

Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox in Czechoslovakia*

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Any discussion of Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox in Czechoslovakia must begin with the questions of the identity and number of Ukrainians in that country. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on either question. The term *Rusyny*, an old name for Ukrainians usually rendered in English as "Ruthenians", is still used in Slovakia. However, since the 19th century the *Rusyny* have variously identified themselves, and been identified, not only with Ukrainians, but also with Hungarians, Slovaks, and even Russians. Names which combine regional and ethnic identity, such as "Transcarpathian Ukrainians" and the misleading "Carpatho-Russians", have sprung up both in the Ukraine and in the diaspora. Post-war government policies have variously supported Russian, Ukrainian, and *Rusyn* orientations.¹

This confusion, as well as widespread Ruthenian assimilation with the Slovak nationality, makes it difficult to define who the Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia are, and to estimate their numbers, even assuming that all *Rusyny* are Ukrainians. However, Ukrainians probably number at least 100,000 to 150,000.²

*This is the second of two articles by the same author. The first, "Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox in Poland since 1945" appeared in *RCL* Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 244-61.

¹Paul R. Magocsi, *The Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia* (Vienna, 1983), p. 49; Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus', 1848-1948* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1978), pp. 178-87. For a discussion of nomenclature, see *ibid.*, Appendix I, pp. 277-78.

²Slovak, Ukrainian and official Czechoslovak sources differ sharply on the questions of what constitutes a Ukrainian, and how many Ukrainians there are in Czechoslovakia. The official 1961 census gives a figure of 54,984 Ruthenians and Ukrainians, (see Michal Lacko, "Prešovské gréckokatolícke biskupstvo a ukrajinský patriarchát", *Hlasy z Ríma*, Part 3, 1970, p. 23). An émigré Ukrainian source published in 1971 estimates the number of Ukrainians as between 120,000 and 150,000, (Volodymyr Kubijovyč, ed., *Ukraine: a concise Encyclopedia* (Toronto, 1963-1971), Vol. II, p. 1241). A demographic journal provides a figure of 59,000 in 1968, (*Demografie* No. 3, 1969), cited in: Lacko, *op. cit.*, p. 23. Censuses give figures of 42,146 in 1970 and 39,800 in 1980, see Paul R. Magocsi, *The Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia*, pp. 9, 53. But in Slovakia alone, the 1980 census reportedly gives the number of "Ukrainians, Ruthenians or Russians" as 47,554 ("To bedzie wielka godzina Europy",

What proportion of this population is Greek-Catholic and what proportion is Orthodox is also far from clear. Roughly speaking, however, out of a Ukrainian population of 150,000, over 100,000 would be Greek-Catholic and the rest Orthodox.³

Historical Background

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Czechoslovak Republic included not only the heavily Ruthenian area north and east of Prešov, but also that part of Transcarpathia which is now the Transcarpathian *oblast* of the Ukrainian SSR. These lands, formerly under Austria-Hungary, counted many Slovaks and Hungarians among their population, but also a large Greek-Catholic Ruthenian element, Eastern-rite Catholicism having been introduced by the Union of Uzhgorod in 1646. Before 1918, there were few Orthodox, but the 1920s saw the meteoric rise of an Orthodox movement, triggered by a combination of factors, including popular reaction to Magyarophile Catholicism, a reassertion of Slavic identity, Russophilism, anti-Catholic bias in the government, the missionary efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate, and the presence of a number of Orthodox Russian émigrés. By the 1930s there were over 9,000 Orthodox parishioners in Czechoslovakia, with centres in Iža and Ladomirová. The movement gradually lost ground, however, when a socially and politically conscious Greek-Catholic Church, clearly distinct from the Latin-rite Catholic Church, began to reassert itself in Transcarpathia. The Greek-Catholic Church's new Ukrainophile orientation was exemplified by Monsignor Avhustyn Voloshyn, head of the short-lived Carpatho-Ukrainian state of

Kontakt (Paris), No. 37, May 1985, p. 62). One western specialist estimates that there were between 133,000 and 134,000 "Rusyn-Ukrainians" in 1968 just in the Prešov region (Magocsi, *op. cit.*, p. 64, fn. 91). He estimates the number of "Rusyn-Ukrainians" in all of Czechoslovakia 12 years later (in 1980) as being perhaps two and a half times the official census figure, that is, close to 100,000 (*ibid.*, pp. 9, 53).

³Out of 305,645 Greek Catholics in Czechoslovakia in 1948, one Slovak source says only 64,898 were Ruthenian (Ladislav A. Potemra, "Ruthenians in Slovakia and the Greek Catholic Diocese of Prešov", *Slovak Studies* I (Rome, 1961), p. 220). Michael Lacko claims that there were 35,000 Orthodox in the country in that year (M. Lacko, "The Re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", *Slovak Studies*, Vol. XI (1971), pp. 159-89). Most of these can be assumed to have been Ruthenians or Ukrainians. However, Lacko provides an estimate of 74,898 "Ruthenian-Ukrainians" in 1957 which includes only 10,000 who had been Orthodox before the 1950 forced conversion of Greek-Catholics (M. Lacko, "The Forced Liquidation of the Union of Uzhgorod", *Slovak Studies*, Vol. I (1961), p. 159). The official Vatican figure for the total number of Greek-Catholics in the Prešov diocese in 1985 is 355,320, (*Annuario Pontificio per l'anno 1985* (Rome, 1984), p. 475). Many of the Slovak Greek-Catholics who appear to form the majority of this group, however, would be Slovakised Ruthenians.

1938-39.

During the wartime Hungarian occupation of part of Transcarpathia, Teodor Romzha became bishop of the Mukachiv diocese. In the part of Transcarpathia which was controlled by the right-wing Slovak regime of Monsignor Tiso, Bishop Pavlo Goidych (Apostolic Administrator and from 1940 ordinary of Prešov) gained popularity among Ukrainians for his opposition to the Tiso regime. To some degree this protected him and his church from the accusations of Nazi collaboration which were levelled against the Catholic Church by the Soviet occupants at the end of the war.

The closing stages of the war brought significant developments. In 1944, Orthodox Archimandrite Vitali Maksymenko, a former monk of the Pochaev Monastery in the Ukraine, emigrated to Germany with a number of priests. On 16 May 1945 the Slovak National Council closed all church schools, and ten days later all school properties were confiscated. On 29 June most of Transcarpathia was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR. The Prešov region, however, remained in Czechoslovakia, with its Greek-Catholic diocese headed by Bishop Goidych. Bishop Romzha would be killed in 1947, and the Greek-Catholic Church there would be officially liquidated in 1949.

In 1945-46, several thousand (mostly Orthodox) Ukrainians and Czechs from Volhynia (ceded to the Ukrainian SSR) were transferred to the Sudetenland, which had been emptied of some two million German colonists. Some 50,000 persons from the Carpathian Mountains also migrated there, while 6,475 migrated to the USSR.

After the war, the Greek-Catholic diocese of Prešov boasted about 250,000 to 300,000 faithful, 340 priests, and 240 parishes. The church had a theological seminary at Prešov (founded in 1881) and several charitable and educational societies.

A decree of the Holy See dated 15 January 1946 placed all Greek-Catholic parishes in Czechoslovakia under the ordinary of the Prešov eparchy, except for some parishes which had previously been in the Mukachiv and Hajdudorog diocese and which now formed an Apostolic Administration. The Košice and Stakčín areas belonged to the Prešov eparchy, as did 27 parishes from the pre-war Mukachiv eparchy and four parishes from the old Hajdudorog eparchy.

The Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarch to that of the Moscow Patriarch, as an exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, and in 1947 Patriarch Aleksii named Archbishop Eleutherius (Venyamin Vorontsov) as exarch.⁴ At that time there were 30,000 to 35,000 Orthodox in Czechoslovakia, including 10,000 Czechs repatriated

⁴For the history of this period, see Volodymyr Kubijovyč, editor, *Ukraine: A Concise*

from Volhynia.⁵

In the immediate post-war years, Bishop Goidych sought to rebuild Greek-Catholic Church life. For the Ukrainian Greek-Catholics in Bohemia, the parish of St Clement in Prague (erected in 1931) became the centre of religious life. New parishes were formed in Bratislava (acknowledged by the government on 4 March 1946) and in Brno (acknowledged on 12 April 1946), while several parishes were erected in the Prešov region. In January 1947, the Holy See appointed Vasyľ Hopko as auxiliary bishop of the Prešov eparchy.⁶ By 1948, the "Byzantine-Slavonic Rite" registered faithful numbered 305,645, of whom 64,898 were "Ruthenian", 233,111 Slovak, and 7,636 Hungarian.⁷ There were 301 priests, 27 Basilian monks in four monasteries, 29 Redemptorist monks in three monasteries, 72 Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate in six convents, and 28 Basilian Sisters in six convents.⁸ In 1948 there were some 68,000 Greek-Catholics in Bohemia and Moravia, the aforementioned parishes of Prague, Bratislava and Brno being the only Greek-Catholic parishes outside eastern Slovakia.⁹

Persecution and Liquidation of the Greek-Catholic Church

The communist take-over in February 1948 did not bode well for the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, particularly after the Holy Office's anti-communist decree of 1 July 1949¹⁰ and Archbishop Beran's excommunication of priests who collaborated with communism. The subjugation of the church began in 1949 with a government demand for an oath of allegiance, the continued nationalisations and, on 10 June, the birth of the state-sponsored "Catholic Action", which was promptly declared by the Sacred

Encyclopedia (Toronto, 1963-71), Vol. II, p. 1243; Julius Kubinyi, *The History of the Prjasiv Eparchy* (Rome, 1970), pp. 166-70; M. Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 158.

⁵Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 160-61; Michael Bourdeaux "The Uniate Church in Czechoslovakia", *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1974), p. 4. But see V. Kubijovyč, ed., *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopedia* (Toronto, 1963-71), Vol. II, p. 1243, claiming only 8,000 to 10,000 Orthodox in Eastern Slovakia in 1946, and the same number in (other) Czechoslovak lands.

⁶Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-67.

⁷L.A. Potemra, "Ruthenians in Slovakia and the Greek Catholic Diocese of Prešov", *Slovak Studies* I (1961), p. 220.

⁸Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁹Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 159.

¹⁰Decree of the Sacred Superior Congregation of the Holy Office of 1.7.49. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 41 (1949), p. 334, cited in Ludvík Němec. *Episcopal and Vatican Reaction to the Persecution of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia* (Washington, D.C., 1953).

Superior Congregation of the Holy Office as schismatic.¹¹ Two laws of 14 October 1949 concerning the church gave the government control over the content of sermons, and the right to censor pastoral letters and even Papal encyclicals. A Bureau of Church Affairs was set up. During Easter week 1950, a trial of superiors of orders and congregations was held, and many were confined in concentration camps and monastery-prisons. On 13 April 1950 all monasteries and convents were ordered to be closed. Law No. 112 of 14 July 1950 asserted state control over theological faculties. Between August and September, all but one of the Catholic bishops in the country were arrested, and at a trial held in November ten were convicted of espionage, financial machinations, and Nazi collaboration. At another trial which opened in Bratislava on 10 January 1951, the Slovak bishops Jan Vojtaššák and Michal Buzalka, together with the Greek-Catholic bishop Pavlo Goidych were convicted of conspiracy, espionage, and treason. On 10 March Archbishop Beran was banished from the Archdiocese of Prague. In 1951 and 1952 lower clergy and Catholic laity also were subjected to trials and deprivation of employment.¹²

The Greek-Catholic Church was singled out for special treatment. Communist propaganda in the late 1940s condemned Greek-Catholics as supporters of the anti-communist Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which operated on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains. In the spring of 1948, Soviet Minister Andrei Vyshinsky met secretly in Karlovy Vary with Czechoslovak government representatives (including the Ministers of propaganda and education), and a Soviet proposal to liquidate the Greek-Catholic Church was approved. On 22 February 1949, the Basilian Fathers in Prešov Monastery were arrested. On 26 April 1950, eighty Greek-Catholic priests were invited to a meeting in Košice with Orthodox priests and government representatives. Twelve of their leaders were arrested.¹³

The treatment meted out to the Greek-Catholics differed from that accorded the Latin-rite Catholics not only in the degree of persecution, but in that an attempt was made to convert them to Orthodoxy. The Bureau for Church Affairs invited the Greek-Catholic clergy to attend a "peace rally" to be held in Prešov on 28 April 1950. The rally turned out to be a so-called "synod". It was attended by some eighty Greek-Catholic priests, and proclaimed abolition of the 1646 Union of Uzhgorod, the termination of Rome's

¹¹Decree of the Sacred Superior Congregation of the Holy Office of 20.6.49, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 41 (1949), p. 333, cited in Němec, *op. cit.*, p. 18, fn. 7.

¹²Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 176-78.

¹³Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-73 and *passim*; Sevastiyan S. Sabol, *Holhota Hreko-Katolyts'koyi Tserkvy v Chekhoslovachchyni* (Toronto-Rome, 1978), pp. 245-55, 270-71.

jurisdiction, and union with the Orthodox Church.¹⁴ The Greek-Catholic Cathedral of Prešov was forcibly seized after Bishop Goidych refused to surrender the keys, and a thanksgiving service was held as the recalcitrant bishop was led away to prison. Communist agents toured Greek-Catholic parishes compelling priests to sign transfers to the Orthodox Church. Those who refused were forced to move out of their rectories, and some were eventually arrested. Twenty more priests allied themselves with the eighty who had accepted Orthodoxy on 28 April, bringing the number of secular priests who joined the Orthodox Church to about a third of the total. By April 1951, 120 priests who had refused to join had been imprisoned, and when they were released they were no longer permitted to serve as priests. None of the religious clergy or sisters converted. A number of students at the Prešov seminary were arrested and confined at Hlohovec, then sent to army work brigades. Auxiliary Bishop Vasyl' Hopko was confined in prison in Ilava. Bishop Goidych, who had received a life sentence in January 1951, remained in Leopoldov prison until his death on 17 July 1960.¹⁵

The Orthodox Church

While the Greek-Catholic Church was suffering persecution, the Orthodox Church enjoyed the support of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Soviet government, and, consequently, of the Czechoslovak government. In 1949 Patriarch Aleksii appointed Čestmir Kračmar Bishop of Olomouc and Alexis Dekhterev Bishop of Prešov. In the same year an Orthodox cathedral was built in Prešov. On 3 February 1950, a delegation from the Moscow Patriarchate visited the country, and nine days later Bishop Dekhterev was consecrated. Bishop Kračmar, however, was removed, and replaced on 2 October 1950 by ex-Catholic Nicholas Kelly (Bishop Clement).¹⁶

Further government favour was manifested in a new law offering possession of church buildings and other property to religious groups

¹⁴Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-74; Lacko, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-64. For a detailed account, see Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 164-74. On the number of Greek-Catholic priests present, see *ibid.*, pp. 170-71. For the notification about the results of the "synod", dated 27 May 1950 and sent by the Czechoslovak government to the Russian Orthodox Church, see Osyp Zinkewych and Taras Lonchyna, eds., *Martyrolohiya Ukrayins'kykh Tserkov*, Vol. 2. (Toronto-Baltimore, 1985), p. 361.

¹⁵Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-80; Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 175-78. On the trial, see the memoir of Fr Bihun in Zinkewych and Lonchyna, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-60. On the imprisonment and death of Bishop Goidych, see the accounts of Bishop Hopko written in Rome in December 1968 (*ibid.*, pp. 351-57), and of František Ondruško (*ibid.*, pp. 362-67). See also Sabol, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-25.

¹⁶Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 172, 176.

which joined the Orthodox Church,¹⁷ and at Easter 1950 the journal *Svetlo Pravoslavia* (Light of Orthodoxy) appeared.

When the Greek-Catholic Church was officially liquidated in April 1950, Orthodox priests were actively recruited from amongst both Greek-Catholic priests and laity, including retired teachers. On 15 October the confiscated Greek-Catholic eparchial seminary of Prešov was reopened as an Orthodox seminary, and in the drive to meet the need for Orthodox priests, young men with four or five years' schooling were ordained after only eight months' theological education.¹⁸

In July 1950 a new eparchy was created at Michalovce, with Victor Michalič as bishop residing at the former Redemptorist monastery. He was consecrated as Bishop Alexander on 8 October, and presided over seven deaneries, 95 parishes and 359 filial churches. According to one source, the Prešov eparchy, under Bishop Alexis Dekhterev, had 15 deaneries, 160 parishes and 624 filial churches,¹⁹ while another claims 259 parishes and 1,022 missions for the Prešov eparchy in 1950.²⁰ The Orthodox eparchies of Prešov and Michalovce incorporated the 239 former Greek-Catholic parishes, as well as twenty existing Orthodox parishes, of Transcarpathia.²¹

On 8 December 1951 the Moscow Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the exarchate in Czechoslovakia. Archbishop Eleutherius of Prague was elected Metropolitan on the same day, and was installed on 9 December.²² The Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople did not, however, recognise the autocephaly.²³

Catholics and Orthodox, 1951-68

This state of affairs between Catholics and Orthodox — the former officially banned, the latter officially supported — lasted until 1968. Many Greek-Catholics, unwilling to join the Orthodox Church, began to attend Latin-rite Catholic churches, but the Orthodox authorities reportedly obtained a government order forbidding Latin-rite Catholic priests to minister to Greek-Catholics. Nevertheless, in 1958, Canadian visitors to Slovakia reported that about half the population remained loyal to the Catholic Church, and in the 1960s there were

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

¹⁸ Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-82.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁰ *Svetlo Pravoslavia*, 1950: No. 5-6, p. 50, in Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 181.

²¹ Magocsi, *Rusyn-Ukrainians of Czechoslovakia*, p. 49.

²² Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 186; Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 181.

²³ Kubijovyč, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 198.

some 230 Greek-Catholic priests, including religious priests in Bohemia and Moravia, who had remained Catholic.²⁴

With the establishment of autocephaly, the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia comprised the Metropolitanate and Archbishopric of Prague, and the three eparchies of Prešov, Michalovce, and Brno-Olomouc. On 24 October 1954 Metropolitan Eleutherius was provided with an auxiliary bishop, Ivan (Ioann) Kukhtin, a Russian who was also titular bishop of Zatec, and had been spiritual director of the former Greek-Catholic seminary in Prešov. The following year Eleutherius became Metropolitan of Leningrad, and was replaced in Prague by his auxiliary. Ioann, however, resigned in 1963 and returned to the USSR. He was replaced as Archbishop of Prague by Dorotej Fylyp, a Transcarpathian Rusyn who had been Bishop of Prešov. Dorotej became Metropolitan in 1964.

The eparchy of Prešov remained under Bishop Alexis Dekhterev until 1955, when he returned to the USSR to become Archbishop of Vilnius. Dorotej Fylyp, the future Metropolitan, was consecrated Bishop of Prešov in Moscow in 1956, and remained in that post until his elevation to Archbishop of Prague in 1963. He was succeeded in Prešov by Nicholas Kocvar.

In the eparchy of Michalovce, former Catholic priest Michael Milly was consecrated auxiliary to Bishop Alexander (Michalič), as well as titular Bishop of Trebišov, on 12 February 1953. He took the name of Methodius, and succeeded Alexander on the latter's death on 25 November 1954. From 1962 to 1965 his auxiliary was Methodius Kančuha. Bishop Milly was succeeded by Vasyl' Mučička, a Carpatho-Ukrainian, who took the name Kirill.

Čestimir Kračmar, Bishop of Brno-Olomouc, was removed without explanation and succeeded by the former Greek-Catholic priest Nicholas Kelly, who was consecrated on 2 October 1954 as Bishop Clement. He was succeeded in his turn by Nikanor.

In 1966, the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia had 315 parishes. Of these, 120 parishes were in the Prešov eparchy and served nearly 180,000 faithful. The Michalovce eparchy had over one hundred parishes and 110,000 faithful.²⁵

Several Orthodox publications appeared during these years. *Svetlo Pravoslavia*, mostly in the Slovak language, became *Hlas Pravoslavia* (Voice of Orthodoxy) in June 1952. The Russian version, likewise begun in 1950, became *Golos Pravoslaviya*, but ceased publication in 1955. In May of that year *Odkaz Sv. Cyrila a Metoda* (The Legacy of Saints Cyril and Methodius) was initiated, and in 1958 a mostly Ukrainian version with occasional articles in Russian, *Zapovit'*

²⁴Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 184-85.

²⁵Kubijovyč, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 198.

Sv. Kyryla i Metodiya, appeared. A Russian-language theological quarterly, *Mysl' Pravoslaviya* (Orthodox Thought), was issued from 1956 to 1959. An Orthodox Church Calendar has been appearing since 1950 with parallel Czech and Russian editions, but since 1955 the Czech editions have included Slovak-language articles, while the Russian editions have contained Ukrainian-language articles.²⁶

Liberalisation and Legalisation

In 1962 a number of Greek-Catholic clergymen petitioned the government to permit re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic eparchy of Prešov. The petition was rejected. In 1963, the imprisoned Bishop Hopko was transferred to an old people's home in Osek, Bohemia. But it was only with the temporary liberalisation under Alexander Dubček in 1968 that any significant change in the relative positions of Ukrainian Catholics and Orthodox in Czechoslovakia became possible. On 19 March 1968, Bishop Hopko petitioned the government for his full release and rehabilitation. On 29 March, an open letter printed in the newspaper *Vychodoslovenské Noviny* (East Slovak News) requested a re-examination of the cases of Bishops Goidych and Hopko, as well as freedom of religion and the rehabilitation of the Greek-Catholic Church. With government permission, over a hundred Greek-Catholic clergymen, including Bishop Hopko, and 66 laymen met in Košice on 10 April. Among the resolutions which they passed and which were later published in the press was one declaring the Prešov "synod" of 1950 illegal.²⁷ They also demanded restitution of the churches that had been seized. An Action Committee consisting of Bishop Hopko, 16 priests and two laymen was formed and recognised by the government as a legal body representing the Greek-Catholic Church. The Action Committee elected an executive committee comprising Rev. Dr Jan Murin, Rev. Stepan Ujhelyi and Andrew Zima.²⁸ After the 10 October 1968 meeting of the executive committee at Košice, supporters of Bishop Hopko formed a committee for his rehabilitation and began a movement to have him appointed ordinary of the Prešov

²⁶Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 181-83.

²⁷For the text of the resolutions see Zinkewych and Lonchyna, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 372-74.

²⁸John Slivka, *The History of the Greek Rite Catholics in Pannonia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Podkarpatska Rus' 863-1949*, (n.l.: 1974), pp. 237-39; M. Lacko, "The re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", *Slovak Studies*, XI (1971), pp. 162-63; Michele Lacko, "Ecumenismo contro libertà religiosa? La chiesa grecocattolica in Cecoslovacchia". *Russia Cristiana*, X (1969), p. 61.

eparchy.²⁹

On 14 April 1969, the Bratislava daily *Lud* published a letter from Ladislav Holdoš, who as Commissar for Church Affairs in 1950 had presided over the destruction of the Greek-Catholic Church. In his letter, Holdoš declared the destruction to have been unjust and illegal.³⁰ On 29 April, at the government's request, the Action Committee presented a memorandum on the terms and procedure for the re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church, and on 6 May Bishop Hopko issued a pastoral letter on the restoration of his eparchy.³¹

The government responded by rehabilitating Bishop Hopko on 13 June 1968. On the same day, it issued a decree recognising the Greek-Catholic Church as a legal entity, and providing for its financial support and organisation. A companion decree elaborated the financial arrangements, entrusted questions of the division of property between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to those churches or, should they fail to agree within six months, to regional government organs. It also provided for commissions to resolve questions concerning the re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church and the division of property between it and the Orthodox Church.³² It was decided to put the question of the religious allegiance of each parish to a referendum, to be held within six months.³³ The decision would determine the use to which each parish church would be put.

About 210 parishes voted in 1968. Only five of these decided to remain Orthodox. Since by the end of the six-month period not all the parishes had voted, and since the Soviet military intervention of 21 August had delayed the plebiscite, the government granted an extension until 30 June 1969. At that time the commission conducting the referendum was dissolved. In the final official list of parishes, 205 were listed as Greek-Catholic and 87 as Orthodox. The 87 apparently included some Orthodox parishes outside the areas where voting had taken place. Later, however, the Ministry of Culture in Bratislava suppressed four of the Greek-Catholic parishes.³⁴

During the plebiscite there were a few violent incidents, including

²⁹ *The tragedy of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia*, (New York: Carpathian Alliance, 1971), p. 61.

³⁰ Cited in Lacko, "The re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", pp. 161-62.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163, fn. 9; Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

³² Decree No. 70/68, in Lacko, "The re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", pp. 164-65. The decree was signed by Gustav Husak, then Vice Prime-Minister.

³³ Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 164.

³⁴ Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 168-69; Bourdeaux, "The Uniate Church in Czechoslovakia", p. 5.

one murder, but on the whole the proceedings were conducted peaceably.³⁵ By 1971, some two-thirds of the Orthodox parishes and priests had returned to the Greek-Catholic Church.³⁶ It had recovered ninety per cent of its faithful.³⁷

On 7 July 1968 the Cathedral Church of Prešov was returned to the Greek-Catholic Church. The body of Bishop Göidyč, which had been buried in a prisoner's grave, was disinterred and buried in the Cathedral on 29 October. On 14 July the important parish church in Košice was also returned. However, the episcopal residence in Prešov, and the church and former Redemptorist monastery in Michalovce remained in the possession of the Orthodox.³⁸

The Orthodox reaction to these blows to their prestige, number, material situation, and moral authority varied from self-justification to apology. Some Orthodox pointed out that Soviet pressure had forced them to participate in the 1950 liquidation of the Greek-Catholic Church; others confessed that their actions had been unjustified. The Orthodox authorities, however, at first refused to renounce the 1950 "synod" or to give up any parishes, and demanded that the *status quo* of 1 January 1968 be reinstated.³⁹ On 25 June 1968, Metropolitan Dorotej wrote to Cardinal Agostino Bea, President of the Vatican Secretariat for the Unity of Christians (the office of the Roman Curia concerned with ecumenical contacts), complaining that the actions of the Greek-Catholic Church towards the Orthodox were harming the interests of ecumenism. One Greek-Catholic source also claims that some Orthodox priests welcomed the Soviet invaders of August 1968 as saviours of Orthodoxy.⁴⁰

Catholics and Orthodox After 1968

With the legalisation of the Greek-Catholic Church and the return of parishes and faithful, there remained some practical and administrative problems. Prayer-books were in short supply, although Monsignor Hirka, ordinary for the Prešov eparchy from 1969, eventually obtained permission to print prayer-books as well as liturgical books.⁴¹ Priestly education was inadequate, since the former

³⁵ Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", pp. 167-68.

³⁶ Kubijovyč, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1244.

³⁷ Lacko, "Forced Liquidation", p. 171.

³⁸ *The Tragedy of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia*, p. 62, fn. 195.

³⁹ M. Lacko, "The re-establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", p. 163.

⁴⁰ Michele Lacko, "Ecumenismo contro libertà religiosa?", p. 64.

⁴¹ Slivka, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

Greek-Catholic seminary in Prešov remained in the possession of the Orthodox Church, and Greek-Catholic candidates for the priesthood had to study at the Latin-rite seminaries of Bratislava and Litoměřice, where there were 16 Greek-Catholic candidates in 1968 and twenty in 1970.⁴² The priests who had survived the 1950s were old and few. Young men acquainted with the Byzantine Rite were hard to find and train. In February 1969, there were 163 Greek-Catholic priests in Czechoslovakia. Of 69 Orthodox priests who had joined the Greek-Catholic Church since its legalisation, 27 had been Greek-Catholic priests before 1950. The remaining 42 had been trained as Orthodox priests, but joined the Greek-Catholic Church after its rehabilitation.⁴³

The main administrative question was who would head the restored Greek-Catholic Church, and in what capacity. The Slovak authorities in Bratislava supported Bishop Hopko, who in December 1968 travelled to Rome to consult with the Holy See. There it was decided that the Prešov eparchy would be administered by an ordinary *ad interim*. On 22 December 1968, the Eastern Congregation appointed not Bishop Hopko, but Monsignor Ján Hirka, a Slovak, to this post. Bishop Hopko was to serve as his auxiliary.⁴⁴ On 2 April 1969, with government consent, Monsignor Hirka's appointment was made permanent, and he officially assumed the ordinariate on 23 April.

Behind these events lay a bitter rivalry between the Slovak group of Fr Murín, which favoured Monsignor Hirka, and the Ukrainian group, which supported Bishop Hopko. Ukrainian sources accuse the "Slovak activists" of using their influence in Rome to push aside Bishop Hopko and have their own candidate appointed ordinary.⁴⁵ Ukrainian scholars such as Kubinyi and Pekar also charge that the Slovaks were using a Slovacised Greek-Catholic Church to denationalise the Transcarpathian Ukrainians.⁴⁶ For example, it has been pointed out that after 1968, Slovak-language liturgies were introduced in the church. This point was brought up in an "Open Letter of the Greek-Catholic Clergy to the Redemptorist Fathers and their Supporters" issued in July 1970. The authors, quoting Fr Murín's alleged statement that "every Greek-Catholic has to be a Slovak", accused the Slovaks and particularly the Redemptorists of driving

⁴²Slivka, *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁴³Michele Lacko, "Ecumenismo contro libertà religiosa?", p. 64.

⁴⁴Athanasius B. Pekar, "Restoration of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia", *Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (1973), pp. 292-95; Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 196; Pekar, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁴⁵Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 197; W. Mykula, *The Gun and the Faith*. (London, 1969), p. 37; *The Tragedy of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, passim*; Pekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-95.

⁴⁶Kubinyi, *op. cit.*, p. 197; Pekar, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

Greek-Catholics into the Orthodox Church with their Slovacising policies.⁴⁷ The late Slovak scholar Michael Lacko, on the other hand, asserted that Ukrainians had tried to Ukrainianise the largely Slovak Prešov eparchy with Bishop Hopko's cooperation, drawing it into the Ukrainian Patriarchate promoted by the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.⁴⁸

The Slovak-Ukrainian conflict within the Greek-Catholic Church may have weakened it in the face of new threats. In 1970 a violent press campaign was launched against it and a new state commission introduced the principle of common usage of churches by Catholics and Orthodox. Catholics refusing to comply were threatened with closure of their churches. By 1974, common usage had been adopted in 47 Greek-Catholic and 15 Orthodox parishes.

Despite legalisation, the Greek-Catholics still had no facilities of their own for training clergy, nor a printing press.⁴⁹ There was still no Greek-Catholic bishop to head the Prešov eparchy. Bishop Hopko, who had remained auxiliary to Monsignor Hirka, died in 1976. Monsignor Hirka, the ordinary *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*, has not been elevated to episcopal status.⁵⁰

This situation is not, however, altogether anomalous. In 1973, practically all the bishoprics in Czechoslovakia were vacant, being administered by vicars capitular. In March 1973, four bishops were consecrated under an agreement between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak government. Three of them head dioceses in Slovakia. In 1978, another agreement permitted elevation of the apostolic administrator of the Prague archbishopric, Cardinal Tomášek, to residential archbishop (ordinary). The Slovak dioceses became an ecclesiastical province under the Archbishop of Trnava.⁵¹ Today, out of 13 dioceses only two have ordinaries, while four have apostolic administrators. Three of the four are bishops; the fourth is Monsignor Hirka.

The Present Situation

In 1984, according to the Vatican yearbook, the Greek-Catholic eparchy of Prešov had 355,320 faithful, 201 parishes and quasi-parishes, 207 resident secular priests, and 16 resident religious priests.

⁴⁷ *The Tragedy of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia*, pp. 66-69.

⁴⁸ Michal Lacko, "Prešovské gréckokatolícke biskupstvo a ukrajinský patriarchát", *Hlasy z Ríma*, 1970: Part 3, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Bourdeaux, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Annuario Pontificio per l'anno 1985*, p. 475.

⁵¹ "The religious situation in Slovakia" (interview with Fr T.J. Zubek) *Jednota Annual Furdek*, XIX (January 1980), p. 12.

Nineteen seminarians were in training in 1984, and four diocesan priests were ordained. The eparchy publishes a monthly, *Blahovisnyk* (Herald of Good Tidings).⁵² The Slovak-language Greek-Catholic newspaper *Slovo* (The Word) is edited in Transcarpathia and published in Bratislava.

The Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia is numerically weaker but institutionally stronger. Its 150,000 believers are distributed among 150 parishes, 112 of which are in Slovakia.⁵³ There are 190 open churches with 170 priests.⁵⁴ About twenty students study at the Orthodox Faculty of Theology in Prešov, but about a quarter of them are foreigners, from the USSR and Ethiopia.⁵⁵ The church publishes a theological periodical, the monthly *Voice of Orthodoxy* (in Czech, Slovak and Ukrainian), and the monthly *Testament of Saints Cyril and Methodius*. It also publishes ecclesiastical books and a church calendar.⁵⁶

In addition to his archdiocese of Prague, the Metropolitan presides over three dioceses. Nicholas Kocvar, a native of the Prešov region, is Bishop of Prešov; Nikanor is Bishop of Brno and Olomouc. Bishop Kirill of Michalovce, who died on 25 July 1979, was succeeded by Ivan (Ioann) Golonič, who was elected and nominated on 21-22 May 1983 and consecrated the next day. Born 29 January 1937 near Třebíč in Moravia, he studied at the Prešov seminary in 1953-58 and, after his wife's death in 1980, professed at the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery in Russia.⁵⁷ The General Secretary of the Holy Synod and of the Metropolitan Council is Protopresbyter Jaroslav Šuvarský.⁵⁸

For an Orthodox Church, which may only select bishops from among monastic clergy, the continuing interdiction of monasticism in Czechoslovakia virtually assures the demise of a native hierarchy. The result, as one believer laments, is that the church will be increasingly ruled by foreign bishops.⁵⁹ It seems likely that they will be from the USSR.

The Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia continues to maintain close ties with the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as with its exarchate in Ukraine. On 20 May 1980 Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galicia was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Prešov Faculty of

⁵² "To bedzie wielka godzina Europy", *Kontakt*, No. 37 (May 1985), p. 62.

⁵³ Interview with anonymous believer in Czechoslovakia, in *Service orthodoxe de presse*, No. 104 (January 1986), p. 15.

⁵⁴ Interview with Metropolitan Dorotej by Greek periodical *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia* during Dorotej's visit to Greece, November 1985 in *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Interview with anonymous believer in Czechoslovakia, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Interview with Metropolitan Dorotej, p. 15.

⁵⁷ *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1984: No. 2, p. 47.

⁵⁸ *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1985: No. 10, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁹ Interview with anonymous believer in Czechoslovakia, p. 16.

Theology.⁶⁰ In 1984, the Prešov and Moscow seminaries conducted a student exchange.⁶¹ Metropolitan Dorotej of Prague visited the USSR on 6-19 October of that year.⁶²

The recent history of Ukrainian Greek-Catholics and Orthodox in Czechoslovakia is replete with ironies. Both Greek-Catholicism and Orthodoxy have attracted Rusyns and Ukrainians as preserves of East Slavic tradition. Indeed, in earlier times both churches served as refuges from denationalisation. Yet while the Russifying tendency of the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia counteracts assimilation with the Slovak nationality, it does virtually nothing to preserve Ukrainian or Rusyn spiritual traditions. This, of course, is convenient for the government, which must answer to the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Greek-Catholic Church has taken a slovacising line *vis à vis* its non-Slovak members. Revived by the same communist state which had tried to liquidate it, the church has fallen victim to disputes among its own faithful. Having once drawn popular support because of its national characteristics, it now appears to be a victim of nationalism. As the number of identifiable Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia declines, neither the Greek-Catholic nor the Orthodox Church seem capable of reviving the distinctive spiritual life of their Ukrainian element.

Note. The author would like to thank Mr Ivan Hvat for his assistance in the research for this paper.

⁶⁰ *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1980: No. 10, pp. 40-41.

⁶¹ *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1984: No. 4, p. 7.

⁶² *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1985: No. 3, pp. 56-57.