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The Ukrainian Orthodox Church's stance on the revolution and war

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Volodymyr (secular name Viktor Sabodan), the Metropolitan of Kyiv and All-Ukraine, the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which recognises the honorary primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate, died on 5 July 2014 at the age of 79. He was replaced by Metropolitan Onufry (secular name Orest Berezovsky), aged 70. The fact that this representative of the moderate trend, far from politics, was elected signifies that the UOC's previous policy will be continued in the coming years: strengthening the Church's independence without questioning its canonical bonds with Moscow. Metropolitan Onufry's task is to wait out the hard times, rather than to embark upon an active policy.

The political developments this year have significantly weakened pro-Russian views and sentiments among the Ukrainian public, including members of the UOC. On the other hand, they have also contributed to the radicalisation of views within firmly pro-Russian circles. The hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have distanced themselves from these developments. The reasons for this included a lack of unity among them as regards this issue, as well as the leadership crisis linked to Metropolitan Volodymyr's illness. The main problems the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is facing today are as follows: meeting the expectations of those of its members who hold patriotic views (mainly the younger generation) without at the same time antagonising its numerous members who are pro-Russian; and also continuing to disregard the Kyiv Patriarchate and maintaining bonds with the Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore, we may expect the UOC to continue avoiding taking a clear stance on the present conflict, instead focusing on charity.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church – basic information

Since the early 1990s Ukrainian Orthodoxy has been divided into two main branches: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is part of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and is recognised by the other Orthodox Churches, and the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, which is unrecognised by the Orthodox world. The latter branch represents a patriotic (at times nationalist) and anti-Russian approach, and has often become

openly involved in politics. In turn the former, often described with the addition of 'Moscow Patriarchate' (by its opponents) or defined as 'the canonical Church' (by its supporters) makes very infrequent and cautious statements concerning political issues, supports the Ukrainian state, and distances itself from nationalism and anti-Russian views. There is a rivalry between two factions within this Church: one would like closer bonds with Moscow (up to the patriarchal Exarchate status being reinstated) re-established, while the other wants total canonical independence (autocephaly).

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the only Orthodox Church in Ukraine to have been deemed canonically legal by the global Orthodox community. This means, for example, that only the sacraments administered by its priests are recognised as valid by other Orthodox Churches and other Churches participating in the ecumenical dialogue. Until 1990, this Church was a patriarchal Exarchate, being part of the Russian Orthodox Church, albeit with some autonomy. Since then it has been a fully independent Church as part of the ROC. It is headed by the metropolitan of Kyiv and All-Ukraine, who is elected independently by the bishops of Ukraine and is then blessed by the patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia. The metropolitan of Kyiv is a member of the Holy Synod of the ROC, and is the second most important official there after the patriarch of Moscow, which makes it difficult for the patriarch to take any steps against the UOC.

According to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's own calculations¹, at the beginning of 2013 it was formed of 51 eparchies (dioceses), 11,393 parishes, 291 monasteries and convents and 18 education facilities, including 4 with academic status (it is thus independent of Russian dioceses in this context). It had 73 bishops, 10,187 priests and 3,632 monks and nuns. The UOC's structures publish 82 newspapers and 40 magazines, host 18 radio and 40 TV shows, and run 349 websites. The estimated number of its lay members ranges between 6 and 9 million²; however, no reliable data is available (as with followers of other religions in Ukraine). The UOC has structures and followers all over the country, but mostly in the southern, eastern and central regions. In turn, the 'national' religions, i.e. the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (which also has significant influ-

ence in central Ukraine) and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church are predominant in western Ukraine. Thus the UOC has a clearly better organisational potential than its main competitor, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (29 eparchies, around 40 parishes and 40 bishops; no reliable data is available concerning the number of priests and Church members).

Onufry is non-partisan – he will seek reconciliation, although not unification, of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy. His task is not to make changes, but rather to wait out what is a difficult time for the Orthodox Church.

Furthermore, it also seriously contributes to the Russian Orthodox Church's potential, which has a total of 247 eparchies, around 31,000 parishes, 345 bishops and 29,000 priests.

Two opposing trends can be observed within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church: gaining autocephaly (full canonical independence from Moscow) and re-establishing closer bonds with the Moscow Patriarchate. The former trend is mostly supported by younger hierarchs, and the latter by representatives of the elder generation. In addition to these, there is a strong faction which wants to preserve the *status quo*. Metropolitan Volodymyr was the most prominent representative of this faction, and the new metropolitan, Onufry, also supports it. The 'autocephalous' or 'pro-Ukrainian' faction is headed by Metropolitan Sofronii of Cherkasy (secular name Dmytro Dmytruk, born in 1940); and one of the closest aides of the deceased Metropolitan Volodymyr, Metropolitan Alexander of Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky and Vyshneve (secular name Oleksandr Drabyenko, born in 1977). The pro-Moscow faction is led by Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa and Izmail (secular name Oleksiy Savvin, born in 1938) and Metropolitan Hilarion of Donetsk and Mariupol (secular name Dmytro Shukalo, born in 1951).

¹ Доклад митрополита Киевского и всея Украины Владимира на Архиерейском Соборе Русской Православной Церкви, www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2772214.html; accessed on 10 September 2014.

² Cf. Katarzyna Jarzyńska, 'Patriarch Kirill's game over Ukraine,' *OSW Commentary*, no. 144, 14 August 2014.

The change of the Church's leader

The death of Metropolitan Volodymyr was not a surprise; he had been seriously ill for two years, and he had not managed the Church, not even formally, as of February 2014. He was replaced by Metropolitan Onufry of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna as a 'guardian of the throne' (a deputy, *locum tenens*). On 13 August, he was elected metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine.

A great part of priests in the Donbas backed the separatists more or less openly. The remaining part of the UOC has refrained from supporting any of the sides, focusing instead on charity.

The new metropolitan was elected very quickly, on the first possible day (after 40 days of strict mourning), although the UOC's statute envisages a period of as much as three months for this procedure. This means that the balance of powers was clear, and that Metropolitan Onufry was initially approved as a candidate by the Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia, Kirill. However, the vote was not unanimous: 48 out of 74 bishops backed Onufry as a candidate during the secret ballot. Patriarch Kirill gave his blessing to him on the same day, thus approving the Ukrainian bishops' decision. The election of metropolitan Onufry, who is advanced in age, was expected. He was indicated by Metropolitan Volodymyr as his successor, he has earned respect as a monk and a priest, and he is non-partisan – he does not belong to either the Kyiv or the Moscow faction inside the UOC. It is thus expected that he will seek reconciliation, although not unification, of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Like his predecessor, he is focused on the spiritual aspect of the Church's activity, has no political ambitions and is unwilling to express his opinion on political issues. Metropolitan

Onufry is expected to be a transitional primate. His task is not to make any radical changes, but rather to wait out what is a difficult time for the Orthodox Church, and also to lead Ukrainian Orthodoxy to the Ecumenical Council, which is bound to begin in 2016.

If media reports are accurate³, Metropolitan Antonii of Boryspil and Brovary (secular name Ivan Pakanych, born in 1967) and Archbishop Simeon of Vinnytsia and Mohyliv-Podilskyi (secular name Volodymyr Shostatsky, born in 1962) were the other candidates in addition to Onufry. Archbishop Simeon's candidacy seems unlikely; this provincial hierarch is not a member of the UOC's Synod or even a metropolitan, and claims that President Petro Poroshenko insisted on the election of Simeon are mere speculation. Poroshenko, who has already on several occasions participated in UOC councils as a representative of the laity, given the present situation, needs a Church leader whose authority is unquestionable, and not a new and inexperienced man. In turn, Metropolitan Antonii, who has served as the first vicar of Kyiv Metropolis and has been the Director of Church Affairs since 2012, was a serious candidate. He belongs to the pro-Moscow faction, and he was promoted as a candidate by Metropolitans Agafangel and Hilarion. Considering the new metropolitan's advanced age, Antonii is likely to keep both positions and his previous influence.

It cannot be ruled out that the decision to convene the bishops' council was consulted behind the scenes with Poroshenko, as was the candidacy of Metropolitan Onufry (such consultations are part of the Orthodox Church's tradition, an element of the Church/state 'symphony'). Although the president of Ukraine did not participate in the enthronisation of the UOC's new primate, he received him one day after the ceremony, on 18 June.

³ Cf., for example, Екатерина Щеткина, 'На месте - стой!', *Зеркало недели*, 15 August 2014.

The Church on the new situation in Ukraine

The 'Revolution of Dignity' initiated by the Maidan protests came as a surprise and challenge to the UOC. The Church, which was closely linked to the Yanukovich regime (he demonstrated his religiousness ostentatiously), hostile to European moral liberalism and opposed Ukraine establishing closer links with Western structures, could not join the movement of young patriotic liberals. When the Kyiv Patriarchate granted almost official support to the Maidan in the last days of November 2013, the UOC could not back the movement for precisely this reason. Thus the unexpectedly strong religious aspect of the Maidan remained within the domain of Greek-Catholic and Kyiv Patriarchate (and also Roman Catholic) priests, although members of the UOC were also numerous among the protesters. Priests from the canonical Church also appeared there, but their presence was less visible. Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa openly condemned the Euromaidan, and Metropolitan Hilarion also criticised it. However, the influence of UOC priests on soldiers from the Internal Troops (currently the National Guard) and other law enforcement agencies reduced the bloodshed on several occasions during the clashes in January and February this year.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church had to deal with a leadership crisis at that time. The terminally ill Metropolitan Volodymyr was unable to perform his duties; the 'pro-Moscow' (and pro-Yanukovich) faction was paralysed after Metropolitan Agafangel's unsuccessful attempt to take power in the Church in 2013, and the 'pro-Kyiv' faction feared it could be accused of 'conspiring' with the Kyiv Patriarchate. Since the Church needed to have a legitimate leader, it was decided to elect a 'guardian of the throne'. Metropolitan Onufry, a compromise candidate who shuns politics, was elected to this position.

The situation changed when the Russian Federation annexed Crimea and war later broke out in eastern Ukraine. The hierarchs of the UOC would

not accept a reduction of their 'canonical territory', nor could they disregard the sudden increase in patriotic sentiments and the failure of the so-called 'Russian Spring' in March and April 2014. The Kyiv Metropolis is finding it easy to cope with the situation since the Moscow Patriarchate has not as yet made any moves to detach the Crimean eparchies (Jankoy, Feodosia and Simferopol) from the UOC⁴. Regardless of the canonical complexity of this solution, the hierarchs of the ROC must be aware of the fact that such a move would have caused an open split within the UOC.

The anti-Russian sentiment among a significant part of the followers of the UOC is likely to last a long time. Many members see the Church's being 'canonical' as insignificant as compared to its national and political orientation.

A great part of priests in the Donbas backed the separatists more or less openly, giving special sermons for them and supporting them through propaganda, e.g. repeating the threats of an imminent "danger posed by the Banderovtsy-Uniates"⁵, "US aggression", etc., thus strengthening the civilian population's support for the rebellion. In some cases priests refused to officiate at the funerals of fallen Ukrainian soldiers. The remaining part of the UOC refrained from supporting any side, focusing instead on charity, especially with regard to refugees. UOC priests serve as chaplains in the Ukrainian armed forces, and probably also in some volunteer battalions (followers of the Kyiv Patriarchate, to the extent that this can be determined at all, predominate among the members of these battalions; in others Greek Catholics are predominant, although members of the UOC are also represented there to a sizeable degree).

⁴ For more information on the ROC's stance on these developments see Katarzyna Jarzyńska, *op. cit.*

⁵ i.e. Greek Catholic.

Metropolitan Onufry, who has never concealed his negative attitude towards European integration, has expressed very cautious opinions on this issue, both before and after he was put in charge of the Kyiv Metropolis, arguing that the Church is apolitical, emphasising the need to stop bloodshed, and avoiding taking sides. However, the 'Address to the clergy, monks and all members of the Church' announced by the 'electoral' council on 13 August 2014 states that the UOC "supports the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine" and includes the phrase "one, unified (*soborna*) Ukraine" (the term *soborny* in this context had thus far been used in nationalist rhetoric)⁶. None of the bishops dared to openly support the Russian aggression on Ukraine.

People who have grown up in independent Ukraine and have been educated in the spirit of school-taught, state patriotism are a growing group among the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Young priests have been brought up this way as well.

The Russian reaction to the 'Revolution of Dignity' (provoking the 'Russian Spring', backing the Donbas rebellion, and finally open aggression) has given rise to a sudden increase in anti-Russian sentiments among the Ukrainian public, including the lay members and clergy of the UOC. Many members of this church have become followers of the Kyiv Patriarchate; at least two parishes have changed their subordination (in compliance with Ukrainian law, which still recognises religious communes and not church organisations as legal subjects), and some of its priests have blessed and backed volunteer battalions. The name of the Moscow Patriarch is no longer mentioned in the liturgy in some church-

es (the first such instances of this had already been observed last winter). There must have been quite a number of such cases, and pressure from the lay members must have been strong, as Metropolitan Sofronii of Cherkasy and Kaniv gave a free hand to the priests in his eparchy⁷. The anti-Russian sentiment among a significant part of the followers of the UOC, and to an even greater extent the numerous group who define themselves as Orthodox Christians but are not linked to any Church (and are in general not engaged in religious practices), is likely to last a long time. Many members see the Church's being 'canonical' as insignificant compared to its national and political orientation. Thus the Kyiv Patriarchate will gain most, and the threat that lay members and parish clergy could join the Kyiv Patriarchate on a mass scale will force the UOC to identify itself increasingly strongly with the Ukrainian state and nation. However, it cannot be expected that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will univocally support Kyiv's pro-Western policy and hard-line approach towards separatism and Russia. This is not only because the Kyiv Patriarchate does this (and the UOC must be clearly distinct from it), but also because a significant part of its members in eastern Ukraine oppose Kyiv's policy and even openly support separatism (these are mainly representatives of the elder generation; however, young people can also be found among the Russian nationalists in Donbas, who demonstrate their faithfulness to Moscow-based Orthodoxy⁸). The UOC cannot disregard them as well, nor can it ignore the fact that its priests and bishops, especially those from the elder generation, support the idea of the 'Russian world'. Last but not least, even those Ukrainian Orthodox Christians who hold patriotic views are usually at least critical about the introduc-

⁶ КИЇВ. Послання Собору Єпископів УПЦ до духовенства, чернецтва та усіх вірних Української Православної Церкви, <http://pravoslavnye.org.ua>, accessed on 10 September 2014.

⁷ Митрополит УПЦ МП Софроній: Бути у єдиній церкві в Україні. Чому б ні?, <http://glavcom.ua/articles/22204.html>, accessed on 8 September 2014.

⁸ One of the armed separatist formations is called the Russian Orthodox Army.

tion of 'Western values' in Ukraine, since these are associated not only with 'new moral standards' but also with Catholicism as a force which is alien and dangerous to Ukrainian identity. Tension between the two orientations is augmented from time to time by incidents taking place in connection with the unfolding conflict. Although there are no grounds to call them a religious war, as representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate have been claiming, at least one priest of the UOC has been killed (in May 2014)⁹ and several churches have been shelled. Minor incidents have been much more numerous. On the other hand, the constitution of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic states that the UOC is the only official church on its territory. Furthermore, many priests and churches of the Kyiv Patriarchate and also of other religions have been harassed and attacked in the self-proclaimed 'republics' and Crimea (several Evangelical clergymen have probably been killed there)¹⁰.

Possible developments

The generation gap is having an ever greater impact on Ukrainian society as a whole, including members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. People who have grown up in independent Ukraine and have been educated in the spirit of school-taught, state patriotism emphasising the country's unity and indivisibility, and Ukraine's 'perennial' struggle for independence, but who also accept the multi-ethnicity of Ukrainian society, constitute a growing group among the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Young priests have been brought up this way as well.

⁹ Cf. RISI report of August 2014; <http://www.riss.ru/analitika/3460-proyavleniya-religioznoj-neterpimosti-v-otnoshenii-ukrainskoj-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi-moskovskogo-patriarkhata#.VBrPNova9-Y>, accessed on 18 September 2014.

¹⁰ Cf. Лист Патріарха Київського Філарета до Вселенського Патріарха Варфоломія of 24 August 2014, <http://www.cerkva.info/uk/patrposlannia/5375-lyst-patr-bartholomew.html>, accessed on 2 September 2014.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church as viewed as 'pro-Russian' mainly because it has maintained the canonical (religious) bond with the Moscow Patriarchate. Furthermore, it can be agreed (no reliable data is available) that most of its members from the elder generation are ethnic Russians and Ukrainians with pro-Soviet/pro-Russian views. However, people who hold patriotic (although not nationalist) views also form an essential group among its members. The indisputable canonical legitimacy of the UOC (including the validity of its sacraments) is more important to them than the political orientation of its hierarchs. President Poroshenko is an active member of the laity of this Church. In turn, the younger generation, also among 'canonical' Orthodox Christians, are mentally Ukrainian and expect the Church to take their side, and thus also the state's side. This puts the hierarch in a difficult situation: on the one hand they need to deal with generational disunion among the faithful, and on the other they have to face the challenge posed by the Kyiv Patriarchate, which is more and more nationalism-inclined. Therefore, it cannot move too far – neither in the 'pro-Russian' direction (as expected by its members from the elder generation) nor in the 'pro-Ukrainian' one. On the one hand, it cannot turn its back on its numerous members who took part in the protests on the Maidan and today are fighting in volunteer battalions and the armed forces; and on the other it cannot allow itself to bless monuments to the 'Heavenly Hundred' together with 'patriarchalists' and be involved in similar actions. It also cannot turn its back on those of its members who are convinced that their country has fallen victim to 'Fascist-US aggression'.

This polarisation resulting from the conflict is lowering rather than increasing the chances for the unification of Ukrainian Orthodoxy into one religious structure. This is not only because reconciliation is difficult between the two sides of the conflict, and may only be achieved one

generation later, but also because the secular government (especially Presidents Leonid Kravchuk and Viktor Yushchenko) insisted on this unification in the past. Another reason is that while the UOC expects the other Churches to become united *with it* (i.e. 'the return of those who have separated'), the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, which is less influential, expect all churches to be united *together*. Another impediment is posed personally by Patriarch Filaret of

Kyiv (secular name Mykhailo Denysenko, born in 1929), who in 1997 was excommunicated by the council of the Russian Orthodox Church (upon a motion from Metropolitan Volodymyr), so any dialogue with him is ruled out. However, in 2013, bishops from the Kyiv Patriarchate decided that when Patriarch Filaret dies, no new patriarch will be elected until Ukrainian Orthodoxy is united. This opens up the way to resuming dialogue, possibly during the Ecumenical Council of the Eastern Church.

APPENDIX

Biographical notes

Onufry, Metropolitan of Kyiv and All-Ukraine, was born Orest Berezovsky on 5 November 1944 in Korytne (Chernivtsi oblast) to a priest's family of noble origin. In 1966, he left technical college in Chernivtsi to enrol at the Moscow Theological Seminary. He became a monk in 1971, and received holy orders as a priest one year later. In 1988, he graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy. He started working as a priest in Moscow. Later he was transferred to the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius (the 'capital' of Russian Orthodoxy), and in 1988–1990 he was father superior of the Pochaiv Lavra. In 1990, he was consecrated bishop and was nominated bishop of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna. Ten years later, he was promoted to metropolitan, and in 2007 he became head of the UOC Court. He has been a permanent member of the UOC Synod since 1994.

In 1990–1992, he was a leading representative of a group of bishops who opposed the autocephaly of the UOC, especially the ambitions of Metropolitan Filaret (who later proclaimed himself Patriarch of Kyiv), and contributed to Filaret's demotion from his position as metropolitan. Furthermore, in his activity as a bishop he counteracted the ambitions of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which was making efforts to regain its supremacy over northern Bukovyna. He has shunned publicity and avoided expressing opinions on politics (so he has no political experience, even inside the Church), but he is generally respected as a model monk and priest.

Metropolitan **Antonii** of Boryspil and the first vicar of the Kyiv Metropolis was born Ivan Pakanych on 25 August 1967 in Chumalevo (Zakarpattia Oblast) to a peasants' family. Already as a secondary school student he served as subdeacon of the Orthodox bishops of Mukacheve. After military service, he enrolled at the Moscow Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1992. He was consecrated a monk and received holy orders as a priest a year later. In 1995, he graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy and later worked as a lecturer and the rector's assistant at the academy.

In 2002, at his own request, he was transferred to Ukraine. He was in charge of the Kyiv Metropolis's office. In 2006, he was consecrated bishop and nominated Bishop of Boryspil, vicar of the Kyiv Metropolis. Two years later he became archbishop, and in 2013 he was promoted as metropolitan and first vicar of the Kyiv Metropolis. He has served as rector of the Kyiv Theological Academy, among other positions. In February 2012, he was nominated head of the Department of External Church Relations of the UOC, replacing Metropolitan Volodymyr's secretary, Archbishop Aleksandr. This was an element of a plot devised by Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa. When this plot failed, Antonii had to resign from this post in May 2012. He has, however, remained a permanent member of the Synod and 'in charge of the UOC's affairs', and is *sui generis* the prime minister of his Church.

Metropolitan **Aleksandr** Pereyaslav-Khmelnysky and Vyshneve, vicar of Kyiv Metropolis, was born Oleksandr Drabyanko on 18 March 1977 in Korets (Rivne Oblast) to a civil servant's family. After graduation from secondary school, he studied at the Moscow Theological Seminary and the Kyiv Theological Academy. He graduated from the academy in 2002, and then, still as a layman, he became a host of a religious TV programme approved by the UOC.

In 2006, he received holy orders as a priest and monk, and became Metropolitan Volodymyr's personal secretary. He was also in charge of the UOC's major media projects. He was consecrated bishop in 2007, and was promoted to archbishop three years later. At that time he was a serious candidate for the position 'in charge of the UOC's affairs.' In 2011–2012 he chaired the interim commission in charge of the Kyiv eparchy and was responsible for the medical treatment of Volodymyr. He lost his positions after a conflict with Metropolitan Agafangel, and was removed from the Synod (which he had become a member of in 2011). He has remained in the shadows since then. He is one of the leaders of the pro-Ukrainian wing in the UOC, although he does not believe that achieving autocephaly is the top priority. He is the youngest of the key bishops in the UOC.

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