

## After “Reunion”: Soviet Power and the “Reunited” and “Non-Reunited” Greco-Catholic Clergy in Eastern Galicia (1950s–1960s)

Kateryna Budz

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### Abstract

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In 1946, the Soviet regime liquidated the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church in Galicia through its forced “reunion” with the state-supported Russian Orthodox Church. Whereas most Greco-Catholic clergy officially joined the ROC, the “non-reunited” priests often experienced arrests and then, upon release, confrontation with clergy who had gone over to Orthodoxy. Based on archival sources and oral history accounts, the present article analyzes the extent of alienation that emerged between the former colleagues, friends, and relatives among the Greco-Catholic clergy as a result of the “reunion” campaign of the UGCC with the ROC. Drawing on the theoretical insights from the works of Hannah Arendt, Jan Gross, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, the article situates the relations between the two categories of clergy in the debate on “social atomization” under totalitarian regimes. The author concludes that although the Soviet state mostly succeeded in alienating the “reunited” and the “non-reunited” priests, the contacts between the two categories of clergy never ceased completely.



In keeping with the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, in September 1939 the Red Army occupied Eastern Galicia, a part of the Second Polish Republic in the interwar period. After the period of Nazi occupation (1941–1944), Eastern Galicia, a region populated mostly by Ukrainians, came again under Soviet rule. Intending to destroy the potential sources of opposition to their regime, the Soviets abolished the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (hereafter UGCC). The Church's abolition at the pseudo-council of Lviv (March 8–10, 1946) took the form of allegedly voluntary "reunion" with the Russian Orthodox Church (hereafter ROC), which enjoyed Stalin's support after 1943.<sup>1</sup> The "reunion" campaign was mainly accomplished by governmental organizations such as the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (hereafter CAROC) and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (hereafter CARC) as well as the Soviet state security organs.<sup>2</sup>

Already in April 1945, the head of the UGCC, Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj, as well as Bishops Hryhorii Khomyshyn, Mykolai Charnetsky, Mykyta Budka, and Ivan Liatyshevsky were arrested. In May 1945, three Greco-Catholic priests were organized into the Initiative Group for Reunification of the UGCC with the ROC, with a clear aim to portray "reunion" as a voluntary action. In the following months, the head of the Initiative Group, Fr. Havryil Kostelnyk, accompanied by a state security agent Ivan Bohdanov, held a number of meetings with the parish priests of the Lviv *oblast*, convincing them to join his group.<sup>3</sup> As of March, 1946, in Drohobych, Lviv, Stanisla-

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<sup>1</sup> Given the absence of the Greco-Catholic bishops at the council, its decision to dissolve the UGCC was not canonically legitimate. Since prior to the council the members of the "Initiative Group," namely the Greco-Catholic priests Fr. Antonii Pelvetsky and Fr. Mykhail Melnyk, were consecrated to the episcopacy by the Orthodox hierarchy, they could not be regarded as Greco-Catholic bishops. For more details see: Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939–1950)* (Edmonton-Toronto: CIUS Press, 1996):181–182.

<sup>2</sup> In 1965, the CAROC and the CARC were merged into a single institution, the Council for Religious Affairs (hereafter CRA).

<sup>3</sup> See Bohdanov's reports on the meetings in: *Ликвідація УГКЦ (1939–1946). Документи радянських органів державної безпеки. У 2-х т., vol. 2* (К.:

viv and Ternopil *oblasts* 997 out of 1,270 clergy remaining in Galicia, that is, seventy-eight percent of them, became formal members of the Initiative Group.<sup>4</sup> The remaining priests, who refused to “sign on to Orthodoxy” for confessional, national, and political reasons, were labeled as “recalcitrant Uniates.” Whereas the “reunited” priests usually kept their former parishes, a great number of the “non-reunited” clergymen served sentences for “anti-Soviet” activities in the Stalinist era and worked “illegally” in the “catacombs” up to legalization of the UGCC in 1989–1990.

The present article aims to explore the relations between the “reunited” and the “non-reunited” clergy in the post-Stalin era.<sup>5</sup> The paper specifically looks at how Soviet religious policy both succeeded and failed in turning the former colleagues, friends, and relatives among the Greco-Catholic clergy into ideological foes. The research is based on the published and unpublished archival material, mainly the CAROC and CRA documentation from the archives in Kyiv and Moscow as well as interviews with the “reunited” and the “non-reunited” clergy from the Archive of the Institute of Church History in Lviv. The paper combines the methodological approaches of political science, social history, historical anthropology, and anthropology of religion.

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ПП Сергійчук М.І., 2006), 95–100, 105–108, 123–125, 140–149, 176–184, 198–209, 204–245.

<sup>4</sup> Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГАРФ), ф. 6991, оп. 1, д. 33, ф. 192.

<sup>5</sup> The terms are used in quotation marks because, first, the concept “reunion” is artificial, given its formal and forced character; second, the terms come from the CAROC documentation; and third, to avoid confusion, since, in the (Greek) Catholic usage, the Orthodox are defined as “non-reunited” (*neziedyneni*), i.e. without ties to Rome. Following both the CAROC and Church terminology, in this article, “reunited” priests appear also as “Orthodox,” “new Orthodox,” and “signed” (since they “signed onto Orthodoxy”), whereas the “non-reunited” clergymen are defined also as “Catholic,” “Greco-Catholic,” “clandestine,” and “Uniate” (in quotes only). In this article, the categories “non-reunited” and “clandestine” usually overlap, though they are not identical: not all the “non-reunited” priests were active in the “catacombs,” whereas many young candidates received ordination after 1946.