

AUTOCEPHALOUS MOVEMENT IN BUKOVYNA IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE LATE 1980s AND EARLY 1990s

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Abstract. *The paper presents a detailed analysis of the religious processes in Chernivtsi Oblast, which took place during the period under study. The revival of the Church and religious life of the region and the specifics of church-state, interfaith and inter-religious relations in the post-Soviet time and at an early stage of Ukraine's sovereignty are characterized. Particular attention is paid to the autocephalous movement in the region in the context of sociopolitical transformations and the efforts to establish its status.*

Key words: *ROC, UOC-MP, UAOC, Autocephaly, Church, religious organizations, interfaith relationship, the relationship between the Church and state, conflict, tolerance/intolerance.*

1. Introduction

The Church plays an important political and ideological role in the independent Ukrainian state. The interests of both are closely intertwined in various spheres of social life, as the state ensures the legal status of religious organizations, whereas the Church took over the duty to help resolve pressing global issues and to concern for the spiritual and moral state of the society. It is this very model of relationship that should be the key to avoiding potential conflicts on religious grounds. However, the Church and religious situation in modern Ukraine and the ability of the state to guarantee the freedom of conscience for citizens, which is critical for specific manifestations of the free choice of an individual in the society, largely depend on the authorities' position in relation to the Church, as well as on a number of other factors, namely social activity of religious organizations, policy regime, regional and historical specificity of a particular oblast, that can acquire both constructive and destructive dialogue forms. Therefore, in this paper we set an important task: to consider the specifics of state-church relations in Chernivtsi Oblast during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rebirth of the Church and religious life in the region. The latter is particularly important for the development of the Ukrainian society, because the religious policy of the state is the result of consolidation of Church and state interests.

The purpose of the study is a comprehensive analysis of the specifics of the Church and religious life revival in the region during the period under study in the context of social and political transformations, as well as understanding of ideology and contents of the autocephalous movement in Northern Bukovyna.

2. Problem / Methodology

Religious institutions and religious organizations of Chernivtsi Oblast has always played a leading role in shaping the spiritual values of Bukovynians and positively influenced cultural, spiritual, educational and social activities in the

region. Occurring Religious processes in Northern Bukovina contribute to the formation of the nation and the state, in spite of still-existing difficulties in the inter-denominational relations. Therefore, these processes have always been of interest to researchers in our country and abroad, and this interest, in its turn, motivates further research in the field. References for the study were provided by the Department of the cultural heritage protection, and for nationality and religion affairs of the Chernivtsi Oblast State Administration, sources cited are formal requests and statements of government officials and institutions on church agenda, official Church documents and speeches of leaders of denominations, ecclesiastic publications and secular media materials, interviews and the like.

Analysis of the Church and religious life of the region in the post-Soviet period in the context of socio-political transformation requires a comprehensive methodological approach, because the use of different methods (e.g. the problem-historical method for presenting historical material of the early period of Ukraine's independence, the comparative historical method for comparing data and facts in the same historical context, the retrospective method for the disclosure of the past through the study of traditions continuity, the statistical method for statistical analysis of quantitative indicators of different nature and value, method of analysis and synthesis for the study of documentary and literary sources, the diachronic approach to the structuring of the research, and other methods) gives the opportunity to explore denominational specifics and church life of the region in the period under study.

Scientific novelty of the research lies in the attempt to explore the establishment of the confessional network in Bukovyna in the early period of Ukraine's independence in close connection with the state-church relations in general. The complicated confessional situation in the region during the revival of the Church and religious life is explored, the nature and content of the religious policy in the region are clarified; the nature of the autocephalous movement and its role in the new paradigm of the state are highlighted.

This study is part of the planned research, conceptually correlated with the subject of scientific and theoretical and practical problems solved by the staff of the Department of Culturology, Religious Studies and Theology of Philosophy and Theology Faculty of Yuri Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University.

2. Results

Newborn civil and religious freedom after the crisis of the Soviet system and Gorbachev's Perestroika in the late 1980s raised the necessity for developing a new model of church-state relations thus motivating in 1987 the activity of believers in the issue of re-opening temples that were once closed by the totalitarian regime. The Office of the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in Chernivtsi Oblast under the USSR Council of Ministers was deluged with the oblast residents' petitions about the return of places of worship and church property. It is worth noting that in 1987, the Office of the Commissioner received more than 185 letters which were requests and petitions, rather than accusations or threats [6, l. 9]. However, because of their undeniably political coloring, all those letters have not found any positive feedback from the local authorities that couldn't move beyond the longtime atheist propaganda.

This state of affairs has changed in 1988, after the Church Council dedicated to the 1000th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus', which, as the modern researcher S. Yaremchuk aptly noted, was the first Jubilee Council in Soviet times, the purpose of which was not the election of a new patriarch, but addressing the pressing religious issues. Decisions of the Council radically changed the relationship between the Church, state and society [16, p. 223]. While these transformations were not legally warranted, as the old law was still in operation, they allowed the Church to leave the constraints of the Soviet regime behind. Believers were given the right to register their communities with government agencies and revive the Church and religious life.

All this is evidenced by more than 107 letters about the registration of Orthodox communities and the return of churches received that year by the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs at Chernivtsi Oblast. Along with this, there have been structural changes in the procedure of registration of religious communities. [7, l. 11]. It should be noted that the positive dynamics of registering new Orthodox communities, as has been stated above, was observed in the middle of 1988 when more than 27 communities were registered. Local authorities, taking into account the spiritual needs of the faithful and a steady increase in their number, began to transfer religious buildings to communities. As of 1989, another 57 religious communities were recorded in Chernivtsi Oblast, and another 20 – in 1990 [8, l. 14]. Thus, in 1988-1990 there were more than a hundred of Orthodox communities in Chernivtsi Oblast, and by the end of 1990 their number was 360, of which 350 had premises for prayer in ownership and 10 were constructing religious buildings of their own. In 1990, 14 Orthodox temples were built in the region, 30 houses were built and 7 houses were bought for priests. Local authorities returned about 10 parish buildings

that formerly belonged to the Church. Restoration work has been done on many parish temples, and 12 chapels were constructed in Kitsman, Zastavna and Novoselytsia Regions [5, pp. 2-11].

The authorities were gradually withdrawing from purely bureaucratic methods, which had a positive impact on the religious climate in the region was manifested in the following basic facts: first, the priests were given the right to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful, and the ruling bishops were granted free entrance to the parishes. For example, in 1985 Chernivtsi Bishop served a total of 14 bishops services to the eparchy parishes; in 1988 this number increased to 61 [16, p. 229]. Second, according to Article 39 of the Law "On Elections of People's Deputies of the USSR", adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR 1 December, 1988, members of civic organizations, including religious ones, could stand for election [See: 3], which meant that religious leaders could exercise their civil rights. Third, representatives of the Church and religious organizations gained access to the media and were able to freely attend conferences, educational institutions and labor collectives. For example, in 1989, His Eminence Anthonii (Volodymyr Ivanovych Moskalenko), Bishop of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna (30 December, 1986 to 23 November, 1990 – I.L.) took an active part in social conventions and meetings with students and teachers of educational institutions, including the conference of The People's Rukh of Ukraine, in the agenda of which was the question of Gorbachev's revolutionary Perestroika. Also, His Eminence stood for election to the Regional Council People's Deputies [16, p. 229]. Fourth, the authorities did not interfere with the construction of churches and chapels or church bells installation, the organization of religious processions and the commission of occasional services in the homes of believers, in particular, memorial services. Strict control during worships, militia cordons around the temples on holidays, mistreatment of believers at work or study and the like became things of the past.

These revolutionary transformations have contributed to the national awakening of the long-suffering of the Ukrainian people and the rapid growth of the number of believers, including young people. The authorized CRA in Chernivtsi Oblast wrote in the 1988 Report about "the increase of attendance at temples, youth making up 20-30%" [9, l. 11]. The Secretary of the Executive Committee of Khotyn Region addressed these tendencies: "As for the work of the commissions under current changes, they abandon the practice of studiously avoiding explanations why you cannot do what the law allows. Yet, it's quite a bit of challenge since in one year we have to do what has not been done for four decades" [10, l. 37]. In fact, 1989 was the year the government last tried to impose such thing as scientific atheism on the society.

Along with these representative changes in Chernivtsi Oblast, known for its national and religious diversity, and, in historical perspective, for inter-religious tolerance and liberality, political instability and the threat of an explosion of new inter-confessional and Church-state conflicts were brewing. This situation had both objective and subjective

reasons: first, the revival of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (hereinafter – the UAOC) took place; second, after hard Soviet times, the challenge of Greek Catholics, especially in Galicia; added; third, these trends have become the impetus for the revival and spread of Protestant denominations, which were mostly persecuted and forbidden under the Soviets, and in the early 1990s gained the right to register their religious communities. As the 22 January 1991 issue of the local newspaper "Bukovynske Viche" related, "...at the meeting of the Regional Executive Committee a number of religious communities were registered. Also, the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the village of Anadoly, Khotyn Region, obtained permission to build a temple, and the community of Evangelical Baptist Christians of the village of Zarozhany - to construct a new chapel instead of the one which is beyond repair. The registered community of Evangelical Baptist Christians in the village of Stanivtsi, Hlyboka Region, was allowed to rent a private house for religious services. The Seventh-day Adventist community in the village of Mlynky, Khotyn Region, was allowed to buy a house for the same purpose" [2, p. 3]. However, the leading position in Chernivtsi Oblast belonged to only two denominations, namely the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as part of the Russian Orthodox Church (hereinafter - the UOC-MP, the ROC) and the UAOC, which appeared in the focus of heated debates and confrontation. The situation around these Orthodox denominations resulted in protracted conflicts which made a noticeable influence on the religious life in the region.

The intense expansion of autocephaly which promotes the Ukrainian word and national revival and meets the needs of the society turned into a factor of major worldview changes in many local residents. As far back as in March, 1990, a small group of residents of Chernivtsi applied for registration of the UAOC community and asked for premises of the Holy Spirit Cathedral which, under puzzling circumstances, was immediately handed over to the community of the UOC-MP. Local authorities accounted their refusal to allocate premises of the Holy Spirit Cathedral to the UAOC community for the absence of the official registration of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church at the time [11, l. 1].

Then-existing tension between Orthodox Churches provoked conflicts not only over religious buildings and church property, but over congregations. In these conflicts, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church appealed to historical justice, whereas the UOC-MP, having ensured political support of the local authorities, rejected the opponents' arguments, which generated mass protests of the local residents. The known Bukovynian journalist Oleksandra Popeliuk gave the description of those events: "Local powers ought not deter the process of revival of our Church, so neither ought they hinder the transmission of our religious sanctities, but make sure that in Chernivtsi, at least one of the existing temples (for instance, St. Paraskeva Church) was given to those on whose land we live. And with great difficulty given to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church were the oldest and the most miserable... Then, it turns out that Russian Church and so-called

Ukrainian Orthodox Church are supported by the ruling party and the government, that is to say they stand of the on the platform of the Communist Party of the soviet Union, which, unfortunately, is not interested in the spiritual revival of the Ukrainian people" [13, p. 8]. Yet, in spite of all attempts of some officials and supporters of the UOC-MP to prevent the revival of Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and along with that, the Ukrainian spirit, culture and language, the idea of autocephaly continued its triumphantly victorious progress.

On 5-6 June 1990, Kyiv hosted the First All-Ukrainian Orthodox Council (the third revival of the UAOC – I.L.) involving some 700 delegates from across Ukraine, including seven bishops and more than 200 priests. The Council unanimously legitimised the restored UAOC and took the historic decision to proclaim Patriarchate of the UAOC. It should be noted that the delegates from the clergy and laity of Chernivtsi Oblast were present at the Council, namely Mitered Protopriest Stepan Antonovych and laymen Dmytro Kovaliuk, Mykola Olevych and Mykola Dzhuriak. The Council decided on the ordination of Daniel (Mykhailo Stepanovych Kovalchuk) the Bishop of Chernivtsi, Khotyn and all of Bukovyna. A native of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast and a graduate of the Moscow Theological Seminary (1973), Bishop Daniel served as a priest in parishes of Galicia (the villages of Holyn and Novytsia – I.L.) [14, p. 540].

On 10 June, 1990, at the church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos in the village of Mamaivtsi, Kitsman Region, in the lead of Bishop Daniel the first service in the Ukrainian language was held [4, p. 6]. And on 28 June, Bishop Daniel made his first appearance in Chernivtsi, speaking at the unsanctioned rally organized by The People's Rukh of Ukraine in memory of the political prisoners of the Soviet regime [11, l. 1]. This important event in the life of the Bukovynians marked the beginning of the revival, establishment and development of the Ukrainian Church in Bukovyna and at the same time, initiated large-scale confrontations. It is also worth remembering that, during the rally Bishop Daniel, answering journalists' questions about who should administer the churches in our region, clearly stated: "Neither Moscow nor Rome built churches in our region, but the common people – by their own efforts and resources and with faith in God. So, let the people decide" [4, p. 7]. This public statement, together with strong things said and decisive actions taken won the Most Reverend the support of the socio-political organizations and parties that opposed Communists – the People's The People's Rukh of Ukraine of Ukraine, URP, UHS and others in his vigorous efforts to establish new UAOC communities of the UAOC, which yielded positive results. Soon several priests of UOC-MP together with communities and churches joined Bishop Daniel [16, p. 239; 5, p. 6].

One must not forget that in the 1990s, almost all church property (churches, chapels, crosses, church utensils, etc.) belonged to the UOC-MP, so the UAOC believers in Bukovyna had no place to pray and worship God. In Chernivtsi, 2 September to 4 December, 1990, the Divine Liturgy was officiated in the church yard [1, ll. 19-20].

2 October, 1990, an event of outmost importance for the UAOC took place: the government of Ukraine officially registered the statute of the Church, which made it possible to register the UAOC communities across the country, and in November, 1990, the first 3 communities of the UAOC were legitimized in Chernivtsi (Chernivtsi Oblast Executive Committee decision, № 261 of 21 November, 1990). These religious organizations received two temples (St. Nicolas Church in Volhohradska (now Sahaidachnoho) Street and the Church of the Dormition in Novoushytska Street) and a construction license. There were no conflicts over these churches because, since the Soviet times, they haven't been used for designed purposes (St. Nicholas Church was a Beekeepers Society warehouse at the time) [11, ll. 19-21], and a few days later the ancient Church of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist in the village of Vyzhenka, Vyzhnytsia Region, was transferred to the faithful of the UAOC [4, p. 6]. Also in December this year, Daniel (Kovalchuk) was officially registered by the authorized CRA as a bishop [16, p. 240], which gave him extensive rights and opportunities in the implementation of solutions important for the revival of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Bukovyna.

One can not ignore the fact that in establishing Ukrainian values and his active religious activities, Bishop Daniel and has received support from the Rector of Yuri Fedkovich Chernivtsi State University (hereinafter – the CSU, since 2000 – Chernivtsi National University), Professor Kostyshyn Stepan Stepanovich. At the same time, the intellectual and Church leaders of Chernivtsi Oblast raised the issue of expediency of the restoration of the theological faculty as part of the University. To implement this plan, two major documents were issued: the 30 October, 1990 Academic Council resolution on reopening of the Theological Faculty that passed unanimously, and Order of the Rector of 1 November, 1990 on transferring the University church of the Three Holy Hierarchs under custody of the UAOC. At the same time, Professor Kostyshyn filed the petition to the Ministry of Education to allow activity of the Theological Faculty as part of the CSU [15, pp. 66-67].

These events have caused a very negative response from the pro-Russian believers in the region, and on 9 November this year a formal protest was filed to the authorities from the clergy of the UOC Chernivtsi Diocese headed by Bishop Anthony (Moskalenko) of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna and representatives of all Orthodox parishes of the Oblast. This letter of protest was sent, in particular, to the Chairman of the Regional Council of People's Deputies B. I. Dmitriev, the Chairman of the Regional Executive Committee I.M. Hnatyshyn, the Chairman of the Chernivtsi City Council I.V. Boiko, the Chairman of the City Executive Committee P.M. Kaspruk and to the Minister of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the USSR V.D. Parkhomenko, and to the editorial offices of the local newspapers *Radianska Bukovyna* and *Zorile Bucovinei* (a newspaper in Romanian – I.L.).

This formal protest should be analyzed from the perspective of its basic provisions and text components. First, the letter is xenophobic and aimed against the idea of autocephalous movement, referring to the faithful of the

UAOC as "autocephalist schismatics", and second, the clergy of the UOC-MP required to immediately return the buildings of the University, which originally hosted the Residence of Metropolitans of Bukovyna and Dalmatia, to the Russian Church (a question that must be asked, "What does the UOC-MP have to do with the Residence?"), and third, in the event of denied demands, pro-Russian activists threatened to take over the University buildings.

This is how these demands were explicated in the letter: "We ask to immediately stop these actions and dismiss these provokers of ethnic hatred, Rector Kostyshyn and his cronies. If this is not done in the coming days, we reserve the right to struggle for justice and for the property of our Church. We disclaim responsibility for the possible bloodshed and place it on Kostyshyn, Rukh and autocephalists" [12, l. 223]. On 4 July, 1991 the Diocesan Board of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna Consistory of the UOC-MP sent similar letter to the Academic Council of the CSU. The supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate insisted on the UOC-MP participation in the Theological Faculty reopening otherwise threatened to raise all the faithful of the diocese "... to a general strike of workers of Bukovyna" [12, l. 116].

However, attempts of intimidation on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate supporters in Chernivtsi Oblast became more frequent and still continue, because the revival of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and with it the Ukrainian culture, spirituality and patriotism crossed out all the plans of Moscow as for the Ukrainian lands and the Church, in particular. Impressive is the fact that the main task of the UOC-MP was, apparently, not to reduce the number of Protestant denominations, or even the Catholic communities, in the region but eliminate the Autocephalous Church.

4. Conclusions

To summarize, the following should be noted. Unfortunately, confessional bias (non-canonical / schismatics / fallen out of Grace etc.), claims to absolute truth and the possibility of salvation only within a specific confession, insistently promoted by the UOC-MP, intolerance in inter-Church relations contribute to prolonging conflicts in the denominational network, and therefore, can be viewed as factors of social instability.

It is important to note that at the time of rebirth, when Ukraine – its culture, language and economy revived, the resurgence of the Ukrainian Church was ineluctable. A new paradigm of relations between the state and the Church begun to form, because the rapid spread of religious organizations has set new tasks before local authorities, primarily establishing inter-confessional and Church-state dialogue and cooperation through the relevant institutional structures.

Local authorities, on the one hand, had to create an effective model of Church-state dialogue and to reduce inter-confessional tension in the region by maintaining balanced position in relation to religion and the Church, but on the other hand, took sides, supporting one or another confession to the disadvantage of others, thus contributing to the prolonged inter-confessional confrontations, particularly contradictions between the Orthodox Churches.

Religious and denominational situation in Chernivtsi Oblast is influenced by various factors that cause tension in inter-confessional relations. It is impossible to deal with current problems without a true dialogue between religious organizations and their leaders, the state and the Church institutions, and most importantly, between the believers of different confessions. To reduce conflicts on the religious ground, all participants of the religious relations should recognize the principle of tolerance and embed it into the public conscience in Ukraine and, more specifically, in Chernivtsi Oblast.

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