Istorii Tserkvy Katakombna Tserkva – Struktura UGCC* <http://www.ichistory.org/ukrsite/churchex/church19.html>

85. Institute of Church History, *Exposition of the Institute of Church History – The Church of the Underground: 1956-1989 Bishops and Religious in the Underground* <http://www.ichistory.org/churchex/church12.html>.

underground Church was not limited only to the clerical hierarchy either. Beginning in the 1970's, dedicated lay activists began forming human rights groups that began articulating demands to Soviet authorities for the recognition of religious liberties as well as using the capabilities of *Samizdat* literature to circulate information to the West on state repression of the UGCC.<sup>86</sup>

Along with other dissident groups in the Soviet Union, the ascendancy of reformist Mikhail Gorbachev to Soviet leadership by 1985 brought a glimmer of hope for Ukrainian Greek Catholics. Although primarily aimed at increasing governmental transparency, Gorbachev's *Glasnost* reforms soon extended into the sector of freedom of press, media, and speech. Within the first two years of taking office, Gorbachev ended the imprisonment and exile of high-profile political dissidents, foremost among them the renowned physicist-turned-activist, Andrei Sakharov; eventually ending the GULAG system in its entirety by 1987.<sup>87</sup> While the UGCC was still a de-facto illegal religious body, Gorbachev's steady progression of liberalizing reforms paired with his effective 'de-fanging' of the Soviet penal apparatus further emboldened underground clergy and lay activists to become far more visible within society. By this time, the 1988 millennial celebrations in Ukraine provided opportunities for such visibility—such as the case when underground Greek Catholic bishop, Pavlo Vasylyk, celebrated an open-air liturgy for thousands of faithful in July 1988 in commemoration of the baptism of Kyiv-Rus' at the popular Marian shrine of Zarvanytsya in western Ukraine.<sup>88</sup> Similar open-air liturgies and processions would continue throughout western Ukraine in the subsequent months.<sup>89</sup>

While Communist authorities in Moscow and Kyiv would have preferred to conveniently forget the significance of 1988, the Roman pontiff made every effort to raise the commemorations to international and ecumenical importance. Throughout the 1980's, John Paul II made frequent reference to the 'gifts' of the Kyivan Christian tradition (of which the Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Greek Catholic churches are both heirs) as well as the contemporary sufferings of its adherents in the 20th century through apostolic letters (*Euntes in Mundum* (1988), *Magnum Baptismi Donum* (1988)), public addresses, liturgies, and even one encyclical (*Slavorum Apostoli*)(1985). For Papal biographer and author George Weigel, such persistence demonstrated the political deftness that allowed

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86. Ivan Hvat' "The Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Vatican, and the Soviet Union during the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II", *Religion in Communist Lands* vol. 2 no. 3 (winter 1983) p. 265.

87. Ronald Grigor Suny *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford University Press 2010) p 484.

88. "Photo Follow-Up: The Millennium in Zarvanytsya" *The Ukrainian Weekly* (Sunday, September 11, 1988) p. 8.

89. Serge Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection* p. 134.

Pope John Paul II to effectively protect the genuinely Christian significance of the 1988 commemorations from possible manipulation by Soviet authorities.<sup>90</sup> Capitalizing on a historic moment, John Paul II initiated correspondence with Mikhail Gorbachev in early June of 1988 through a hand-written letter in which the Pope invited the Soviet chairman to consider the possibility of closer diplomatic ties between the USSR and Holy See so as to better address the “situation of the Catholic Church in the USSR.”<sup>91</sup>

In the end, John Paul II's persistence would pay-off. On December 1, 1988, the Pope and the Soviet chairman would meet for the first time in the Vatican—the first and only encounter between a Pope and Soviet leader. While the meeting was characterized by mutual cordiality as well as exuberance for its implications, the Pope did not shy away from the issue of legalization for the underground UGCC.<sup>92</sup> While indirectly alluding to the UGCC in his formal address,<sup>93</sup> the Pope directly and adamantly asserted the need for religious liberty for Ukrainian Greek Catholics as well as others—reminding Gorbachev of past treaties and agreements in which the Soviet government had promised to secure such civil rights.<sup>94</sup> Within hours of the historic meeting, the head of the Council for Religious Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, Mykola Kolesnyk, announced legal recognition of the UGCC.<sup>95</sup> If, as Gorbachev once asserted during a 1987 Soviet Central Committee meeting, that his liberalizing reforms set the Soviet machine on a trajectory of having “nowhere to retreat,” then granting legal recognition to the largest of its underground dissident organizations (not to mention churches) was an inevitable reality.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, the solicitude of Pope John Paul II must be credited in hastening such inevitability.

The final declaration of legal recognition for the UGCC's existence only lowered the proverbial ‘flood gate’ to what was already a steady re-appearance of the underground Church within western Ukraine. Along with this was the massive return of the local population to the Greek Catholic Church in western Ukraine most of whom were from families who were

90. George Weigel *Witness to Hope* p. 572.

91. Found in *Ibid* p 574 Letter dated 7 June 1988. Author George Weigel acquired the letter with the approval of then-Vatican secretary of State, Angelo Cardinal Sodano—the letter was subsequently translated from John Paul's original handwritten Italian to English.

92. *Ibid* pp 601-605.

93. Pope John Paul II *Speech of John Paul II to the President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mykhail Gorbachev* (1 December 1989) The Pope alludes to the situation of persecuted Greek Catholics: . . . it is well-known that many Catholic communities are today eagerly awaiting the opportunity of re-establishing themselves and of being able to rejoice in the leadership of their pastors. . . .”

94. Clyde Haberman “The Kremlin and The Vatican; Gorbachev Visits Pope at Vatican; Ties Are Forged” *The New York Times* (December 2, 1989).

95. Mykola Kolesnyk, *Zajava Rady V Spravakh Relihij Pry Radi Ministriv Ukrain's'koji RSR, I Patriarkhat* (229) Jan.1990, at 5.

96. Suny, *supra* note 87, at 48.

Greek Catholic prior to the UGCC's dissolution in 1946. Significant among this number of 're-verts' were many priests who had received theological education as well as ordination within the Russian Orthodox Church, but who nonetheless felt compelled to incardinate into the Greek Catholic Church.<sup>97</sup> Despite the fact that the Kremlin may have acquiesced to the demands for legal status of the Greek Catholic Church, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox-Moscow Patriarchate did not. The re-emergence of the underground Church paired with the mass return of the majority of church-going western Ukrainians to Greek Catholicism raised the question of property ownership. As the significant majority of the functioning 'Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox Churches' in western Ukraine were previously Greek Catholic, the UGCC understandably insisted on the return of its churches. From the Greek Catholic perspective, the Kremlin's concession to legally recognize the UGCC, however good, was essentially a moot point without any reference to the return of assets that were liquidated by the Soviet government four decades prior. The leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate strongly objected to any such suggestion and had obvious reasons for doing so. Not only were fifty percent of all Russian Orthodox parishes throughout the USSR registered in Ukraine as a whole,<sup>98</sup> western Ukraine had one of the highest levels of religious adherence among all Soviet countries.<sup>99</sup>

Throughout 1990, bitter conflicts ensued throughout western Ukraine as Greek Catholic and Orthodox faithful contested such ownership rights. One of the most notable cases involved the return of L'viv's St. George's Cathedral, the historic mother-church of the UGCC since the 18th century, in August of 1990. Despite the fact that Greek Catholics had gained property rights for the cathedral compound from L'viv municipal and regional authorities, Russian Orthodox Bishop Andrei Horak refused to forfeit the Cathedral—resulting in a mass demonstration of over 30,000 Greek Catholics on St. George's hill to reclaim the territory.<sup>100</sup> Bishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, the underground Greek Catholic bishop of L'viv, intervened to urge the demonstrators to be peaceful in their efforts that would eventually succeed in re-acquiring the Cathedral.<sup>101</sup>

The Russian Orthodox-Greek Catholic conflicts also bore ecumenical implications outside of Ukraine as well—inciting the Vatican to initiate special meetings in Moscow with Russian Orthodox leadership to negotiate terms of resolution.<sup>102</sup> While the bitterest of conflicts over church-property

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97. Serge Keleher, *supra* note 44, at 160.

98. Frank Sysyn "The Ukrainian Orthodox Question in the USSR" 11 *Religion in Communist Lands* 3, 252 (1983).

99. Linda Feldman, "Ukraine's Clash of Faiths" *CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR* (Sept. 5, 1990) <http://www.csmonitor.com/1990/0905/dlvov.html>.

100. *Id.*

101. Keleher, *supra* note 44, at 176-179.

102. Michael Hirsley, "Cardinal, Patriarch Discuss Catholic Orthodox Dispute," *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* (Aug. 30, 1990).

rights would eventually somewhat subside, enmity between the Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches would not. In the perspective of the Moscow Patriarchate, the UGCC's reclamation of its church properties in western Ukraine would constitute the first of continuing infringements upon its canonical territory.

On March 30, 1991, the UGCC's exiled head, Ivan Myroslav Cardinal Lubachivsky, returned to Ukraine and took permanent residence in the country. In a moving ceremony the following day, Lubachivsky officially took possession of St. George's Cathedral in L'viv.<sup>103</sup> Despite his shy and retiring demeanor, Lubachivsky would nonetheless take on the gargantuan task of building-up the Church's extremely primitive infrastructure as well as defining its role within the post-Soviet political order of independent Ukraine. In 1992, Lubachivsky organized and lead the first synod of Greek Catholic bishops on Ukrainian territory and by 1994, had established four new eparchies within the country.<sup>104</sup> Along with providing the necessary administrative structure to the Church, there was the question of vocations to the priesthood, which posed both tremendous opportunity as well as challenge. While the number of seminarian candidates dramatically swelled (Lubachivsky reported there were over one thousand seminarians in Ukraine in a 1994 interview),<sup>105</sup> the Church had neither the logistics nor the personnel to train them.<sup>106</sup> In the absence of necessary funding to build new seminaries, bishops often resorted to purchasing abandoned Soviet-era schools and military barracks to house their students.<sup>107</sup> As formal theological education was a luxury unavailable to Soviet citizens, let alone for priests and religious in the underground, the Church was left to rely on international assistance from educated clergyman and academics from abroad, a majority of whom were from the Ukrainian diaspora, to lead the UGCC's fledgling social apostolates and institutions. Chief among these institutions was the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) in L'viv, which was founded in 1994 by Ukrainian-American historian, Borys Gudziak. Gudziak, who would be ordained a priest in 1998 and later consecrated a bishop in 2012, regarded the establishment of the university as a continuation of Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky's vision of a Ukrainian Greek Catholic institution of higher education and research.<sup>108</sup> Since its establishment, the Ukrainian Catholic University has maintained the pride

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103. *Patriarkhat* 6 (246) (June 1991) pp 5-6.

104. "Intervju Patriarkha Myroslava-Ivana dlja presy z nahody tretoji richnytsi povorotu v Ukrajinu" *Patriarkhat* 7-8(283-284) July-August 1994 p 4.

105. *Id.*

106. Interview with David Nazar SJ, Jesuit Provincial of Ukraine, in "Jesuit Voices (Apr. 29, 2008).

107. Interview with Lubomyr Cardinal Husar, (May 2014).

108. Borys Gudziak, Speech for the Inauguration of the Ukrainian Catholic University (June 26, 2002).

of place as the first and only Catholic University in the former Soviet Union.

Beyond rebuilding its structure and institutions, a no less important task for UGCC leadership involved defining the church's role within the post-Soviet political order. To that end, Cardinal Lubachivsky made efforts to both dialog as well as cooperate with presidential and parliamentary leadership in Kyiv—such as addressing Ukraine's parliament (Verkhovna Rada) in 1993 concerning the need to come to greater understanding of the nature of the Church's distinct independence from governmental authority.<sup>109</sup> Given the Soviet legacy of church-state relations—a paradigm that was undoubtedly engrained in the mentalities of secular and church authorities alike, such efforts of engagement between both sides proved necessary. The idea of an independent church outside of the customary, regulatory controls of the state was something to which many state bureaucrats who had come of age in the Communist system, were unaccustomed. Likewise, for many clergymen of the same generation who lived through the Church's 'defensive crouch' of underground existence, the idea of a pro-active church on the 'public square' proved equally foreign. As Lubomyr Cardinal Husar would later put it, the first decade(s) of the UGCC's existence in post-Soviet Ukraine would involve the Church and State simply “‘getting used to one another.’”<sup>110</sup>

Intensified social engagement within post-Soviet Ukrainian society would characterize the leadership of Lubomyr Husar, who would succeed Lubachivsky as head of the Church in 2001. Though born in L'viv in 1933, Husar's family would flee Ukraine and eventually settle in the United States where he would be ordained a priest. After serving as a parish priest as well as an academic theologian, Husar entered the Studite monastic order in Rome as well as collaborated with the then-exiled church head, Josyf Cardinal Slipyj. Following the Soviet dissolution, Husar permanently took up residence in Ukraine in 1993 until his elevation as head of the church.<sup>111</sup> Known for his deeply reflective wisdom, simplicity, and personal candor; Husar became well-respected throughout Ukraine and abroad.<sup>112</sup>

A firm advocate of ecumenism, Husar sought out opportunities for improved relations with Ukraine's Orthodox communities—even proposing the somewhat controversial idea that the UGCC maintain 'dual communion' between Rome and Constantinople.<sup>113</sup> Strongly encouraging of

109. Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky “Slovo Patrijarkha Myroslava-Ivana Do Narodnikh Deputativ Verkhovnoji Rady Ukrainy” *Patriarkhat* 9(49) September 1991.

110. Husar, *supra* note 107.

111. Borys Gudziak, “Foreword” in Antoine Arjakovsky, *Conversations with Lubomyr Husar* (2007) 7-9, 12-14.

112. American journalist and Vatican expert John Allen slotted Cardinal Husar as a top ‘Papabile’ in his 2002 *Conclave: The Politics, Personalities, and Process of the Next Papal Election* (Image 2002) 231 pgs.

113. “Orthodox Leader Suggests “dual unity” for Eastern Catholics” *Catholic World News*

post-Soviet Ukraine's democracy-building efforts, Husar did not shy away from leveling acute criticism regarding the many dysfunctions within post-Communist society—even admitting one time that it would take generations formed (and maltreated) within the Communist system to eventually 'die out' before any genuine renewal were to take place.<sup>114</sup> Under Husar's leadership, the UGCC continued its remarkable growth and development within the country—not only reclaiming predominance within its traditional heartland of western Ukraine, but also experiencing marked growth throughout the entirety of the country.

In accord with Metropolitan Andriy Sheptytsky's vision, UGCC leadership established missionary exarchates in the eastern and southern oblasts of Ukraine (Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odessa, Crimea) by the early 2000's—territory that, despite the preponderance of Orthodoxy, had borne the effects of Soviet atheism considerably more so than in the west of the country. The development of the UGCC within these regions also coincided with the Ukrainian Synod of Bishops' decision to move the seat of the UGCC from L'viv to Kyiv in 2004—beginning the construction of the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Resurrection that was to be located on Kyiv's left bank along the historic Dniper river.<sup>115</sup> Such decisions did not come without controversy. In a 2003 interview for the Italian publication *30 Giorni*, Metropolitan Kyrill Gundjaev of Smolensk (later elected as Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2008), decried the moves as 'expansionist' and accused the UGCC of attempting to revive "an ecclesiology of the time of the Crusades."<sup>116</sup> The Holy Synod of the Russian Church took Kyrill's accusation one step further by accusing the Vatican of a "strategic intention of expansion" into traditional Orthodox territory.<sup>117</sup> Husar defended the UGCC's decision on both historical as well as pastoral grounds—citing that Kyiv had once served as the center of Greek Catholic life prior to its suppression under the Czarist government and that increased numbers of Ukrainian Greek Catholic faithful living in Central and Eastern Ukraine, largely due to Soviet-era forced relocations, required greater pastoral accessibility for UGCC leadership.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless the continued development of the UGCC would further exacerbate the already frayed relations with the Russian Orthodox Church and eventually emerge as an

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(June 19, 2008).

114. John Allen "Throwing one more red hat into the (unofficial) papal race" *Word from Rome – National Catholic Reporter* Vol. 1 No. 9 (October 21, 2001).

115. Lubomyr Husar "Khochemo Baczyty Sobor" *Patriarkhat* 6(379) November-December 2003.

116. Gianni Valente "Hope Remains: Interview with Kirill Gundjaev, Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad" *30Giorni* Vol. 9 – 2003.

117. Sandro Magister "Tra Roma e Mosca ora si Combatte anche in Crimea" *Espresso – La Chiesa* (August 2, 2002).

118. Gianni Valente "Our Mission with a Deadline (Interview with Lubomyr Cardinal Husar)" *30 Giorni* no. 11 2003.



ineluctable sticking point in broader Rome-Moscow relations in the following years.

Despite mounting tensions with the Russian Orthodox, Cardinal Husar had gained a respect across Ukraine that was unparalleled by any other Church leader in the country.<sup>119</sup> In particular, the events surrounding the 2004-2005 ‘Orange Revolution’ provided a unique manifestation of such moral authority. As outrage sparked the country due to election fraud, Husar along with the rest of UGCC hierarchy vocally asserted that faithful had the moral and civic obligation to expect fair and honest procedures from state authorities. At the same time, however, UGCC hierarchy (and clergy) strictly abstained from offering endorsements of any candidate or political party.<sup>120</sup> As thousands of citizens gathered on Kyiv’s Independence Square to vocalize their demands for an official recount, Greek Catholic clergy were among the most visible religious representatives who accompanied demonstrators. The eventual victory of the western-leaning Viktor Yushchenko stood as a favorable moment for the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine as Yushchenko was particularly well-disposed toward the work of the church in post-Soviet society—most particularly in the example of L’viv’s Ukrainian Catholic University.<sup>121</sup>

Though considered as a victory in the cause of democratic process, the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 also revealed the latent complexities within Ukraine’s political and religious landscape. In the run-up to the elections in 2004, Viktor Yanukovych received the official endorsement of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate, whose clergy also accompanied smaller, counter-protests on Kyiv’s city square.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, the religious overlay of what had long been understood as Ukraine’s political cleavage between ‘east’ and ‘west’ demonstrated stark, albeit, unsurprising correlations. As the western-leaning Viktor Yushchenko received his highest approval from oblasts in western Ukraine with the highest proportion of Greek Catholics per population, Viktor Yanukovych maintained the majority of his support in the far eastern regions of the country, predominated by the Moscow Patriarchate Church.

With the possibility of being perceived as a politically partisan institution, UGCC hierarchy faced a delicate balancing act of maintaining an active presence within the ‘public square’ while at the same time fastidiously upholding its political neutrality. For a country where the state’s co-optation of the church was considered ‘business as usual,’ such a

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119. Borys Gudziak “Foreword” in Antoine Arjakovsky *Conversations with Lubomyr Cardinal Husar: Toward a Post-Confessional Christianity* (L’viv: Ukrainian Catholic University Press 2007) p. 15.

120. Ibid pg. 135.

121. “Ukraine’s president visits Ukrainian Catholic University in L’viv” *Ukrainian Catholic University – News* (3 June 2009) <<http://ucu.edu.ua/eng/news/176/>>.

122. “Yanukovych Has Moscow Patriarchate On His Side” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Vol. 1 Issue 127 (November 14, 2004).

task was easier said than done. Yet for Husar, it was precisely the necessity to undo such ‘totalitarian’ mentality that dictated the UGCC’s rules of engagement in the post-Soviet context. For Husar, the Church bore an explicit obligation to encourage virtue and excoriate vice within the political realm, but could not trivialize itself as a mere instrument of the state through potentially compromising political alliances.<sup>123</sup> Such qualifications would nonetheless be important in the proceeding years.

Due to a variety of factors, not least the pressures of the global financial crisis in 2008, Yushchenko’s ‘Orange’ political coalition would eventually dissolve, leaving his European-style political and economic reforms stillborn. Out of clear disappointment with Yushchenko’s failed attempts at westernization, Yushchenko’s 2004 challenger, Viktor Yanukovych, made significant political gains on a platform that stressed a return to stability and centralization. The election of Viktor Yanukovych to the presidency in early 2010 began the eventual deterioration in relations between the UGCC and the Ukrainian government. By May of 2010, Fr. Borys Gudziak, the rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University of L’viv reported a shake-down from agents of the Ukrainian Security Services (SBU—Sluzhba Bezpeka Ukrainy—the Ukrainian successor to the KGB) in an attempt to intimidate him into reigning-in student-led protests against the Yanukovych government.<sup>124</sup> Gudziak politely refused and shrewdly sent his memorandum of the encounter to editors of the *Economist* magazine, who published it in a later week’s edition. While international attention likely helped to foil coercive attempts in this case, such incident nonetheless stood as an early litmus test of the Yanukovych government’s willingness to resort to Soviet-style heavy-handedness when it felt necessary.

Within an atmosphere of mounting tension, the Ukrainian Synod of Bishops elected Sviatoslav Shevchuk as head of the UGCC in March of 2011 to succeed Lubomyr Cardinal Husar who resigned due to ailing health. At just forty years old at the time of his elevation, Shevchuk was the youngest bishop of the UGCC and one of the youngest senior clerics in the global Church. Born into a family that was active in the Soviet-era underground Church, Shevchuk was ordained to the priesthood in 1994.<sup>125</sup> He would later go on to attain his doctorate in Moral Theology from the Angelicum in Rome in 2000, becoming the first native-born Ukrainian Greek Catholic cleric to be awarded such a degree in the Church’s post-Soviet existence. Shevchuk was consecrated a bishop in 2009 and summarily appointed to administer the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Eparchy

123. Antoine Arjakovsky *Conversations With Lubomyr Cardinal Husar* p. 42.

124. “Ukraine: Spooked by Spooks” *Economist* May 23, 2010 <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/05/ukraine>>.

125. Athanasius McVay “The Church is Young” *Religious Information Service of Ukraine* March 31, 2011 <[http://risu.org.ua/article\\_print.php?id=41569&name=kaleido\\_digest&\\_lang=en&](http://risu.org.ua/article_print.php?id=41569&name=kaleido_digest&_lang=en&)>.

of Buenos Aires (Argentina), where he incidentally forged a strong friendship with then-Archbishop Jorge Cardinal Bergoglio. Considered as a dynamic pastor, a precocious scholar, and a gifted polyglot (Shevchuk is said to be fluent in six other languages in addition to his native Ukrainian); Shevchuk's elevation as head of the UGCC stood as a confirmation of his church's remarkable revitalization in the post-Soviet period.

While the relationship between the Yanukovich government and the UGCC would be relatively uneventful for Shevchuk's first years of leadership, the course of events by late 2013 and 2014 would bring about confrontation with state authorities to degrees not seen since the Soviet-era. On November 22, 2013, just a week before signing his long-promised European Association agreement, President Viktor Yanukovich, undoubtedly intimidated by the Moscow strong-arming, backed out of the agreement.<sup>126</sup> In protest, students of the Ukrainian Catholic University organized demonstrations in L'viv that would be soon followed-up by much larger student gatherings in Kyiv. Kyiv's Independence Square, known in Ukrainian as 'Maidan Nezalezhnosti' soon became known as the 'Euromaidan,' a title that eventually came to stand for the entire movement. Just a week after protests began, brutal beatings of student demonstrators at the hands of Ukrainian special police (BERKUT) ignited what had originated as a student movement into a nation-wide event that gripped the entire country. In the proceeding weeks, increasing numbers of citizens came by the thousands to Kyiv—eventually turning Independence Square into a semi-permanent stronghold of large, canvas field tents cordoned off by ad-hoc protective walls of street rubble and old tires. At the same time, the increasing willingness of government authorities to resort to reminiscently Soviet-style police crackdowns, intimidation tactics, secretive abductions, and even contracted killings,<sup>127</sup> made it ever more apparent that the civil struggle on Kyiv's streets constituted, in the words of Bishop Borys Gudziak, a "Maidan of Dignity" above all else.<sup>128</sup>

Much like the Orange Revolution before it, Greek Catholic clergymen were among the first and most visibly present religious leaders on the Maidan. While clergymen constructed make-shift chapels and could be seen mingled among protesters with their indicative stoles worn over heavy winter down jackets, religious observance frequently took center stage as priests and bishops punctuated time by corporate prayers, celebration of

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126. Ian Traynor "Russia Blackmailed Ukraine to Ditch EU pact" *The Guardian* (22 February 2013).

127. "Ukraine Police Tortured Me, Claims Mikhailo Niskoguz" *BBC News* (23 January 2014). \*Among numerous reports of beatings and torture at the hands of police and government-sponsored 'titushki' (hitmen), activist and L'viv resident Yury Verbitsky was found dead on 23 January 2014 on the outskirts of Kyiv with signs of extreme torture. Verbitsky was one of the first fatalities of the regime at this time.

128. "Ukraine Movement a "Maidan of Dignity" says Bishop" *Radio Vaticano* (January 25 2014) <<http://www.news.va/en/news/ukraine-movement-a-maidan-of-dignity-says-bishop>>.

Divine Liturgy, and the recitation of the Rosary. Yet far from being an exclusively religious movement, such traditional liturgical observances often shared the stage with political activists as well as contemporary Ukrainian rock and roll bands—making the Maidan an eclectic, albeit, seamless *mélange* of sacred and secular that was most likely initially jarring to most Western observers. While UGCC clergy were initially most vocal and pro-active, the Maidan very quickly became robustly ecumenical with the strong representation of Orthodox and Protestant clergyman as well. As heated stand-offs between demonstrators and police gradually evolved into more frequently violent, even fatal confrontations; clergymen willingly placed themselves among demonstrators, sometimes in the direct line of fire, to assume the role of impromptu peace-keepers.

The apparent ‘activism’ of UGCC clergy on the Maidan was not lost on the Yanukovych government. In early January of 2014, Major Archbishop Shevchuk received a letter from the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture threatening the repeal of the legal status of the UGCC if its clergy continued to lead public prayers outside of ‘designated’ areas for such religious observance.<sup>129</sup> For Church leaders and faithful alike, such a gesture evoked the disturbing memories of Ukraine’s Stalinist past—the legacy of which had never been fully extirpated even after two and a half decades of independence. Refusing to bend to state pressure, Shevchuk publicly urged state authorities to desist from such measures lest the “‘current socio-political crisis’” involve “‘the religious sphere as well.’”<sup>130</sup>

While successfully withstanding such pressures, the censure of the UGCC along the aforementioned grounds brought the concern of its alleged political partisanship once more into further attention. While strenuously defending the right of priests to “pray wherever his faithful are,” Archbishop Shevchuk nevertheless explained the UGCC’s role within the course of events with a sense of caution and balance.<sup>131</sup> Disabusing any notion that would associate the UGCC as a political ‘agent’ within the movement, Shevchuk asserted, along with Cardinal Husar a decade before him, that the Church’s priority remained in pastoral support of its faithful—emphasizing the striking image of the Church ‘following’ her people to the Maidan.<sup>132</sup> Deflecting the accusation that the UGCC’s activity within the Maidan had constituted part of a larger ethno-religious conflict of ‘Catholic West’ versus ‘Orthodox East,’ Shevchuk stressed the Church’s support of

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129. Sviatoslav Shevchuk “Statement of the Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) to the letter from the Ministry of Culture in Ukraine concerning possible grounds for terminating the activity of religious organizations of the UGCC” *Information Resource of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church* (15 January 2014).

130. *Ibid*

131. *Ibid*

132. Brett R. McCaw “A Preacher of Peace Amid Conflict: An Interview with His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church” *The Catholic News and World Report* (May 12, 2014).

the exclusively ‘civil’ nature of the Maidan, which was based upon universal values of liberty, human dignity, and disdain for corruption among other values.<sup>133</sup> Because the UGCC built its agenda on such values, it was better able to encourage and participate in a genuinely ecumenical social movement among different religious institutions throughout Ukraine, who worked together to contribute to Ukraine’s otherwise underdeveloped civil society.<sup>134</sup>

Following the ouster of president Yanukovich, UGCC leadership as well as that of Kyiv’s interim government would face the new challenge of what historian Timothy Snyder would term as Russia’s “‘Haze of Propaganda.’”<sup>135</sup> As Russian accusations of latent-fascism against the Maidan movement and the Kyiv interim-government became more commonplace, the UGCC was often implicated. In an early and prominent example, Vladimir Putin used the opportunity of a January 28, 2014 address in Brussels to blame the influence of ‘racist and anti-semitic Uniate priests’ for the upheaval in Kyiv.<sup>136</sup> Unfortunately, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) not only took the same position, but intensified the rhetoric. While the Russian Patriarch, Kyrill (Gundjaev) offered relatively few comments concerning the Ukrainian crisis, the majority of commentary has been left to Metropolitan Hilarion Alfaeyev, the head of the Department of External Church Relations for the Moscow Patriarchate. In an April 2014 interview, Hilarion went to the extent of accusing the UGCC of mounting a “‘crusade’” against Orthodoxy in Ukraine.<sup>137</sup> As an ecumenical participant in the Synod of Bishops on the Family held in October of 2014 at the Vatican, the Metropolitan used the occasion of his official address not only to deride the UGCC for its alleged political partisanship in Kyiv’s Maidan movement but even suggested that its very existence posed insurmountable obstacles to the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue.<sup>138</sup> Vatican officials offered no response to Hilarion’s charges that nonetheless indicated one of the lowest points in Rome-Moscow ecumenical relations since the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

133. Ibid

134. Ibid

135. see Timothy Snyder “Ukraine: Haze of Propaganda” *The New York Review of Books* March 1, 2014.

136. Oksana Grytsenko & Ian Traynor “Vladimir Putin Tells Brussels to Stay out of Ukraine’s Political Crisis” *The Guardian* (January 28, 2014).

137. Edward Pentin “The Pan-Orthodox Council, Ukraine Crisis, and Christian Unity” *National Catholic Register* (04/03/2014).

138. Hilarion Alfayev “GREETING ADDRESS BY METROPOLITAN HILARION OF VOLOKOLAMSK TO THE THIRD EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS ON PASTORAL CHALLENGES TO THE FAMILY IN THE CONTEXT OF EVANGELIZATION” *Department of External Church Relations – The Russian Orthodox Church*. (October 10, 2014) <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/10/16/news109624/> \*The metropolitan’s final assertion with regard to the UGCC, ‘Uniatism does not bring the Catholic and Orthodox Churches closer to one another; on the contrary, it divides us.’

In a far more immediate sense, the commentary of the Moscow Patriarchate is particularly disconcerting given the current status of the UGCC within both Russian-Annexed Crimea as well as the war-torn Donbas where Moscow-backed authorities have designated Russian Orthodoxy as the official religion. Following the annexation of the Crimean peninsula in March of 2014, there were several reported incidents of harassment against Greek Catholic clergy—including one abduction and interrogation of a Greek Catholic priest from Simferopol.<sup>139</sup> Beyond intimidation tactics, the UGCC faces paralyzing legal constraints on its very existence as self-proclaimed Crimean authorities required all religious bodies to re-register for legal protection according to Russian law by the end of 2014. As it is not an officially recognized religious body under Russian law, it was impossible for the UGCC to complete such re-registration thus making it a de-facto illegal religious body on the Crimean peninsula as of January 2015.<sup>140</sup>

While no such legal constraints have been enforced on UGCC churches within the separatist-backed regions of the Donbass (Donetsk and Luhansk) to date, far many more incidences of acute aggression against Greek Catholic Clergy, paired with the indiscriminate violence of warfare, have made the effects on the Church all the more devastating. Greek Catholic priests reported frequent threats, abductions, and in one case, torture at the hands of rebel fighters in the area.<sup>141</sup> The intensity of military conflict within the region over the past year, which has claimed more than 6,000 lives, eventually forced the current Greek Catholic Bishop of Donetsk, Stepan Meniok, to abandon his residence in Donetsk which, along with the Greek Catholic Cathedral and Chancery, were vandalized and looted by separatist fighters.<sup>142</sup>

Instances of harassment have not been directed solely toward Greek Catholics either as both Roman Catholic as well as Protestant communities within the region have reported significant instances of violent harassment over the past year. Archbishop Thomas Gullickson, the American-born Papal nuncio to Ukraine has been solicitous in drawing attention to the

139. Michael Miller “Unknown Assailants abduct Greek Catholic Priest in Sevastopol” *Catholic News and World Report* March 15, 2014 <[http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/3003/Unknown\\_assailants\\_abduct\\_GreekCatholic\\_priest\\_in\\_Sevastopol.aspx](http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Blog/3003/Unknown_assailants_abduct_GreekCatholic_priest_in_Sevastopol.aspx)>.

140. “Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church faces possible ban 25 years after legalization” *Vatican Radio* (December 13, 2014) <[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/12/13/ugcc\\_faces\\_possible\\_ban\\_25\\_years\\_after\\_legalization/1114651](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/12/13/ugcc_faces_possible_ban_25_years_after_legalization/1114651)>

141. Sviatoslav Shevchuk “Letter from His Beatitude Sviatoslav (Shevchuk), Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, on the very difficult situation in Ukraine” published in *Religious Information Service Ukraine* (August 21, 2014). <[http://risu.org.ua/article\\_print.php?id=57491&name=ugcc\\_doc&lang=en&](http://risu.org.ua/article_print.php?id=57491&name=ugcc_doc&lang=en&)>

142. Thomas Gullickson “Serving the Needs of the Church in Ukraine—Address to the Aid to the Church in Need” (25 September 2014) found on *Zenit* <<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/nunciato-to-ukraine-gives-overview-of-church-s-most-pressing-needs.>>

religious persecution over the past months. In Gullickson's estimation, the current pressures against Catholics in both Crimea as well as the Donbas place the future existence of Catholicism of both Latin and Greek rites into serious jeopardy in the coming years.<sup>143</sup> Given the relatively small population of both Roman and Ukrainian Greek Catholics within these regions, such concerns are not unwarranted. Whether or not there will be the opportunity to re-build Catholic communities in the Donbas in the years ahead, the task of rebuilding after the devastation wrought from the past year of warfare will easily require decades of work.

When taking into consideration its long-term as well as contemporary history, it is reasonable to say the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, like Ukraine, is at a significant 'crossroads' in its existence. Such is the case with regard to its own maturity and development as a church in the post-Soviet era. The remarkable recovery and renewal of the UGCC, an institution once doomed for annihilation, from its underground existence to its present-day status is nothing short of miraculous. The most telling sign of such Post-Soviet renewal can be found in the person of its current head, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, whose combination of intellectual, pastoral, and organizational dynamism paired with his relative youth will make the UGCC a force to be reckoned with both in Ukraine, as well as the broader Catholic Church. Presuming his reception of the Cardinalate within the next five years, Shevchuk would be on pace to emerge as one of the global Church's most senior clerics while still in his prime. In this regard, the UGCC has reached a point of development and stability unprecedented in its history.

The UGCC's contemporary development paired with the current confrontation between Russia and Ukraine has nonetheless brought the issue of Rome-Moscow ecumenical relations to the fore. The current discourse from the Russian Orthodox leadership, which considers the UGCC as an existential obstacle to further ecumenical relations, seems to have laid down an ultimatum. While Rome's acquiescence to Moscow's demands in the past may have kept such relations nominally afloat, it often came at the expense of the UGCC, which was often struggling for its existence. Nonetheless, the contemporary status and relative stability of the UGCC would make it far too formidable of an entity to ignore. It would seem therefore, that contemporary Rome-Moscow ecumenical relations, at least on the level of hierarchical leadership, have reached an indefinite impasse that is not likely to be moved in subsequent years.

Lastly, there is the question of the role of the UGCC within the national life of contemporary Ukraine. Long-term as well as recent history has only reiterated the Greek Catholic Church's closeness to the national aspirations of the Ukrainian people. As a mainline church, the UGCC still retains an

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143. Ibid

overwhelming moral authority within Ukrainian society that is otherwise unfathomable for the Church in other parts of Europe—a fact demonstrated in both the Orange Revolution and the Maidan movement respectively. Assuming Ukraine’s movement toward Europe is inevitable, it remains to be seen as to how the UGCC, despite its favorable legacy and youthful leadership, will encounter a European-style secularism that is both apathetic as well as traditionally anti-clerical. Such question shall nonetheless be for posterity to judge.