

THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Argument: *The present political situation in Ukraine tensions the entire world which is afraid of unknown, of the aggravation of the conflict which can easily degenerate into war. Romania, in her turn, feels threatened thinking that unfortunately, the Romanians beyond the River Prut seem to be closer to the expansionist policy of Russia than to the European integration. The neighbourhood of a new Russian empire frightens us. But is the turmoil the Ukrainians are cast into today something new or its roots can be easily found in the past? Kiev was for a short time the place where Christianity spread from for Russians, the same as Kosovo region used to be long ago for the Serbs. The religious life of the Orthodox Ukrainians was affected by the formation of the Greek Catholic Church which promoted strong religious propaganda. The large territory of today's Ukraine was under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom for a long time. The treaty from Pereiaslavl (1654) enabled Russia to extend its influence in the Ukrainian territories, so that at the beginning of the 18th century tsar Peter the Great really possessed these territories. Tsarina Ekaterina II extended the territory of Russia through the occupation of Crimea. The 20th century showed that at critical times the Russian-Ukrainian union was fragile. The fall of the tsarist Empire enabled the Ukrainians to proclaim their independence, a political movement crushed by the Bolsheviks. The Ukrainians adopted the same attitude during the World War II, as well as after the fall of communism. Every time the brutal intervention of the Russians brought the Ukrainians under the domination of Moscow. All these political manifestations were followed by similar church gestures, because an important part of the Ukrainian Orthodox clergy wished to have church independence and get rid of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow. The Orthodox Churches formed in today's Ukraine support either the autonomy or the autocephaly, maintaining the inter-ethnic tension dressed in religious vestment. The study is focused on the presentation of the evolution of the Russian-Ukrainian political conflicts followed by strong religious fights between the Orthodox clergy from Kiev and Moscow.*

Keywords: *Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Greek-Catholics, Bolsheviks, inter-ethnic conflict, religious autonomy, independence.*

The Russians adopted Christianity at the time of Prince Vladimir the Great (980 – 1015), in Kiev, a locality that got special political importance in Eastern Europe at the time of prince Iaroslav the Wise (1019 - 1054), as the Metropolitanate of Kiev had 15 dioceses under its jurisdiction till the great Mongolian invasion (1237-1241). In 1169, the Metropolitanate of Kiev moved its seat to Vladimir, and in 1325 is settled in Moscow, which was the political seat of Russia in the 13th century. Till the Unionist Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 – 1439), the metropolitans of Kiev were either Greeks sent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople or Russians. Several metropolitans were called “metropolitans of Kiev and Moscow” in the 14th – 15th centuries. The Russian Orthodox Church suffered because of the Mongolian persecution which lasted two centuries and a half (1241 – 1480). The great prince of Moscow Dimitrie Donskoi strengthened the power of Moscow a lot, also reviving the Russian Church seated in Moscow. Kiev gradually fell from a religious point of view as a result of the expansion of Lithuania, and later on of the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom formed in 1385. Catholicism supported by Poland attracted a large part of the Ukrainian elite, the Orthodox Church having only been tolerated. This religious phenomenon permanently affected the political relations between Poland and Russia as well as those between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The protection provided by the Polish state and the possibility of the Ukrainian nobles to ascend to high administrative and military positions determined the Ukrainian leaders to accept the Polish occupation especially because of the

military threatens of the Ottoman Empire. Many Ukrainian boyars accepted Catholicism wishing to keep all the privileges the Polish nobles enjoyed. The Protestant Reform complicated the state of the Ukrainian society, some of the Polish nobles joining Lutheranism. As a reply, the king of Poland has become an important supporter of the tough actions of the Catholic Counter-reform.

In Russia, the political and religious situation passed through some major changes. After removing metropolitan Isidor of Kiev, who had accepted the union with Rome at the council of Ferrara-Florence (1438 – 1439), in 1448, Russian Iona was appointed as the new metropolitan of Moscow.

Even tsar Ivan IV noticed that the Church had a special impact in the Russian state, and this is why, in 1551, he convened a church council, just like the Byzantine emperors long time before, to consolidate the position of the Church, whom he wanted to make partner in the state policy, and ask for her material help in case of need. The tsar personally attended the debates, just as the Byzantine emperors used to do at the ecumenical councils. The church councils of 1547 and 1549 had consolidated the position of the Church, but the one of 1551 wanted to make her worthy of her great mission in the world. This council adopted a large number of measures designed to strengthen the discipline of the parishes and monasteries. Ivan IV wanted Moscow, “the third Rome”, to become the kingdom of God on the earth. Unfortunately, the great plan of reform the tsar tried to apply failed. The times confused and the limited resources made the application of the decision taken impossible. Through his way of governing, Tsar Ivan IV turned out to be unable to harmonise the policy of the state with the role of the Church, so that he came in conflict with the clergy, who criticised rather seriously, through metropolitan Filip, the arbitrary way in which the destiny of a people was ruled.¹

The Russian Orthodox Church made one step forward to consolidate her authority at the time of tsar Fiodor (1584 – 1598), in 1589, when she was raised to the rank of patriarchate on behalf of patriarch Jeremia II of Constantinople. A council met in Constantinople in 1593, awarded the Patriarchate of Moscow the 5th place in the honorific order of the patriarchates.

After the Ruric dynasty extinguished (1598), the leadership of the Russian state was taken over by Boris Godunov (1598 – 1605), when Russia passed through a troubled period in which the Orthodox Church proved she was able to mobilise the people through a common effort of fight against their enemies. The fights for the throne of Moscow broke out a war between Russia and Poland, in which patriarch Ermoghen (1606 – 1612) played an important religious and political role. Peace was established once tsar Mihail Feodorovici Romanov was elected (1613 – 1645), whose reign started the long period of the Romanov dynasty. The tsar’s father had turned monk, taking the name of Filaret, according to the Orthodox tradition; due to his virtues, he was elected Metropolitan of Rostov in 1606. Following the request of the clergy and of the people, metropolitan Filaret was raised to the rank of patriarch (26 June 1619). The pastoral rule of patriarch Filaret (1619 – 1633) brought great prestige to the Russian Church, as he was the closest collaborator of the tsar. The decrees (ucases) were signed and applied “in the name of the tsar and of the Great Prince, patriarch Filaret”.² The patriarch’s activity was focused especially on the morality of the people and against the Catholic influences. The following patriarchs Ioasaf (1633 – 1640) and Joseph (1642 – 1652) continued the work of patriarch Filaret.

A distinctive period in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church was marked by the pastoral rule of patriarch Nikon (1652-1658; +1681). Promoted bishop of Novgorod due to his virtues, and patriarch in 1652, with the support of tsar Aleksei (1645 – 1676), Nikon marked

¹ Geoffrey Hosking, *Rusia, popor și imperiu 1552-1917*, trad. Dana Crăciun, Hortensia Pârlog and Maria Teleagă, Bucharest, Polirom Publishing House, 2001, p. 51.

²Vasile Pocitan, *Geneza demnității patriarhale și Patriarhatele Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Bucharest, 1926, p. 62.

an important page in the history of the Russian Orthodox faithful. He starts a long process of improvement of the liturgical books and removal of the innovations introduced in the rite. The patriarch's attempt was met with hostility, and Nikon gave up the patriarchal throne because of some plots around him. Moreover, a council met in 1666 in Moscow, where Russian, Greek and Serbian hierarchs participated, as well as patriarch Paisie of Alexandria and Macarie of Antioch, blamed the former patriarch Nikon, but approved his reforms.

The political religious situation of the Orthodox in the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom was complicated as a result of the intensification of the Catholic propaganda that brought about the division of the Orthodox and formation of the Greek Catholic Church, after the religious treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1596).³ The Greek Catholic started taking over the Orthodox dioceses, churches and monasteries. The uniate clergy protested in a petition addressed to the Pope to show the treatment they were submitted to by the Polish authorities. In the local Seims and in the national one too, the Orthodox nobles, supported by the Protestant ones, asked for the observation of the rights the Orthodox and their bishops used to have. The rights of the Orthodox Church of Poland were officially recognised in the Constitutions of 1607 and 1609.⁴ After the death of the Orthodox Bishop of Lvov, Gheodeon Balaban (1607), and taking over of the diocese of Premysl by the Greek Catholics, and after the death of Mihail Kopystensky (1610), Lvov remains the only Orthodox diocese headed by Ieremia Tysarovsky (1607 – 1641), not recognised by the Polish Catholic State. In this case the formation of a new Orthodox hierarchy in Poland was a must.

The attempt to limit the effects of the Greek Uniate propaganda determined the Patriarchate of Constantinople to send Nichifor Cantacuzino as exarch to Poland, while patriarch Meletie of Alexandria sent Chiril Lucaris. The two young priests acted just after the Council of Brest, helped by Constantine, prince of Ostrov and voivode of Kiev. Unfortunately, their activity had a tragic end as a result of the intervention of king Sigismund III Vasa, a fervent Catholic, Nichifor having been sentenced to death and Chiril banished from the country. Chiril Lucas was elected patriarch of Alexandria and participated in the enthronement of patriarch Teofan of Jerusalem (1608 – 1645) who succeeded in re-establishing the Orthodox hierarchy in Poland-Lithuania, as well as in ordaining patriarch Filaret in Moscow (1619 – 1633), who knew the political and religious situation of Poland. Teofan's activity in Poland (1618 – 1620) received the blessing of the ecumenical patriarch Timotei (1612 – 1621), as well as the approval of patriarch Chiril Lucaris of Alexandria (1601- 1620) who became ecumenical patriarch in 1621 (1621 – 1630). All the eastern hierarchs were interested in the re-organisation of the Metropolitanate of Kiev. Patriarch Teofan of Jerusalem ordained bishops of Kiev, Peremusl, Polotsk, Volodimir-Brest, Lutsk-Ostrog, Khelm-Bielj and Minsk,⁵ protected by the Cossacks and by the hetman of the Zaporozhyians. After re-establishing the hierarchy, Teofan anathematized the Greek Catholic Church, but prohibited the war between Cossacks and Moscow through a special document. In fact, Teofan's action was supported by the patriarch of Moscow, and especially by Cossacks and by the Orthodox brotherhoods of Poland. From now on, the tensions between Orthodox, Catholics and Greek Catholics would be permanent in the Polish-Lithuanian

³See Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 263; Claudiu Cotan, *The Role of the Orthodox Hierarchs in the Foreign Political Life of the Romanian Principalities from 1450 to 1750*, in „The Orthodox Church in the Balkans and Poland., Connections and Common Tradition”, Bialystok, 2007, pp. 15-35.

⁴ Antonie Mironowicz, *The Orthodox Church in Poland*, The monastery in Supraśl-Bialystok, 2005, p. 79.

⁵ Antonie Mironowicz, *The Activities of the Patriarch Teofanes III in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, in „The Orthodox Church in the Balkans and Poland., Connections and Common Tradition”, Bialystok, 2007, p. 81.

Kingdom, having been, to a certain extent, one of the causes of the division of Poland at the end of 18th century.⁶

Once the act of Uniation was signed at Brest-Litovsk (1596), the Catholic propaganda, supported by the Jesuits, started organising a few colleges in Lvov (1608), Comenita, and Bar (1636). The actions of the Jesuits were encouraged by the Jesuit Peter Skarga, who has permanently carried on, in the Polish Seim, a policy designed to divide the Orthodox Church. Given this state of things, we notice the attempt of the Orthodox circles to re-organise themselves in order to resist the Catholic Counter-reform. In order to prepare the clergy, the Jesuits and Piarists set up seminaries almost in every eparchy as well as Catholic schools to prepare the nobles' sons in view of strengthening the uniation. Prince Constantine Ostrogski feels better intellectual preparation of the clergy is needed and urges them to participate in the creation of cultural resistance. Ivan Kiszenski, a supporter of the Orthodox culture, who lived at Mount Athos for a time, tried to introduce in Poland the education based on the hysichast living, opposite the Latin scholasticism. Adopted to a certain extent by the Orthodox brotherhoods, the system developed as a counter-weight to the Jesuit education. Although it did not meet the requirements of the youth, it turned out to be a good one. "Ostrogski Academy" operated too short a time to give results, but Mohylanski Orthodox College turned out to be efficient.

The revival of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was due to the metropolitan of Kiev, Petru Movila (1633 – 1646). He got the "*articles of pacification*" through a series of subtle measures, after he had supported the election of the new Polish king Vladislav IV. Thus, the Orthodox got confessional freedom, the right to raise their own churches, philanthropic institutions and printing houses. Petru Movila has the merit to have created in Kiev, in 1633, an Academy that enjoyed the same rights as the Universities of Krakow and Vilna. The Academy of Kiev which mixed the Western European system of education with the Orthodox one has become a cultural centre with strong influence in Moldova and Wallachia.⁷ The Orthodox Church was recognised by the state and considered equal to the Greek Catholic Church under the leadership of metropolitan Petru Movila. Having had a good command of the Western culture and of the Orthodox spirituality as well, Petru Movila created an outstanding synthesis that marked the Ukrainian culture. Petru Movila criticised the Protestant theology, but kept permanent relations with the Uniates and Roman Catholics. Even his successor, metropolitan Silvestru (1647 – 1657) would have liked to continue the dialogue interrupted because of the political changes.

The constitution of the Ukrainian state under the leadership of hetman Bogdan Hmielnitchi (1648 – 1657) changed Orthodoxy into official religion. The conflicts between Poland and Moscow involved Ukraine too, which was divided into its Western part close to Poland, and the Eastern one faithful to Moscow. The successors of metropolitan Silvestru, metropolitans Josef Nelinbovici (1663 – 1675) and Antonie Vinitki (+1679) took the side of Poland. The Oriental region was headed by a locum tenens, Lazar Barancovici and by his successors. In Eastern Ukraine, after the election of metropolitan Gheodon (1685 – 1690), the Orthodox Church of Kiev was enclosed to the Patriarchate of Moscow (1686), as a result of the discussions between the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Therefore, the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow over the Orthodox Church of Ukraine got a canonical character.

⁶ Daniel Tollet, *Les tentatives de suppression du rite grec dans la Confederation polono-lituanienne a la fin du XVIIe siecle et au debut du XVIIIe siecle*, in „The Orthodox Church in the Balkans and Poland...”, pp. 117-129.

⁷ Demir Dragnev, *Evoluția relațiilor politice româno-polone în lumina unei noi publicații dedocumente*, in „RIM”, Chișinău, 2002, no. 1-2, pp. 66-69.

At the middle of the 17th century, the Polish nobility and the king tried to annul the privileges of the Cossacks and to include their territories into the Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom. Faced with this threatening, hetman Bogdan Hmelnitki asked for the protection of the tsar of Moscow. The treaty of Pereiaslavle (1654) which the Cossacks concluded with Moscow mentioned that the Cossacks were the subjects of the tsar, but they kept their privileges, as well as the right to have their own laws and administration, to elect their hetman and to carry on a foreign policy not hostile to the tsar. The rights and traditions of the nobility, clergy and Ukrainian cities were guaranteed. Thus, Poland was excluded from the largest part of Ukraine and from Kiev. The Ukrainian hetman preserved his autonomy till the middle of the 18th century. Therefore, in the 17th century the Cossacks succeeded in setting up a Ukrainian national state allied to Russia. Moscow, in its turn wanted to have the Ukrainian territories permanently included in its administration. The political situation of the Ukrainians complicated at the time of Peter the Great and of the war against Sweden. Hetman Ivan Mazepa tried an alliance with Sweden and Poland at the expense of Russia. Faced with such a decision, Peter the Great acted brutally, and after liquidating the resistance of the Cossacks, he started integrating Ukraine into the Russian Empire. The hetman's office was dissolved in 1763, and the Ukrainian territories were divided into "gubernii" (provinces) according to the administrative system of the entire empire. To the end of the 19th century, the Ukrainian elite of the rural regions was Russified to a great extent, only the great cities having cosmopolite population.⁸

Till the 18th century the metropolitan throne was held by Ukrainians, but since the 19th century these metropolitans were Russians. Thus, the Ukrainian Church was submitted to systematic Russification. This state of things continued till the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. At the second division of Poland, in 1795, the majority of the territories of Western Ukraine passed under the jurisdiction of Russia, and the Greek Catholic population was gradually forced to become Orthodox again. Only Galicia, property of Austria, preserved a Greek Catholic Church reorganised in 1807 under the name of the Metropolitanate of Galicia seated in Lvov.

After the death of patriarch Adrian (1690 – 1700), tsar Peter the Great (1682 – 1725) let the Russian Orthodox Church without patriarch, and on 25 December dissolved the patriarchal dignity, replacing it with a Ruling Council and moving its seat from Moscow to Petersburg, a city which he had set up in 1703, to keep it under strict control. Influenced by Protestants, Peter became the head of the Church, having a representative within the Holy Synod, the prosecutor, who expressed the will and decisions of the tsar. In the 19th century, the prosecutor became a sort of minister like any other one, subordinated to the tsar.⁹

The new relation between the Church and state was regulated by the "*Spiritual Regulations*" (1721), worked out by theologian Teofan Prokopovici. The regulations specified the duties of the bishops, priests, deacons and monks. During the ordination rite the clergy swore submission to the tsar and committed themselves to keep the records of the civil status and the registration of the confession and communication, to read the imperial decrees in the church and ask the faithful oaths of fidelity to the state. The priests became employees and agents of the autocratic state. The power of the bishops grew, because they got the right to appoint parish priests without the consent of the parishioners. The role of the parishioners in this election was preserved rather in the Western Russia, to counteract the Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches. The parochial trustee who controlled the finances started being appointed

⁸ Geoffrey Hosking, *Rusia, popor și imperiu 1552-1917*, trad. Dana Crăciun, Hortensia Pârlog and Maria Teleagă, Bucharest, Polirom Publishing House, 2001, pp. 30-31.

⁹ Claudiu Cotan, *O istorie a Bisericii ortodoxe slave*, Iași, Vasiliana '98 Publishing House, 2009, p. 35.

by the higher authorities. The consequences of these measures were baleful because they diminished the relation between Church and faithful and between the faithful and state. Peter the Great has also changed the role of the monasteries which he used as institutions of social protection. Thus, the oppression the state exerted over the Church could have been one of the causes of the success of the Revolution of 1917.

Yet, the Russian Orthodox Church could resist to these aggressions, especially through her great spiritual personalities. Bishop Tihon of Voronej (1724 – 1783), canonised by the Church, spent the last part of his life at Zagaonsk Monastery, where he dedicated himself to the contemplative life and drafted his spiritual works. Just like other Russian father confessors, he illustrates the reaction to the secularism of the reforms of Peter the Great. Monastic life flourished through Paisie Velicikovski, Serafim of Sarov and abbots from Optima, the guides of the Russian intellectual elite. Just close to the Revolution, the Orthodox Church had the spiritual power to convert the Marxist intellectuals like Struven Frank, Bulgakov and Berdiaev. The Russian Orthodox Church brought her contribution to the intellectual progress especially in the 19th century, when she created a true network of schools with a remarkable level, with an important role played by the Academy of Kiev.

Tsarina Ecaterina II continued the church reforms initiated by Peter the Great, passing to the expropriation of the church estates. From 1762 – 1764, the state took over the administration of all the lands the Church still owned, providing in exchange an official donation to the dioceses and monasteries which represented very little compared to what the state got. Metropolitan Arsenie of Rostov protested against these measures, but he was sentenced, defrocked and imprisoned for life. The tsarist state submitted the Orthodox Church to its own interests. Ecaterina II continued the Russian expansion to the West and succeeded to include Crimea Peninsula into the Russian Empire, where the Tatars were defeated forever. The khanate of Crimea (1441 – 1783) was one of the permanent enemies of Russia, submitted to intense Russification after conquest. The Romanian population have also been moved to the Caucasus Mountains and to Siberia. In the 19th century, part of the Tatar population emigrated to Dobrudgea and Anatolia under the pressure of the Russian state.

The spreading of the European Enlightenment and the more and more obvious laicism of the Russian society, as well as the seclusion of the Church into a conservative outdated organisation brought about a cultural and intellectual isolation of the clergy. This state of things perpetuated superstitions which sometimes had a greater impact than the Orthodox practices. The theological schools were following the model of the European ones, but they did not have special success, because few clergy could graduate these courses. The educational conditions were precarious and the adequate infra-structure was missing. Besides the Theological Academy of Moscow, three other academies were set up at Sankt Petersburg (1809), Kiev (1819) and Kazan (1842). The students of these academies were the best graduates of the seminaries. It was an attempt to translate the Bible into the Russian language with the support of Tsar Alexander I, but it failed. Then, metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, an outstanding erudite person and former rector of the Academy of Sankt-Petersburg, was also involved in this initiative. The action of Metropolitan Filaret was obstructed by other hierarchs, who considered this cultural initiative a Protestant influence and a danger for the minds of the faithful. Yet, the work of metropolitan was rewarded at last through the publication of the New Testament in 1862, and of the complete Bible in 1876.¹⁰

During the synodal period (1721 – 1917), the Russian Orthodox Church continued its missionary work to the East. This missionary activity was facilitated by the political and military expansion of Russia. To the end of the 18th century, the clergy had become a closed

¹⁰ Claudiu Cotan, *O istorie a Bisericii ortodoxe slave*, Iași, Vasiliana '98 Publishing House, 2009, p. 38.

caste. Usually, the priests' children became clergy, although they did not have the necessary qualities, only because they chose to practice this service not to be recruited in the army or be members of the classes who had to pay taxes. The parochial clergy had a precarious social state, especially after Pugaciov's rebellion, when tsarina Ecaterina II forbade the priests to draft the peasants' petitions and involve in political and social issues. Yet, the number of the priests grew a lot in the 18th century exceeding that of the parishes, which fact created conflicts and tensions among clergy. A reform was needed, even though some hierarchs strongly opposed the idea.

A serious threatening in the modern epoch was that of the sects, which seemed to be successful. The movements of the sects, Catholicism and Uniatism attracted more and more faithful. But the Baptism, Adventists and Witnesses of Jehovah got into the Russian territories recruiting their adepts from among the workers. The many changes of the Russian society imposed a series of urgent reforms to the Orthodox Church. In 1905, they tried to apply a church reform encouraged by many clergy and politicians, but the results were modest.¹¹

The great events of the 20th century, the World War I, the World War II and the dissolution of the USSR to the end of the century proved how fragile the Russian – Ukrainian union was. The abdication of tsar Nicholas II accelerated the movement of independence in Ukraine, where the Ukrainian Rada was created headed by historian Mihail Hrushevski, who proclaimed the autonomy. As a result of the major changes within the Tsarist Empire, the Russian Orthodox clergy started asking for reforms in their turn to enrich the religious life, as well as for the re-establishing of the Patriarchate. In Kiev, certain Ukrainian clergy asked for the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from Moscow. In October 1917, a church Rada was set up, made up of Ukrainian clergy and laics. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev was at Moscow at the time where, in August, the working session of the Great Council was opened which decided the re-establishment of the Patriarchate with Tihon as patriarch. On this occasion the situation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was discussed, where a delegation of the Holy Synod was to be sent to discuss with the Central Rada. But the church Rada convened a council on 28 December 1917 which decided to support the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, a council met in January 1918, with the participation of the representatives of the Patriarchate of Moscow, under the chairmanship of metropolitan Vladimir, decided to keep the church relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow and accepted to translate the liturgical texts into the Ukrainian language. The situation complicated in Ukraine when the military Bolshevik forces succeeded in taking over the leadership in Kiev, where they shot metropolitan Vladimir. A meeting of the same council of June 1918 proclaimed, in its turn, the autonomy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. In April 1918, Pavel Skoropaski was the leader of the Ukraine Rada, succeeded by Simeon Petliura who sustained the autocephaly. After Kiev was conquered by the Bolshevik armies, on 14 February 1919, the Soviet Ukraine declared it was willing to join Moscow. The Bolsheviks took over the power forever in 1920. Afraid of the communist power that was being installed in Kiev, a series of hierarchs went into exile, where they formed an Orthodox Church in emigration. The majority of the great theologians emigrated from Russia to the West where they revived the Orthodox theological thought.

The fight for getting the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was continued by archimandrite Vasile Lipkivski, the Bolsheviks planning to weaken the Orthodox Church while encouraging the inner dissensions. In May 1920, the church Rada proclaimed the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Yet, the majority of the priests remained faithful to the Patriarchate of Moscow. The church Rada did look for a

¹¹ Claudiu Cotan, *O istorie a Bisericii ortodoxe slave*, Iași, Vasiliana '98 Publishing House, 2009, p. 39.

hierarchy to lead the movement of autocephaly and to ordain the Ukrainian priests. On 21 October 1921, archimandrites Vasile Lipkivski and Nestor Saraievski were ordained bishops by priests, according to the so called Alexandrine model. Although their ordinations and those of some other clergy were not canonical, between 2000 and 3000 parishes passed under the jurisdiction of the Autocephalous Ukraine Orthodox Church. The communist authorities decided to dissolve this Church in 1930, Lipkivski having been arrested in 1927 and shot.¹² Only under the German governing during the World War II the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was free. After the World War II till 1980, it was only one Church in Ukraine, namely the Russian Orthodox Church.

During the communist epoch the Russian Orthodox Church suffered the greatest persecution in her history. On 6 May 1922, patriarch Tihon was arrested and accused not to have donated the liturgical vessels made of precious metals to the aid fund for those affected by famine, especially the Ukrainian population. The persecution of the Russians and Ukrainians caused the death of thousands and monks.¹³ On 12 May 1922, Patriarch Tihon was obligated to retire from the leadership of the Church, the church life having been controlled now by renovators – the living Church – a church fraction encouraged by Bolsheviks. As soon as they appeared on the scene, they were encouraged by the state, accelerating the persecution against the Orthodox Church headed by Tihon. Some of the bishops were arrested, while others joined the “living Church”. On 29 April 1923, the “renovator council” was opened and decided: Russification of the liturgical language (unaccomplished decision), usage of the Gregorian calendar instead of the Julian one, permission to promote the married priests to episcopate and even allowing the priests to divorce and marry again.¹⁴ Soon, the majority of the parishes of the country were held by renovators. But in November 1924, the number of these parishes diminished to 30% in all, although the cases of parishes taken by force by the renovators, helped by the Soviet authorities, continued till the beginning of the 1930-ies.

On 7 April 1924, patriarch Tihon addressed the clergy a message by which he asked the servants of the Orthodox Church to show loyalty to the Soviet authorities and to adapt to the new state order. Many clergymen considered the document known as the *Testament* of patriarch Tihon a forgery, especially since the patriarch died the same day. On 29 July 1927, metropolitan Serghie, the new leader of the Russian Orthodox Church with the rank of patriarch locum tenens and the members of the synod published the *Declaration of loyalty* to the leadership of the Soviet state. This Declaration recognised the authority and legitimacy of the Soviets. After the death of patriarch Tihon, the attacks of the Soviet communists against the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church were intensified, trying by all means to submit them to the Soviet state. Many of the churches became the property of the “living Church”, a religious structure which actively cooperated with the Bolshevik regime, which praised the communist ideology. After the *Declaration of loyalty* was signed, the Soviet political power did not support the “Living Church” any more. But a “Church of the Catacombs” appeared consisting of bishops, priests and simple faithful. Monasteries were raised in inaccessible places, churches buried into the ground, and the clergy was wandering, with no fix dwelling places. The members of this Church were hunted by the Soviet authorities till the end of the

¹² Sofia Senik, *Biserica Ortodoxă din Ucraina în secolul XX*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă din Europa de est în secolul XX”, coord. Christine Chaillot, trad. Liliana Donose Samuelsson, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2011, pp. 364-365.

¹³ Mihail Vitalievici Skarovski, *Biserica Ortodoxă Rusă în secolul XX*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă din Europa de est în secolul XX”, coord. Christine Chaillot, trad. Liliana Donose Samuelsson, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2011, p. 411.

¹⁴ Claudiu Cotan, *Biserica și statul. Biserica Ortodoxă în secolul al XX-lea*, Iași, Vasiliana '98 Publishing House, 2009, p. 105.

communist regime. In spite of all the persecutions and deportations executed by NKVD, the Russian people remained religious.

Stalin's decision of 1928 to collectivize the peasants' households caused the ruin of the Russian peasantry, millions of peasants going to labour camps. In many villages this action hit the priests and the places of worship first. The situation of the Ukrainian peasants affected by this action became dramatic. Millions of Russians and Ukrainians starved because of the economical decisions adopted by Stalin from 1931 – 1933. The extermination of the Ukrainian population was a political programme imposed by the Bolshevik Russians willing to impose the Russification of Ukraine (holodomor). Almost three million Ukrainians died during this genocide, crimes that the Ukrainians have not forgotten till today.

1937 was the hardest year in regard to the repressions of the servants of the Church all over the territory of the USSR. Millions of people of various religious confessions and of all social classes have become the victims of these repressions. The Synod was forbidden to operate, and many priests and faithful were sent to gulags, tens of thousands of them having been shot from 1937 – 1938. The persecution reached its climax in 1936, when the Soviet authorities thought to liquidate the hierarchy and the administrative bodies of the Church.

The German invasion unleashed on 22 June 1941 was announced right away through a circular letter by metropolitan Serghie of Moscow, asking the faithful to defend the frontiers of the country attacked by the "Fascist killers". Faced with "Barbarossa" Operation the Soviet state changed its attitude towards the Church whom it attracted in the great effort to support the war. The dioceses were restored and the churches were opened again. During the war, the Orthodox Church succeeded in organising her administration re-establishing its eparchies, appointing bishops, and reactivating many parishes. If at the beginning of the war there were only 3732 parishes, at its end 10,200 churches were opened. The adversaries of the Orthodox Church were removed.¹⁵ Metropolitan Serghie was allowed to come back to Moscow. On 4 September 1943, Stalin also met some of the Orthodox hierarchs, with whom he decided to convene the Synod for electing the patriarch. Serghie was elected patriarch in the presence of 10 hierarchs and enthroned on 12 September.¹⁶ After the death of patriarch Serghie, Aleksei Simanski, metropolitan of Leningrad was elected patriarch during an ample synod where representatives of other Orthodox Churches also participated (enthroned on 4 February 1945). Metropolitan Nicholas of Kiev who was heading the Foreign Relations department of the Russian Orthodox Church and supported Stalin's policy played an important part in these events.

After the outbreak of the anti-Soviet war, in a few months time, the German armies occupied 1/3 of the territories of the USSR. The German administration in the territories occupied, among which Ukraine too, was headed by Alfred Rosenberg. In these territories the church situation was disastrous as a result of the communist terror that had shut the majority of the churches and monasteries. The German occupants claimed that they were fighting against communism in these territories, the population enjoying religious freedom. The Orthodox population was allowed to build churches and renovate those deserted because of the communist persecution. Nevertheless, the Nazi ideology was in contradiction with the Christian teaching. The communist totalitarian regime of the USSR determined the population to welcome the Germans in large territories of Ukraine and Belarus, as well as in regions with population Russian in majority. After a quarter of century of Soviet regime, many inhabitants

¹⁵ Mihail Vitalievici Skarovski, *Biserica Ortodoxă Rusă în secolul XX*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă din Europa de est în secolul XX”, coord. Christine Chaillot, trad. Liliana Donose Samuelsson, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2011, p. 434.

¹⁶ Claudiu Cotan, *Biserica Ortodoxă Rusă în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial*, in „Teologia Pontica”, Anul I (2009), p. 262.

of the USSR saluted the invaders as liberators. There appeared anti-Soviet guerrilla movements, which were anti-German too. The Soviet general Andrei Vlasov, who was taken prisoner by the German armies, started organising an anti-communist movement, the Liberating Russian Army – ROA (*Russkaia Oscoboditelnaia Armia*) who was really fighting against the Soviet armies.

If under the communist political regime of Belarus the religious life was almost eliminated, almost all the churches were reopened during the German occupation, some of them restored or renovated. Yet, clergy were also needed. The number of those who received the Holy Baptism during the three years of German occupation was impressive. It is true that part of the population was communist and accepted to withdraw to the East with the Soviet troops, but most of the population remained under the German occupation was anticommunist. The antifascist fighters were arrested and sent to labour camps. In Ukraine, the German authorities encouraged nationalism and church separatism little sustained by the local Orthodox population. Thus, two parallel Churches were operating in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church set up in February 1942. Unlike Lipkivski who declares himself metropolitan and leader of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox, the autocephalous supporters of 1942, had a canonical basis because their bishops had been canonically ordained before the war. Their problems appeared when they decided to receive among them the non-canonical clergy formed in 1921, without re-ordination. Metropolitan Dionisie of Warsaw, leader of the Orthodox Church of Poland, decided to recognise the Ukrainian supporters of the autocephaly who proclaimed him metropolitan primate. In 1941, metropolitan Dionisie appointed bishop Policarp Sykowski administrator of the Autocephalous Church in the territories occupied by Germans. The German authorities considered Policarp as the true leader, especially after his election as metropolitan. Thus, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church was set up under the leadership of Policarp, with 15 hierarchs among whom bishop Mstislav Skripnik, a nephew of Petliura. Mstislav Skripnik was ordained by Policarp Sykowski in 1942.¹⁷ Till the outbreak of the war, Mstislav activated as member of the Polish Parliament.

In Volynia, most part of the autonomist clergy were removed through the terrorist actions of the anti-Soviet partisans. Unfortunately, they have also assassinated metropolitan Aleksei Hromadski, leader of the Ukrainian Autonomous Church who recognised the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow. The entrance of the Soviet troops in Ukraine determined all the autocephalic bishops to take refuge in the West.¹⁸

When the German and Romanian troops left Crimea in 1944, afraid of the Soviets' persecutions, part of the Tatar population left the region and settled in Romania. On 19 February 1954, Russia ceded Crimea to Ukraine, with no referendum, only through the decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, when Nikita Hrusciiov was the leader of the Soviet state. The Bolshevik terror, which affected the church life before war rather deeply, passed through a calm period, but after the death of Stalin, Hrusciiov took it to new dimensions. If Stalin applied a programme of elimination of the Orthodox clergy, Hrusciiov encouraged the anti-religious ideologies, denial of the existence of God and creation of a new atheist generation. The generations formed at the tsar's time, in whose life the Church held a special place, did no longer exist. The new generations appeared during the Bolshevism were not attached to the Church, the atheist education having a big effect on them. The Church

¹⁷ Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, Crestwood, 1998, p. 283.

¹⁸ Sofia Senik, *Biserica Ortodoxă din Ucraina în secolul XX*, în „Biserica Ortodoxă din Europa de est în secolul XX”, coord. Christine Chaillot, trad. Liliana Donose Samuelsson, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2011, p. 370.

answered the communist persecutions through a series of religious leaders, some of them, such as archbishop Luka of Simferopol, having been canonised for their exemplary Christian life. A special moment was the memorial of bishop Teodosie of Poltava (+2001) addressed on 26 October 1977, to president L. I. Brejnev. He was removed by communists as a result, but he returned in 1992, and in 1996 was raised to the rank of metropolitan.

The political changes promoted by the Russian president Gorbaciov provided religious freedom too. The celebration of one thousand years since the Christianisation of the Russians, where the role of Kiev was shown, stimulated the Ukrainians in the movement of religious independence from Moscow. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church proclaimed her autocephaly on 19 September 1988, in the church of "Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles" of Lvov, with Mstislav, metropolitan of the Ukrainian Diaspora of the USA as patriarch. The fight for supremacy in the Church facilitated the appearance of several Orthodox Churches in the territory of Ukraine, each of them claiming the right and authority to represent the nation and be considered national Church. The religious freedom provided by president Gorbaciov, just like the political independence proclaimed by Ukraine on 24 August 1991, changed the ideological frame the Ukrainians were living in. Besides the internal conflicts that affected the Church the claims of the Ukrainian Church from Diaspora also appeared, because this one considered herself to be the only representative Church of the Ukrainian people not affected by communism. The Greek Catholic Church has also come out of the underground, asking for the restoration of the churches confiscated by communists in 1946, which had been ceded to the Orthodox Church. Soon the conflicts between the Orthodox and Greek Catholics came up with rather violent manifestations, many times solved in the court.

After the fall of communism, and the dissolution of the USSR, the inter-ethnic tensions also appeared. In May 1992, Crimea accepted to be part of Ukraine. Soon, the first anti-Ukrainian protests appeared of the population Russian in majority. In November 2013, anti-Russian protests appeared in the entire Ukraine, and the philo-Russian president Viktor Ianukovici asked Russia to send troops to Crimea. Occupied by Russian troops, Crimea was integrated into Russia as a result of a referendum. The Euromaidan protests in the heart of Kiev determined Ianukovici to flee to Russia, the political situation of Ukraine degenerating into a civil war supported by Russia and tensioned by the diplomatic interventions of the West.

After 1990, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine passed through a series of dramatic events that brought about its dismemberment. Finally, several Orthodox groups were formed, with three of them more important: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.¹⁹

In 1990, a synod met at Moscow provided the Orthodox Church of Ukraine with a large statute of autonomy. Unfortunately, this one was headed by exarch Filaret, a collaborator of the KGB. The synod of the bishops of Moscow of 1992 examined the issue of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Filaret was asked to resign because of his past not worthy of a hierarch. The Ukrainian president Leonid Kravciuk supported him, as Filaret did not want to resign. Another synod of Harkov deposed Filaret and elected metropolitan Vladimir Sabodan of Rostov instead. Filaret was also defrocked by a synod met at Moscow the same year, but nevertheless he remained at the head of the Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church attached to the governments from Kiev which asked for the independence and integrity of Ukraine. Today, Patriarch Onufrie, who succeeded Vladimir Sabodan, has been at the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which belongs to the Patriarchate of Moscow, since 2014. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church who accepted to

¹⁹ Claudiu Cotan, *Biserica și statul. Biserica Ortodoxă în secolul al XX-lea*, Iași, Vasiliana '98 Publishing House, 2009, pp. 130-131.

maintain the relationship with the Patriarchate of Moscow has always been submitted to the attacks on behalf of Filaret, of the Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church, of deputies and of the supporters of the Ukrainian church autocephaly. Onufrii sustains the maintenance of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow over the Ukrainian faithful and, in spite of all the inter-ethnic conflicts which devastate Ukraine he leads the Church with the largest number of priests and faithful, the double of the two other Orthodox Churches which tension the religious life. The cultural and social differences between Western and Eastern Ukraine, as well as the religious ones created by the existence of some Catholic and Greek Catholic minorities in the Western regions make difficult a future peace and preservation of the Ukrainian unity. Western Ukraine wishes European integration, while Eastern Ukraine wishes the integration with Russia, as happened with Crimea. Maybe these tensions will finally bring about the division of Ukraine.

After 1990, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church appeared in Ukraine headed by Mstislav Skipnik, elected patriarch by the Ukrainian autocephalics, after he had headed the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the USA. After the death of Mstislav Skripnik (+1993), Vladimir was elected patriarch (+1995), who passed to the side of the Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church. Given the new state of things, the autocephalics appointed Dimitrie Jarema patriarch, and in 2003 Metodie Kudreakov of Tenopil, the present leader of the Autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The government of Kravciuk has permanently sustained Filaret and the Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church, and the political power from Kiev installed after the election of the new president Leonid Kuchma had the same attitude. Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church declared many times that the priests affiliated to the Patriarchate of Moscow support the Ukrainian separatists and the policy of Russia in the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, the other Orthodox having been driven away from these territories. Similar persecutions suffered the Ukrainian Orthodox from Crimea enclosed by Russia, unlike the Orthodox of the parishes affiliated to the Patriarchate of Moscow. This year, at the Divine Liturgy on the Resurrection night, Petro Poroshenko, president of Ukraine stood near patriarch Filaret, showing in this way he is a supporter of the Ukraine-Patriarchate of Kiev Orthodox Church and of the unity and independence of Ukraine. Filaret encourages European integration and moving away from the policy of Moscow.

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