

Bociurkiw, Bohdan R. *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939-1950)*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, Edmonton and Toronto, 1996. xvi + 310 pp. Notes. Illustrations. Maps. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95.

THE year 1996 marked both the four-hundredth anniversary of the Union of Brest that created the Greek Catholic Church and the fiftieth anniversary of its forcible dissolution. For four hundred years the Church, loyal to the Pope but with an Orthodox liturgy in the Ukrainian vernacular, helped to provide West Ukrainians with a sense of their own identity, distinct from both Poland and Russia. The main thesis of Bohdan Bociurkiw's detailed and painstakingly researched monograph is therefore that 'neither Marxist atheism nor Leninism alone were motives for the forcible incorporation of the [Ukrainian Catholic] Church into the Moscow patriarchate [in 1946]. Instead, tsarist policies towards the Greek Catholic Church provide a fuller explanation for Stalin's actions [. . .] the common denominator [behind tsarist and Soviet repression of the Church] was the desire to remove the religious and ecclesiastical

barriers to Russification of the Ukrainians by forcing the Greek Catholics into the state-dominated Russian Orthodox Church' (p. 235).

Bociurkiw argues that the staged 'unity sobor' held in L'viv in March 1946 to repudiate the 1596 Union and 'reunite' the Greek Catholic Church with the Russian Orthodox Church was modelled on similar assemblies arranged under the tsars, such as the 1839 'Polatsk sobor' that dissolved the Church in Right-Bank Ukraine and Belarus, and the 1875 abolition of the remaining eparchy in Kholm. Moreover, it was foreshadowed by the hostile measures taken during previous Russian/Soviet occupations of Galicia in 1914-15 and 1939-41, and by the transfer of Kremianets' district from Volhynia to Galicia in December 1939, so that the local Pochaiv monastery, a stronghold of conservative Orthodoxy, could serve as a Trojan Horse for the imposition of the 'reunion'. For Bociurkiw, therefore, the dissolution of the Church was simply the final act in a long campaign of attempted 'ethnic ecclesicide' (p. 237).

On the eve of World War II, the Greek Catholic Church was still a strong and popular institution, with almost 3,000 priests and 3.6 million faithful in Ukrainian territories in inter-war Poland, including those in Peremyshl' and Lemko Ukraine (pp. 28-29), as well as a further 360,000 believers in Eastern Czechoslovakia or Subcarpathian Rus' (p. 215). Although there were some tensions between 'Latinizers' and 'Easternizers' (*vostochnyky*), Bociurkiw argues that the Church still had a powerful sense of its own unique identity, and that both the hierarchy and the faithful were united in their hostility to the 1946 'reunion'. The latter was a wholly artificial affair, directed and implemented from outside by the Soviet regime. According to Bociurkiw, 'the abolition of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and its absorption into the Russian Orthodox Church had evidently been planned since September 1939' (p. 102), with the formal decision being taken by Stalin and Molotov as early as March 1945 (p. 104). Although certain proposals for compromise were floated in 1944-46, their function was only to disguise the authorities' true intentions: 'Stalin's regime never contemplated a lasting *modus vivendi* with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Instead it viewed the latter not merely as a part of a united anti-Soviet front in Western Ukraine, but as its spiritual core' (p. 100).

Although the Soviet authorities promoted a puppet 'Initiative Group' to take charge of the proceedings, which was headed by Havryil Kostel'nyk, the leader of the inter-war 'Easternizers', Bociurkiw argues that the 1946 'sobor' was clearly uncanonical. The Initiative Group took its orders from Georgii Karpov, head of the KGB's department on religious affairs, the regular hierarchy of the church was imprisoned or refused to attend, key members of the Initiative Group had already been consecrated as Orthodox bishops *before* the sobor, and delegates to the sobor were not elected, but appointed by the Initiative Group and included many lay persons. Moreover, on the opening day of the sobor, each of the delegates was 'fortified at breakfast with a hundred grams of vodka and two hundred grams of wine' (p. 164). Kostel'nyk's group were therefore not representative of the Church as a whole. The real spiritual leader of the Greek Catholics, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, had died in November 1944, and his consecrated successor, Iosyf Slipyi, was in a

Soviet prison, where he remained until his departure for Rome in 1963. In Transcarpathia, his equivalent, Bishop Teodor Romzha, had to be murdered in November 1947 to make way for 'reunion' (Kostel'nyk himself was assassinated in 1948, although probably by the Soviet secret police rather than the nationalist Ukrainian underground). Moreover, outside of Galicia the Soviet authorities dispensed with the formalities. No 'sobor' preceded the dissolution of the Transcarpathian Church in 1949, as the depth of local resistance meant none could be organized, as was also the case in Poland in 1947-49 and Czechoslovakia in 1950.

That said, Bociurkiw accepts that Kostel'nyk's Galician Initiative Group had a certain importance. He records that it 'was determined to ensure that the "reunited" Galician Church would, as a minimum, retain its national characteristics and maintain, as much as possible, a continuity with the past' (p. 188). Although such expectations were over-optimistic, the legacy of Ukrainian 'neo-Orthodoxy' in Galicia after 1946 'made it easier to draw a significant number of former Greek Catholics and their descendants into precisely this kind of Orthodoxy and [...] facilitated the defection of numerous Orthodox parishes in Galicia to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (rather than to the revived Greek Catholic Church) in 1989 and 1990' (p. 243). The Greek Catholics have therefore been unable to recover the hegemonic position amongst the Galician Ukrainian faithful that they enjoyed in 1939. Moreover, the re-legalized Church is still plagued by disputes between those who temporarily joined the Orthodox Church, and those who remained 'underground' or have returned from the diaspora.

One weakness of Bociurkiw's book is that the narrative is interrupted in the period between the two Soviet occupations of Galicia in 1939-41 and 1944-45 (as his focus is on the relationship between the Church and the Soviet state). Nevertheless the period is of considerable interest, as a fuller explanation of Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi's wartime manoeuvres might have placed the Greek Catholic Church's 'Easternizing' mission in a clearer context. Bociurkiw does discuss the Archeparchial synods of 1940 and 1941, when Sheptyts'kyi sought to 'purge [the Church] of Latin-rite borrowings and innovations so as to bring it closer to its Byzantino-Slavic origins and to remove one of the main barriers separating the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches' (p. 51). In 1941-44, however, Sheptyts'kyi went further and made 'reunification' overtures to the various factions amongst the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (not Moscow!). At the same time, he sought to establish new Greek Catholic parishes in German-occupied territories in Kiev, Odessa, Vinnytsia, Kharkiv and Poltava, and even amongst the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia, as a bridgehead towards future ecumenical accord, despite the suspicions of the Vatican (pp. 45-47).

Sheptyts'kyi was trying to revive the traditions of Volodymyr the Great's tenth-century church of 'Kiev, Halych [Galicia] and all Rus', as were, in his opinion, the original signatories of the Union of Brest. In other words, his long-term ambition was for a grand reunion of all the Ukrainian churches, if sufficient common ground could be found. As Bociurkiw rightly points out, these were hardly the terms achieved in 1946, but Ukrainian ecumenism

formed part of the background to the events of the late 1940s, and as an unfulfilled project remains an issue of great importance today.

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