

The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Ukraine

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The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Ukraine, an underground publication of the Action Group for the Defence of the Rights of Believers and the Church*, appeared in Ukraine in early 1984 and made its way to the West later that year.¹ The Action Group was founded on 9 September 1982 by Iosyp Terelya, its first chairman, and four other Ukrainian Catholics with the purpose of seeking legalisation of their church. Since 1 March 1984 the chairman of the Action Group has been Vasyl' Kobryn, who was arrested in November 1984 and sentenced on 22 March 1985, under article 187-1 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code, to three years labour camp. Terelya was arrested on 8 February 1985 and on 20 August was sentenced to a twelve-year term on charges of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.

The *Chronicle* is a composite document, compiled from different sources and containing material of a variety of types and on a variety of subjects. This renders the customary uncertainty regarding the authenticity of all portions of a *samizdat* document particularly acute.

The *Chronicle* states that 81 Ukrainian Catholic priests were secretly ordained in Transcarpathia (in western Ukraine) over the previous three years. There is a three-year underground monastery school in that region for the Christian education of youth. It is in Transcarpathia that the Ukrainian Catholic Church is strongest (issue No. 2). In the late 1970s five Catholic priests travelled to the Belorussian SSR and established three deaneries and dozens of parishes. Dozens of Ukrainian Catholic missionary priests have been active in eastern Ukraine as well (No. 7).

The *Chronicle* provides information on repression of Seventh-Day Adventists (No. 1), Baptists (Nos. 1, 2, 5), Belorussian Catholics (No. 7), Jehovah's Witnesses (Nos. 1, 2, 5), Orthodox (Nos. 1, 4, 5), Pentecostals (No. 7), and Ukrainian Catholics (Nos. 1-9). Searches, confiscations and imposition of fines are recorded. Among suggestions of how to behave during a search, praying aloud is advised; one must pray, too, for the

*See *RCL* Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 290-93.

persecutors conducting the search (No. 3). Accounts of the trials of Polanya Batyo (May 1982) (No. 4) and Viktor Rafal's'ky (February 1984) (No. 5), including the composition of the court in the former case and the text of the decision in the latter, are given. Texts of documents concerning the 1974 trial of Fr Vasyl' Bilyns'ky and Vasyl' Kobryn's dismissal from work are provided (No. 9). The *Chronicle* also gives statistical information on prisoners in labour camps VL 315/30 (L'viv [L'vov])* , VL 315/40 (Drohobych [Drogobych]) and IV 301/59 (Trudove [Trudovoye]), (Pischanka [Peschanka] district, Vinnitsya region) (No. 1). For example, according to the *Chronicle* three hundred Ukrainian Catholics are confined in labour camp VL 315/30 (No. 1). Details are given on the treatment and conditions of Christian prisoners in labour camps VL 315/30, VL 315/40 (No. 1) and IN 316/93 (Novodanylivka [Novodanilovka], Kazankim [Kazankov] district, Nykolayiv [Nikolayev] region) (No. 2).

Churches in the following towns and villages are reported to have been closed because of the parishioners' refusal to accept Russian Orthodox priests: Mereshchiv [Mereshchev] and Kemerov, Peremyshlyany district, L'viv region, in 1983; Korosne [Korosno], Peremyshlyany district, on 17 March 1984; and Dobryanka, Tyachiv [Tyachev] district, Transcarpathian region, on Easter Day 1984 (No. 5). In a conversation with officials on 23 April 1984 in Uzhhorod [Uzhgorod], Transcarpathian region, Iosyp Terelya is reported to have mentioned that since the new year over thirty Ukrainian Catholic churches had been closed, for the same reason (No. 6). A church in Stari Strilyshcha (Starye Strelishcha), Zhydachiv [Zhydachov] district, L'viv region, was closed in 1983; in Veryatsya, Vynohradiv [Vinogradov] district, Transcarpathian region, a church was converted in 1984 into a medical aid station which the villagers boycotted (No. 9). Churches and chapels are reported to have been destroyed in the following towns and villages: Martyniv [Martynov], Rohatyn [Rogatin] district, Ternopil' [Ternopol'] region on 4 April 1984 (No. 4); Bibrka [Bobrka], Peremyshlyany district, L'viv region on 23 May 1984 (No. 5); Pnyatyn, Peremyshlyany district on 21 June 1984 (No. 7). In June 1984 a group of young people gathered at the site of a destroyed monastery at Boronyava, Khust district, Transcarpathian region (No. 9). The *Chronicle* also reports desecration of synagogues in Dolyna [Dolina] and Bolekhiv [Bolekhov] (Ivano-Frankivs'k [Ivano-Frankovsk] region) and destruction of a Jewish cemetery in L'viv (No. 6).

Local authorities in the Transcarpathian region are reported to have interfered with Christmas carol singing and to have arrested one believer for taking part in the performance of a traditional Nativity play (No. 1). On 7 June 1984 the Russian Orthodox Church authorities in the

*Place-names in this article are given in their Ukrainian form, with the Russian form in parentheses following the first mention — *Ed.*

Transcarpathian region ordered all priests to celebrate Mass on Saturday evening instead of Sunday. The next day the priests were told by the party regional executive committees that matins and vespers were likewise to be sung on Saturdays instead of on Sundays. The party officials also ordered them to grow beards, in the Orthodox manner (No. 5). In Belorussia the authorities have begun a campaign of intimidation against Catholics. The *Chronicle* calls for prayer and aid for the rebirth of the underground Belorussian Catholic church (No. 7).

From January to April 1984, between 827 and 921 persons in western Ukraine handed in their internal passports in protest against religious persecution. Over 290 persons are reported to have done so in the Transcarpathian region alone (No. 3). Five hundred and twenty Ukrainian Catholics reportedly burned their internal passports. Iosyp Terelya has predicted that over 3,000 may do likewise (No. 1). The *Chronicle* provides the names of ten persons who have handed in or destroyed their documents. Fifty-four persons have been convicted in Transcarpathian Ukraine for refusing to do military service; among them are 18 Jehovah's Witnesses (No. 2). Militia attempting to break up carol singing in the mountain village of Lysycheve [Lisichevo] (Irshava district, Transcarpathian region) were beaten back by the villagers (No. 1); at Dobryanka and Martyniv villagers initially succeeded in routing the militia and civilian auxiliaries (Nos 4, 5).

Persecution has been documented in detail: the *Chronicle* announces the compilation of a "black book" containing the names and descriptions of those who have committed crimes against humanity in the course of persecution, and provides a sample list including practitioners of psychiatric abuse (No. 4).

The *Chronicle* contains biographies of persecuted believers such as Polanya Batyo (No. 4), Vasyl' Kobryn (No. 4), Fr Antyn Potochnyak (No. 5), Fr Mykhaylo Vynnyts'ky (No. 7) and Fr Vasyl' Bilyns'ky (No. 9). There is a special appeal to the Ukrainian emigration by Iosyp Terelya on behalf of imprisoned Russian Orthodox believer Yelena Sannikova, who was arrested on 19 January 1984 after publicly defending Terelya (No. 4).

Altogether the *Chronicle* mentions 65 known or presumed believers who have suffered some form of repression (including five who have recently died). This number includes one Seventh-Day Adventist, nine Baptists, six Jehovah's Witnesses, two Orthodox, two Pentecostals, 35 Ukrainian Catholics, and eight persons of unknown denomination. Thirty-six of these believers presently are, or are presumed to be, in confinement (including exile). The *Chronicle* states, however, that in one corrective labour colony alone — VL 315/30 in L'viv — there are three hundred Ukrainian Catholics, 29 Baptists, two Pentecostals, 15 Jehovah's Witnesses, five Seventh-Day Adventists, and 39 Orthodox

(No. 1).

On 14 March 1984 Fr Hryhori Budzins'ky was approached by party and government representatives avowedly seeking a dialogue with the Action Group and offering registration of the Ukrainian Catholic Church (No. 4). District Prosecutor Stepan Braila reportedly told Iosyp Terelya to announce his support for a break with the Pope, specifying 10 June as the date for the announcement and warning him that physical harm could befall him should he refuse (No. 5). On 23 April 1984 Terelya was sent, ostensibly on business, to Uzhhorod, where several party and government representatives sought, over a period of two days, to persuade him to sever all ties with the Vatican in return for legalisation of an "autocephalous" Ukrainian Catholic Church. They promised personal favours as well as the return of Ukrainian Catholic churches closed in 1983-84. Terelya refused, pointing out that registration with a militantly anti-religious regime would permit control and eventual destruction of the church, and that once the church had broken with Rome it would in any case no longer be truly Catholic. The *Chronicle* provides a transcript of the conversation, presumably reconstructed from memory by Iosyp Terelya (No. 6).

Party and government plans for destruction of the underground Ukrainian Catholic Church are revealed in the text of a directive marked "secret" and dated 3 July 1984. Signed by Party Regional Committee First Secretary, Henrykh Iosypovych Bandrov's'ky, and Voloshchuk, it is entitled "Decision of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Transcarpathian region, and of the regional Soviet of People's Deputies, for the Perfection of Methods of Struggle with Manifestations of Nationalism and Zionism". Referring to the decisions of the 26th Party Congress, the succeeding Central Committee plenums and President Chernenko, the document presents several concrete proposals for combatting the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Among them are the intensification of propaganda utilising the recantations of former "anti-Soviet clericalists", the compulsory psychiatric treatment of Ukrainian Catholic activists, the addition of a new department for compulsory treatment in the regional psychiatric hospital, the allocation of space in investigation cells for 250 persons to be subjected to such treatment, the discrediting of members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church through criminal charges, and the prohibition of Sunday masses (No. 6).

In a letter to President Ronald Reagan dated 9 January 1984, Terelya points out that while the Soviet authorities would prefer Christians to confine their activities to praying in seclusion, leaving politics to the Communist Party, a true Christian cannot be blind to social and political realities such as national oppression and the war in Afghanistan (No. 4). Other parts of the *Chronicle* demonstrate its authors' concern about a variety of national and international issues. In his "Easter Talk" of 12

April 1984 Terelya explains the role of the church in the re-birth of the Ukrainian nation (No. 4).

A brief biography of 72-year-old Fr Antyn Potochnyak, who died on 29 May 1984 after being repeatedly refused medical treatment while confined, sheds light on the history of the “Penitents” movement (*Pokutnyky*). According to the *Chronicle*, the KGB infiltrated this movement in 1958-59. Fr Potochnyak joined the Penitents in order to counteract KGB provocations. In 1982 he exposed the aims and methods of the infiltrators, and thus succeeded in bringing nearly all the Penitents back to the Ukrainian Catholic Church. For this, says the *Chronicle*, he was put to death (No. 5).

The *Chronicle* reveals that a certain KGB officer participated in the assassinations of Fr Havryil Kostel’nyk, a leader of the state-sponsored group for the unification of Ukrainian Catholics with the Russian Orthodox Church, in 1948 and of anti-Catholic writer Yaroslav Halan in 1949 (No. 2). Other historical details mentioned in the *Chronicle* concern the arrest of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg by the Soviet authorities in Budapest in 1945, and his fate in the Soviet prison camp system (Nos 2, 3, 8). It accuses Savva, currently Russian Orthodox Bishop of Mukachiv-Uzhhorod [Mukachevo-Uzhgorod], of having been a police informer, responsible for a number of deaths (No. 5).

The *Chronicle* includes a declaration dated 21 June 1984 and addressed to the then Minister of Defence of the USSR, Marshal Ustinov, in which Vasyl’ Kobryn, Fr Hryhori Budzins’ky and Iosyp Terelya denounce the war in Afghanistan and the deployment of Ukrainians there (No. 6). In a personal declaration addressed to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Terelya renounces Soviet citizenship and, in a declaration of the same date, 3 May 1984, addressed to the President and Knesset of Israel, he requests Israeli citizenship (No. 3).

The *Chronicle* contains the texts of nine letters, six of them signed by Iosyp Terelya. In his letter of 12 April 1984 to Lech Wałęsa, he expresses his admiration for the Solidarity movement and calls for Christian unity in the struggle for freedom (No. 3). In an undated “Open Letter to the friends of Ukraine in China” and also to the newspaper *Renmin Ribao* (People’s Daily), Terelya supports the friendship of the Chinese and Ukrainian nations and expresses the wish to visit China to pray together with Chinese Catholics “for your people and ours” (No. 3). Terelya joins Action Group chairman Vasyl’ Kobryn and secretary Fr Hryhori Budzins’ky in signing a letter of 1 August 1984 to United Nations Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar requesting that a monument to the victims of Hitler and Stalin be placed at the Yanov concentration camp in L’viv (now a labour camp, VL 315/30) (No. 9).

The eighth issue ends with a handwritten appeal signed “I. T.” announcing that the *Chronicle* must temporarily suspend publication due

to the confiscation of materials and of two typewriters. It warns believers about KGB agents posing as Ukrainian Catholic activists and asks them not to bring unknown persons to confession or services.

¹Eleven issues of the *Chronicle* have appeared. Issue No. 1 was received by Radio Liberty, Munich, no earlier than 1 March 1984, issue No. 2 no earlier than 14 March 1984, and issue No. 3 no earlier than 16 May 1984. These three issues, mostly in Russian, were released by Radio Liberty with Russian translations of the parts originally in Ukrainian, in the *Materialy samizdata* series, dated 21 December 1984 (40/84, *Arkhiv samizdata* Nos. 5371, 5372, 5373). Issues Nos. 4 and 5, received no earlier than 12 April and 8 June 1984, respectively, were also published by Radio Liberty in the *Materialy samizdata* series (*Arkhiv samizdata* Nos. 5404 and 5406). Issue No. 4 appears there in both Ukrainian and Russian. Issue No. 6, received no earlier than 3 July 1984, was published by Radio Liberty as *Arkhiv samizdata* No. 5410, in the original and in Russian translation (except for two documents originally in Russian). Issues Nos. 7 and 8 were received in mid-December 1984 from *Glaube in der zweiten Welt* (Zollikon, Switzerland) by *Visti z Rymu* (Rome) who published them that month (XIX, No. 12/363, December 1984). Issue No. 7 appeared there in Ukrainian translation from a Russian original; Russian portions of issue No. 8 appeared in Ukrainian translation along with portions originally in Ukrainian. Issue No. 7 has also appeared as *Arkhiv samizdata* No. 5413. Issue No. 9 (late December 1984 or early January 1985) almost entirely in Russian, has appeared as *Arkhiv samizdata* No. 5444. The entire *Chronicle* is to be published by *Sučasnist'* in Munich. Partial English translations have appeared in the *Ukrainian Weekly* (Jersey City, New Jersey, USA). Issue No. 10 was produced in Ukraine, but before it could be sent to the West, the manuscript was confiscated at the time of Vasyl' Kobryn's arrest. At the time of going to press (October 1985), a special issue of the *Chronicle* dated 18.11.84, has just been received by Keston College.