

Soviet Governance in West Ukraine: Church and State

**Presented at the 2018 Danyliw Seminar,
Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, 8-10 November 2018**

**Kathryn David
(New York University, United States)
ked376@nyu.edu**

Draft: Not to be Cited Without the Author's Permission

Introduction

In a letter to his deputy in Ukraine, Georgii Grigorevich Karpov, head of the Committee for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) put forward a blunt accusation: “This situation has become intolerable and this is a consequence of the fact that you and the local ministers have failed to take into account the political meaning of the liquidation of the Uniate Church and the Lvov *sobor*,” (Karpov, November 1946, p. 18).

Karpov was writing in November of 1946, eight months after a *sobor* (official church meeting) was held in newly Soviet L’viv, Ukraine in order to conduct a “reunification” (*vossoedinenie*) of the Greek Catholic Church (also known as the Uniate Church¹) with the Russian Orthodox Church. The L’viv *sobor* of March 1946 annulled the Union of Brest, the declaration that had created the Greek Catholic Church in 1596.² Before this forced religious “reunification”, the Greek Catholic Church had been one the most powerful and moneyed religious institutions in L’viv and the surrounding region of Galicia, as well as the majority church among the peasantry- a peasantry that increasingly came to identify as Ukrainian. In comparison, The Orthodox Church had virtually no presence in Galicia when Soviet forces arrived in 1939.

After the 1946 *sobor*, millions of believers in the newly Soviet Ukrainian *oblasts* of L’viv, Drohobych, Ternopil, and Stanislav were to become Russian Orthodox along with a few thousand members of the clergy. The property of the Greek Catholic Church, one of the richest landholders in Galicia, was not simply nationalized by Soviet authorities but transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church.³ An entire infrastructure for the Orthodox Church in West Ukraine, including the establishment of new eparchates, the appointment of local church hierarchs, and

¹ While both “Uniate” and “Greek Catholic” are acceptable, most in Galicia then and now use the term “Greek Catholic” and this is the terminology most used both in Soviet archival documents as well as by believers themselves.

² The Union of Brest was a compromise organized by the authorities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that allowed Ruthenian peasants to keep their Eastern Orthodox religious beliefs and rituals but be placed under the jurisdiction of the Vatican as their territory (present-day West Ukraine and East Poland) became incorporated into the Catholic Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth.

³ The Russian Orthodox Church was itself under the administration of the Soviet state, but its land was treated as distinct within nationalized properties in the USSR.

the dedication of new monasteries followed the L'viv Sobor of 1946, ushering in a process led by secular Soviet authorities and their selected representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴

By November of that year, however, Karpov was lamenting the slow process of “reunification.” Karpov believed local authorities charged with carrying out and enforcing this church reunification, in some cases the heads of CAROC for each of these “western oblasts” included, did not understand the political meaning of the sobor, which raises the question—what exactly was the political meaning of this strange intervention into church and theological questions by the officially atheist Soviet state?

In this paper, I will argue that at first for different officials the church reunion had various “political meanings.” However, in the months and years after the original L'viv sobor of 1946, the political meaning of reunion began to take form through a process of enforcement carried out by secular authorities, including members of state security services (NKVD, NKGB, and then KGB) working closely with CAROC. Under the direction of CAROC, enforcing reunion meant connecting Orthodox religious ritual to loyalty and participation in the Soviet project, while Greek Catholic rituals became associated with the disloyalty often believed to be inherent to West Ukraine and the threat of radical Ukrainian nationalism. This understanding of reunion by those charged with enforcing it gave an ambiguous process political meaning after the fact and created lasting associations with religious ritual and secular nationalism in Russia and Ukraine.

In this way, reunification with Orthodoxy began to be thought of and implemented similarly to early Soviet nationalities policy in the 1920s and 1930s. Like official nationality, Orthodoxy may originally have been seen by some as a temporary concession—yet over time, enforcement of religious reunion and Orthodoxy in West Ukraine became a critical part of becoming Soviet and Ukrainian in West Ukraine.⁵

The Wartime Orthodox Church

The forced church reunification of 1946 is usually treated as a result of wartime policies that allowed for a robust official presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1939, The Russian Orthodox Church was given jurisdiction over the various Orthodox Churches newly under Soviet control, as well as license to deal with those they deemed “sects” or “schismatics” inside the Orthodox Church (Kolarz 1961; Kalkandjieva 2014; Odintsov 2014). This strategy makes sense, given the perceived loyalty of the Russian Orthodox

⁴ In 1949, a *sobor* was held in Uzhhorod, the capital of Zakarpats'kaia oblast, “reunifying” the Greek Catholics of Zakarpattia (Trans-Carpathian Rus’). Unlike the situation in the former territories of Galicia, there was a small but notable presence of Russian Orthodoxy in the region before the reunion. The Zakarpattia reunification proceeded quite differently from the reunification in Galicia and thus deserves separate treatment.

⁵ Here I am referencing the “evolutionary” aspect of Soviet nationalities policy as articulated by Francine Hirsch in *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the USSR*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005; a framework I will explain in greater detail later in the paper. Bohdan Bociurkiw in his pioneering work on the 1946 sobor also argued that church reunification should be seen as a nationalities policy, however his framework for “nationalities policy” is not the mobilizational and evolutionary one proposed by Hirsch. Instead, Bociurkiw sees nationalities policy in 1946 working as it did in imperial Russia and sees reunification as a means of Russification.

Church to Soviet authorities as well as the Russian Orthodox Church's structure as completely inside the Soviet apparatus—unlike other Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe with external resources and dubious cadres. However, the Greek Catholic Church was not thought of or treated as simply a sect of Orthodoxy for various reasons—one of the main reasons being its connection to the Vatican. For Soviet authorities, the Vatican ought to be treated as a foreign power, one dedicated to ending communism and allying with fascist movements worldwide to do so.

This context, the diplomatic role of the Russian Orthodox Church alongside official concerns about the influence of the Vatican, is important to understanding the rationale for “reunifying” the Greek Catholic Church with the Russian Orthodox Church, but is too often presented in the literature as the definitive account of reunion.⁶ The reasoning that drove Soviet authorities to pursue reunion as a strategy too often becomes the entire story in the literature, ignoring the uniqueness of the reunification process, its ties to Ukrainian nationalism, and the mobilization of state resources to defend reunion years after the *sobor*. I argue that while preventing a presence for the Vatican in now Soviet Ukraine may have been one of the main considerations in pursuing reunification in the first place, the ways in which reunion was carried out went far beyond severing formal ties to the Vatican.

Another important context for reunification is the legacy of the 18th and 19th century Russian Empire's relations with the Ukrainian, Polish, and Belarusian lands that made up its “western borderlands.” When the Russian Empire was first confronted with Uniate populations under Catherine the II, a reunification process was also initiated, forcing religious conversions in an era typically known for imperial religious tolerance (Werth, 2004; Skinner, 2009). It is this context that frames one of the definitive accounts of the 1946 reunion, written by Ukrainian-Canadian political scientist Bohdan Bociurkiw. Bociurkiw makes an important case for the uniqueness of the process within Soviet religious politics at the time, as well as emphasizing reunion as part of a regional imperial strategy with a long history (Bociurkiw, 1996). For Bociurkiw, reunion in 1946 should be seen in the context of the “Russification” policies pursued by the Russian Empire in the western borderlands beginning with the partitions of Poland (ix). The imperial context and its use of Orthodoxy to make claims on territory and populations is indeed critical to understanding the reunion of 1946. In my view, however, the vast differences between the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union's demands of their subjects as well as the complexities of Soviet nationalities policy necessitates a discussion of both the continuities and ruptures between imperial and Soviet policies in the so-called “western borderlands.”⁷

⁶ Works that focus on Russian Orthodoxy during World War II tend to end their treatment of reunion with the 1946 sobor, including Steven Meritt Miner. *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics 1941-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. In Tatiana Chumachenko's *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodox from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*. New York: Routledge, 2016, however, she does note the specificity of the West Ukrainian case when it comes to Orthodoxy in her overall discussion (100).

⁷ This is a context Bociurkiw does not engage with. Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper's notion of the “imperial repertoire” is useful here for understanding how empires mobilize past strategies even as states and their political imaginations change overtime. See Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

One important distinction is that the strategy of reuniting Greek Catholics in the 18th and 19th centuries under Catherine II and Nicholas I respectively saw Uniate populations as potentially loyal to the Polish nobility and later as potential members of an imagined Polish nation. As Theodore Weeks argues (2004), this Polish threat is critical to understanding what imperial authorities meant by “Russification.” Religious reunion in the 19th century did not mean making subjects “Russian” in the national sense but “Russian” in the imperial sense—loyal to the Russian empire (and not Poland). Later, Orthodoxy was a key part of an imagined Russian nation in the Russian Empire and the associated Russophile movement, but even this idea understood “Russian” as uniting, not assimilating, three regional groups, Ukrainians (“Little Russians”) Belarussians, and “Great Russians” into a larger national idea (Hillis, 2013).

The Soviet church reunification, however, operated with an entirely different perception of nationalism and national belonging in now Soviet West Ukraine, in addition to being conducted by an entirely different kind of state compared to the Russian Empire. For Soviet authorities, Greek Catholics were Ukrainians, a distinct nationality that was the titular nationality of Soviet Ukraine. Soviet authorities in studying Greek Catholics during WWII did not see them as potentially Polish or even Poland-loyal—in fact quite the opposite. They saw them as Ukrainians, potentially Soviet Ukrainians, who could become part of the Soviet Ukrainian nation and as particularly hostile to their Polish neighbors.⁸ Church reunification was a key aspect of “reuniting” Ukraine itself, bringing the so-called “ethnographically Ukrainian territories” into one state, specifically a Ukrainian nation-state within the Soviet Union. However, the past imagined by imperial Russophiles proved a useable one to Soviet authorities who emphasized Orthodoxy as a force that united Ukrainians with each other *and* with the Russian people.

The End of the Greek Catholic Church

Soviet authorities were concerned about Greek Catholics in Galicia, even before they officially came under Soviet jurisdiction in 1939 under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. During the purge of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the early 1930s, Soviet authorities were concerned that the Greek Catholic Church and its leader, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts’kyi as well as other forces in then Polish Galicia were attempting to export radical, anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalism into Soviet Ukraine (Malenchuk, 1968).

Sheptyts’kyi, who led the church from 1900-1944, is often credited with turning the Greek Catholic Church into an explicitly Ukrainian Church and allying it with secular Ukrainian nationalist groups. However, Sheptyts’kyi’s relationship to trends in Ukrainian nationalism and his role as a Galician elder statesman complicate that story. At the beginning of the 20th century, Sheptyts’kyi skillfully exploited Habsburg fears of *Russophilism* and Russian allegiances in their province of Galicia to gain resources from the Austro-Hungarian empire to fund Ukrainian cultural institutions and Ukrainian-language schools. By the 1930s, though, Sheptyts’kyi grew concerned with increasingly violent iterations of Ukrainian nationalism forming in Galicia and publicly condemned the Ukrainian nationalist underground and their leaders (Budurowycz,

⁸ Much of the Soviet propaganda materials created to support reunification draw on a perceived anti-Polish sentiment among Galician Ukrainians, portraying the Greek Catholic Church as an institutionalized form of Polish oppression. This trend fits into a wider mobilization of anti-Polish sentiment by Soviet authorities in West Ukraine, a phenomenon analyzed in Tarik Amar’s *The Paradox of Ukrainian L’viv*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.

2003). However, in 1941, after two years of Soviet rule in Lvov, Sheptyts'kyi greeted the Nazi occupation of Galicia with a measure of approval, believing that Nazi overtures toward Ukrainians and their stated tolerance for religion would mean Nazi occupation would be better than the Soviet occupation Galicia had just experienced. Sheptyts'kyi eventually realized his misjudgment, partially after witnessing the extermination of Galicia's Jews and partially due to Nazi institutions' eventual repression of Ukrainian nationalism.⁹ For Soviet authorities, Sheptyts'kyi's flirtation with Nazi collaboration, however short-lived, was the inevitable outcome of his decades-long anti-Soviet, Ukrainian nationalist crusade as well as, in their view, the church's nearly 400 year history of attempting to wrest Galicia from Russian influence. The idea that one could draw a straight line from the 1596 Union of Brest under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to Sheptyts'kyi's support of Nazi occupation in 1941 came to define the official Soviet narrative on the Greek Catholic Church from 1944 onwards.¹⁰

Even before the Nazi invasion, however, Soviet authorities began to develop a framework for how to deal with the Greek Catholic Church. During the first Soviet occupation of Galicia from 1939-1941, members of the local intelligentsia consulted by Soviet authorities emphasized the importance of the Church as a cultural institution, remarking that priests formed a rural intelligentsia of sorts—having often had higher theological education in places like Vienna and Krakow and in many cases were the only literate people in their villages (Bohunov, 2005). In the interwar period, Ukrainian nationalist activists had in fact relied on the priesthood to host reading rooms in their churches where priests could help their congregants learn to read, allowing them to be educated enough for the national awakening Ukrainian nationalists needed from the peasantry (Himka, 1999). Becoming increasingly aware of this context, Soviet authorities also realized that they would need to use village priests in their own political mobilization.

This led to the first iteration of the “reunion” plan, developed by NKGB officer of the 2nd department Piotr Vasilyevich Fedotov in consultation with Lavrentii Pavlovich Beria (Bohunov, 2006, p. 100-1). This plan suggested promoting a campaign to discredit the Church and providing support to anti-Vatican elements in the Church leadership. The anti-Vatican sect would then break away from the Church, sever ties with the Vatican, and then form their own Uniate Church, which would be the only Uniate Church the Soviets would then recognize. This new, independent Uniate Church would then decide to “reunify” with the Russian Orthodox Church. A prominent and respected member of Sheptyts'kyi's inner circle, Gavriil Kostelnyk, was chosen as the anti-Vatican sect leader since Kostelnyk had long wanted an independent Uniate Church separate from the Vatican. However, Kostelnyk was recruited with promises he would get to form his own Uniate Church which would reunite with Orthodoxy but remain separate from the Moscow Patriarchate, and become a new Ukrainian autocephalous, national

⁹ In 1943, the Gestapo arrested Stepan Bandera along with other Ukrainian nationalist leaders they had once partnered with and ended support for Ukrainian cultural institutions in Galicia, deeming Ukrainian nationalism too dangerous for Nazi plans for Eastern Europe. See John Paul Himka. “Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi and the Holocaust.” *POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry* 26: 337-359.

¹⁰ This was the narrative embraced by Soviet writer and propagandist for West Ukraine, Yaroslav Halan. For more on Halan's writings on the church see Amar. *Paradox of Ukrainian L'viv* and Kathryn David. “Galicians into Soviet Orthodox: Religion and Post-War Ukraine.” *Nationalities Papers* (2017). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2017.1295928

church. When the Soviets returned to Galicia in 1944, Kostelnyk remained steadfast in his private meetings with the NKGB agent assigned to him, Sergei Tarasovich Danilenko (also known as Karin), that he would not support reunion with the Moscow Patriarchate (Bohunov, 2006, p. 125-30, 542). At this point, however, the Soviets had a great deal of leverage over Kostelnyk, especially after the March 1944 death of Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi, and thus reunion progressed in the way it had been set out in the 1941 document, with one important exception: there was never a “break” from the Uniate Church under Kostelnyk.¹¹ Instead, Kostelnyk took leadership of the Church once its hierarchy had been arrested and began, along with two other prominent church leaders, advocating for reunification.

The reunification was “decided upon” officially at the Lvov Sobor in 1946—and for many in party committees of the western oblasts, that was the end of this political maneuver. However, in his quarterly report to his superiors in Moscow, the head of CAROC for Ukraine P. Khodchenko (1946) noted that after the *sobor* “The work has just begun” (“*Rabota tol'ko nachalas*”) a phrase underlined by the reader of the report. What work was Khodchenko referring to? The “work” he emphasizes is ensuring that reunion has the “political meaning” that Karpov would mention a few months later: Sovietization through Orthodoxy.

Becoming Soviet, Becoming Orthodox

I argue that the most helpful framework for understanding Sovietization through Orthodoxy in West Ukraine is Soviet nationalities policy and its mobilizing and evolutionary goals as articulated by Francine Hirsch and others. In understanding Soviet nationalities policy, Hirsch (2005) introduces the concept of “state-sponsored evolutionism,” arguing that dividing Soviet people into nations was “A Soviet version of the civilizing mission” that saw mobilizing nationality as a way to make people active participants in the Soviet project. Through a related concept of “double assimilation” becoming part of a nation was part of becoming Soviet and vice versa.

In the case of Orthodoxy in West Ukraine a similar framework can be applied—with key differences. Unlike in the earlier years of nationality policy where everyone was mobilized through a nation in this case, only those deemed both “Ukrainian” and newly Soviet were mobilized through Orthodoxy. In fact, Soviet policymakers did not view it as particularly desirable for Ukrainians from pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine who had been sent to West Ukraine (the so-called “Easterners”) to participate in Orthodox religious life (Vil'khovii, 1945). Orthodoxy was only part of becoming Soviet for *some* Ukrainians— “Easterners” were deemed advanced enough (or “evolved” in Hirsch’s terms) to not require Orthodoxy.

In addition, this evolutionary role for Orthodoxy was promoted much more by state authorities than party authorities. The Russian Orthodox Church in 1943 was given its own

¹¹ Sheptyts'kyi had died in March 1944 and the Soviets had arrested his named successor, Joseph Slipy. Kostelnyk’s own son had been executed in 1941 during the bloody Red Army retreat from L’viv. One of the promises made to Kostelnyk in his meetings with Karin was that they would investigate the whereabouts of his son and if possible give him his son’s remains for a proper burial. In addition, Kostelnyk had worked closely with the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation of L’viv, something Soviet authorities had documented extensively. See “Dokladnaya Zapiska: O besedakh s predstaviteliam greko-katolicheskoi tserkvy Kostelnikov I Kotivym.” In Bohunov. *Likvidatsia*: 372; DA SBU f.2, op.4, s. 24, 198

structure within the Soviet state, and that state structure was replicated on the local level in West Ukraine and built alongside other state institutions. CAROC's officials were responsible for regulating all church property in West Ukraine—and in Galicia the Greek Catholic Church was the largest and wealthiest landowner. The process of registering churches, transferring millions of rubles' worth of property from the Greek Catholic Church to the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as liaising with priests who were often the most educated people in newly Soviet villages gave CAROC a much larger role in dictating policy in West Ukraine than in other parts of the USSR. Party committees were not allowed to make any decisions, for example, regarding church property without consulting CAROC first and could not mobilize priests for party work without CAROC beginning the reunion process with them first. Because most of CAROC's personnel were drawn from the NKVD (most notably its director, Karpov) CAROC officials worked closely with the secret police to use agentura to reinforce reunion, a partnership that had significant consequences for the long-term impact of reunion.¹²

The Committees for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church

Leading up to and long after the 1946 *sobor*, officials from the newly formed oblast-level offices of CAROC were required to send quarterly reports to the republic level heads of CAROC (Khodchenko for Ukraine) as well as to Karpov. For the Ukrainian SSR the quarterly reports from the so-called “Eastern oblasts” vs. the “Western oblasts” were quite different. Within the Western Oblasts, reports from the newly added oblasts of Rivne, Volyn, and Chernivtsi differed still from the reports from the also newly Soviet but Uniate-majority oblasts of L'viv, Ternopil, Drohobych, Stanislav, and Zakarpattia. While the former reports focused on understanding the religiousness of the population and monitoring the finances of the Orthodox Church, the latter focused nearly exclusively on reunification. In the formerly Greek Catholic majority oblasts, success came to be measured by the growth of the Orthodox Church while in oblasts that had been Orthodox, newly Soviet or not, success was measured by the local population avoiding the church in favor of secular activities (Khodchenko, 1947). In a 1948 report to Karpov and Khodchenko, the head of CAROC for L'viv, Vishnevskii, notes that the fact that the priests continue to have a strong influence on the population and that people are “happily” attending services has shown the success of reunion (p. 153).

¹² Here, I build on the work done by Natalia Shlikhta who made a critical intervention in writing about the consequences and enforcement of reunification, instead of simply the *sobor* itself. Her arguments, however, focus more on the consequences for religious observance than from the perspective of Soviet governance. Her explanations of continuing investigations into reunification, however, emphasize goals of assimilation of Ukrainians while here I argue the Orthodoxy was given a special, unique role in West Ukraine—a role that was not accorded to Eastern Ukraine and saw a specific use for religion in Galicia as part of a unique path towards becoming Soviet, a path not accorded to other Ukrainians. The idea of nationalities policy as a special diagnosis and prognosis, introduced by Brigid O'Keeffe in her work on Soviet gypsies also, in my view, applies to the specific role of religion introduced for West Ukrainians. See Natalia Shlikhta. *Tserkva, tykh khto vyzhyv: Radians'ka Ukraina, seredyna 1940-x–pochatok 1970-x*. Kyiv: V-Vo Akta, 2011; Brigid O'Keeffe. *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, And Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2013.

Part of this seemingly strange connection between Sovietization and Orthodoxization (the term used officially was *opravoslavlenie*¹³) had to do with the interaction of the priests with Soviet authorities during the reunion process. In a report to Khodchenko, Kulichenko, the head of CAROC for Ternopil Oblast, describes what reunion looked like on the ground. Priests wishing to “reunite” had to fill out a *zayavlenie* (testimonial) which would be sent to the Episcopate (high-ranking clergy member) of their region. The templates for these *zayavlenii* were distributed to priests by CAROC offices, working closely with the NKVD, leading up to and after the 1946 *sobor*. These *zayavlenii* would then be accepted by the Episcopate who would invite the priests to a religious ceremony and give them documents that confirmed they had taken part in this religious ceremony. The priest would then bring these documents to the Oblast Ispolnitel'nii Komitet (Oblispolkom) where they would prove they had done the ceremony and could formally register as Orthodox priests (Kulichenko, 1949).

From their response to these reports, it is clear that for Khodchenko and for Karpov, the important aspects of reunion were not in the *sobor*, but partly in this process that individual priests had to go through: a religious ceremony with an episcopate and an appearance at the local state office. Engaging in this process for the officials at CAROC bound priests to an official Orthodox Church run by the Soviet state.

The second component of the connection was religious ritual, understood partially through the lens of participation in Soviet life, fusing religious ritual with secular tasks. In instructions for his officers, local MGB major Briker emphasized that monitoring ritual to ensure it was Orthodox and not Greek Catholic was highlighted as the most important aspect of the reunification process (Briker, 1949).

One of the most obvious ritual differences between Greek Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy was the commemoration of the Pope. Thus, officials in CAROC instructed the MGB to report on whether reunited priests commemorated the Pope in their services or if instead they commemorated Moscow Patriarch Alexei, as one ought to do in a Russian Orthodox service. In quarterly reports in the years following reunion, CAROC officials noted that some reunited priests continued to commemorate the Pope, others had ceased mentioning the Pope but did not mention Alexei either, while some priests praised Alexei (Sherstiuk, August 1946). Karpov and Khodchenko responded that not mentioning the Moscow Patriarch was not acceptable, not simply because it was flouting proper Orthodox ritual but also because of what commemoration of Alexei represented in the reunification project. In a meeting of CAROC officials in Kyiv (1949), I. Ivanov, one of the CAROC officials instrumental in planning reunion noted: “What does it mean when the reunited priests do not commemorate (*upominaniia*) the Orthodox patriarch, I see this as bad, there needs to be at least one commemoration. Moscow, it’s the capital of our motherland (*rodina*) the cradle of everything progressive in the human world...” For Ivanov and the CAROC leadership, this Orthodox religious ritual of commemorating the patriarch ought to be mandated for reunited priests because of its relevance to the Soviet project, not simply religious ritual. Mentioning the Pope would not just be a repudiation of a religious reunion project but of a Soviet project for Ukraine as well.

This line of thinking also helps explain why CAROC rejected proposals from priests who agreed to convert to Orthodoxy but asked that it not be made public to their congregations, for fear of reprisals (Sherstiuk, July 1946). In response to these requests, the head of CAROC for the

¹³ This term appears in several CAROC reports well into the 1960s including DALO f. R-1332, op.1, sp. 24, 68-9.

Drohobych oblast, Aleksei Savvich Sherstiuk refused, arguing “I believe, hiding from the population an act with the level of importance of reunion, is out of the question. The decision of the *sobor* should be read aloud to every congregation,” (65). If reunion were simply about church jurisdiction or even recruiting priests to work with Soviet authorities secretly, these public declarations by clergy would not need to be prioritized. Priests ought to actively practice Orthodox ritual, mobilize their populations to do the same and connect these actions to not just loyalty to Soviet authorities, but participation in the Soviet project.

In this same report, Sherstiuk notes he has worked to ensure that the priests his office had “reunified” were serving the Soviet state. From the moment they became reunified priests, they were expected to begin mobilizing their populations for the upcoming local elections. Priests were deployed to refute rumors that the elections themselves were cursed and in many cases bring their parishioners to the polling place after church services. One deacon even requested (and was granted) permission to place an election ballot box in his church to mobilize parishioners to vote (pp. 66-7).

However, Orthodox ritual and secular mobilization could not be disentangled as the reunion process went on. In the most obvious iteration, a Greek Catholic priest who refused reunification was also not permitted to mobilize his parishioners to participate in Soviet life (Khodchenko, 1947). In one case, a member of the District Party Committee, Shevchenko, of Spas-Novomilyatinskii district, reached out to a priest who had refused to reunify with Orthodoxy and told him he would be able to hold services as a Greek Catholic priest if the priest would “inform all of the peasants that on election day all should as a group (“*vse kak odin*”) vote for our candidate and ask them that things remain calm on election day and that on the morning of election day they should all go to the Executive Office and vote to ensure that our village will not be behind [in voter turnout]...” The priest agreed, without reunifying with Orthodoxy. When Shevchenko was called in for a meeting where he was harshly scolded for this act, he maintained it was an effective strategy, pointing to the village’s voter turnout (Vishnevskii, 1947).

While Shevchenko may have maintained the method was effective, what he did not understand was the link between reunification and this new role for the priest. A priest attached to Greek Catholicism and all that it stood for in West Ukraine could not be used for this purpose—only a priest who had “reunified” with Orthodoxy. A priest preaching Catholicism and encouraging citizens to vote in Soviet elections could not be permitted—only one preaching Orthodoxy. Yet Shevchenko’s misunderstanding reveals that for some, especially those in the Party, Greek Catholic priests were simply local notables that could be of assistance. However, because reunion was a long-term strategy with its own vision for a “reunited” Soviet Ukraine, Greek Catholicism could not be tolerated—only Orthodoxy and perhaps down the road, atheism.

Another key linkage between Orthodox ritual and Soviet mobilization began to emerge in reference to operations against the *banderovtsy*, an umbrella term for various Ukrainian guerilla fighters united by Ukrainian nationalism and a mission to “liberate” Ukraine from Soviet forces. The role of the *banderovtsy* in opposition to the church reunion was, I argue, exaggerated by Soviet authorities—but the fixation on the notion of the *banderovtsy* as anti-Orthodox reveals yet another aspect of religion that became tied to desirable and undesirable forms of Ukrainian nationalism. Most of the so-called *banderovtsy* were affiliated with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its paramilitary wing, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). In OUN’s manifestos during WWII, religion was not emphasized in their vision for a “united” (*soborna*) Ukrainian nation state. Their manifestos guaranteed “religious freedom” as long as

these religions did not undermine Ukrainian nationalism.¹⁴ When OUN was formed in the late 1930s, its founders considered the Greek Catholic Church a purveyor of a conservative national vision that did not allow for radicalism and saw the Russian Orthodox Church, for its part, as an imperial Russian institution. Many members of OUN-UPA were themselves Greek Catholics (Stepan Bandera himself was the son of a Greek Catholic priest) but most of them had abandoned the religion (and romantic nationalism that came with it) of their parents' generation for radical nationalism. Despite this divide, Soviet authorities considered the *banderovtsy* behind the vast majority of anti-reunification agitation and the reason for the slow process of reunification.

To be sure, OUN-UPA was against church reunion—not for any theological reason but because they viewed reunion as a way for Soviet authorities to recruit priests to become part of the “NKVD” and to turn West Ukrainians into “Russians”. When preparations for the L'viv *Sobor* began, OUN-UPA made their views known to priests about reunion and when the *sobor* concluded, began sending threatening letters to priests urging them not to convert (Kolomiets, 1945.). In one official statement, OUN noted that it had nothing against Orthodoxy as a religion but was against reunion precisely because it was an “NKVD” operation (1945). In the years following reunion, UPA murdered ten priests out of the few thousand or so reunited priests, most famously Kostelnyk himself in 1948.¹⁵ While these murders are significant, the numbers pale in comparison to the thousands of Jews, Poles, “collaborationist” Ukrainians, Soviet officials, and Red Army soldiers targeted by OUN-UPA in the same period. OUN-UPA's mobilization against other Soviet activities, such as collectivization and Red Army recruitment, were prioritized over opposition to religious reunification.

However, in reports on the “slow” process of reunion, CAROC officials blamed most of reunion's failings on threats from the *banderovtsy*. Priests who refused to speak Patriarch Alexei's name in Church did so because they feared the *banderovtsy* would attack them. Priests who did not want to come into the state office to sign their *zayavlennii* were afraid of being seen there by the *banderovtsy*. After receiving many of these reports, Khodchenko (1947) grew suspicious. “I'm beginning to think,” he noted in a report to the CAROC offices of West Ukraine, “that these references to banderite terror for some of these Uniate priests is a panacea, specifically a way to hide their own desire not to reunite (71).” Whether or not these priests, and the officials of CAROC truly feared reprisals from the *banderovtsy* is difficult to ascertain. What is clear, however, is that the notion that opposition to reunion was tied to opposition to Soviet power and radical nationalism was a framework that proved useful for priests and Soviet

¹⁴ With one exception: Jews as a national group were ordered to be “eliminated” (*unichtozhat*). This did not refer to Judaism in religious terms, however it can be assumed that Judaism would be considered one of the religions harmful to the Ukrainian nation based on the national policy toward them. See the copy of OUN's April 1941 resolution “Postanovy 2: Velykoho Zboru Orhanizatsii Ukrain's'kykh Natsionalistiv.” in RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 338, t.3, 86-103.

¹⁵ According to statistics collected by CAROC in April 1947. GARF f. R-6991, op. 1, d. 216, 40. There is significant evidence to doubt the Soviet account of Kostelnyk's assassination by OUN members and Vatican agents. Whatever the true circumstances of Kostelnyk's death, Soviet authorities were able to mobilize the event to put forward a narrative of Orthodoxy as the enemy of Ukrainian nationalists, a mission supported by the Vatican.

officials. Reunion, like collectivization and military services, was just one of many Soviet projects struggling in West Ukraine because of anti-Soviet sabotage by the *banderovtsy*.

Even though reunification was declared “complete” in 1949 at a conference for CAROC representatives in Kyiv from the Western Oblasts and Zakarpattia, fighting the anti-Soviet, Ukrainian nationalist specter of Greek Catholicism allowed CAROC to advocate for its continued role in Soviet life well past that date. The assassination of Yaroslav Halan, a Soviet writer (and L’viv native) who wrote propaganda materials against the church later that same year by members of OUN-UPA (who were also alleged to have had close ties to the Vatican) only encouraged a more robust role for CAROC and led to hundreds more arrests of priests. These priests, most of whom had reunited with Orthodoxy, were almost always identified as associated with OUN-UPA *because* of their failure to practice Orthodox ritual correctly. In July 1949, for example, officer Steblovskii (1949) of the Ternopil Oblast MGB compiled a list of local Orthodox priests who practiced Catholic rituals during services, connecting these rituals with evidence of ties to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Each priest was a former Greek Catholic who had recently converted to Orthodoxy and most were arrested.

By the early 1950s the connections between ritual and loyalty that had been established by reunification created the paradigm that would inform Soviet policy toward the Greek Catholic Church and Russian Orthodoxy in West Ukraine until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

For example in a 1952 a report to his CAROC superiors, Vishnevskii emphasized why continuing to monitor religious ritual was so important:

What does it mean that there continues to be opposition to the Orthodox rite (*obryad*), it means that this opposition will continue in individual churches as long as Vatican agentura and bourgeois-Ukrainian nationalists do not accept Orthodoxy in formerly Greek Catholic churches. With this in mind, I believe that that the more churches take on Orthodoxy (*pravoslavni vid*), the less there will be a base for anti-Orthodox activity and more importantly it will expose the enemy activity and without a doubt will narrow the possibility for enemy elements to continue their subversive work. (p. 58-9).

Conclusions

CAROC was able to advocate for itself and its powerful position in West Ukraine by emphasizing the “political goals” of reunion—integrating West Ukraine into Soviet Ukraine and the Soviet Union, even as the Orthodox Church’s presence in the rest of the Soviet Union was being minimized. After an extensive study of church life in the Soviet Union commissioned by Suslov (then head of Agitprop), Soviet central authorities concluded that the official presence of CAROC could be minimized everywhere in the Soviet Union *except* in West Ukraine. In a February 1949 report to Dmitri Trofimovich Shepilov (then a deputy to Suslov in Agitprop), Karpov successfully advocated for the CAROC departments in L’viv, Ternopil, Stanislav, Drohobych, and Zakarpattia to remain open and retain their numbers of cadres while agreeing that other oblast-level CAROC offices may close (pp. 17-20).

Perhaps originally envisioned as a temporary wartime measure, the enforcement of the 1946 L’viv sobor and “reunification” with Russian Orthodoxy that continued (in various waves) by CAROC and the MGB in remained a fundamental aspect of Soviet governance in Soviet West Ukraine until 1989. By connecting religious reunification to a larger narrative about Ukraine and a special place for the Ukrainian nation within the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities found in the

Orthodox Church and its rituals a useable past and a loyal institution through which to project a new post-war Ukrainian nationalities policy. However, the complicated entanglements between Orthodoxy, Russianness, and Soviet-ness that reunion promoted throughout West Ukraine also ensured the persistent construction of each church as fundamental to two national projects, set up in opposition to each other: a Ukrainian nation based on rejection of a unified Orthodox past with the Russian nation as part of the Russian empire versus a Ukrainian nation that owes its very existence to the Russian defense of Orthodoxy. These oppositional narratives, and the roles of each church within them, has remained fundamental to how Ukrainians understand themselves and how Russia understands Ukraine up to the present day.

Reference List

- Bociurkiw, Bohdan. 1996. *The Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939-1950)*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press.
- Bohunov, Serhii, ed. 2005. *Mytropolyt Andrei Sheptyts'kyi u dokumentakh radians'kykh orhaniv derzhavnoi bezpeky. 1939-1944*. Kyiv: Ukrains'ka Vydavnycha Spilka.
- Bohunov, Serhii, ed. 2006. *Likvidatsia UNKTs (1939-1946): Dokumenty radians'kykh orhaniv derzhavnoi bezpeky*. Kyiv: Institut Istorii Ukrainy.
- Brikker. (1949 December 12). *Instructions*. Fond 2, opis 4, sprava 13. Haluznyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrainy (DA SBU) Kyiv, Ukraine
- Budurowycz, Bohdan. 2003. "The Greek Catholic Church in Galicia 1914-1944," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 26 (1): 291-375.
- Hillis, Faith. 2013. *Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Himka, John Paul. 1999. *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine*. Montreal. McGill University Press.
- Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Malenchuk, V. Iu. 1968. *Pravda Pro Uniiu: Dokumenty i materialy*. L'viv: Kameniar.
- O'Keeffe, Brigid. 2013. *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, And Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Kalkandjieva, Daniela. 2015. *The Russian Orthodox Church, 1917–1947. From Decline to Resurrection*. London: Routledge.

- Karpov, G.G. (1946 November 6). *Top secret letter from G. Karpov (head of CAROC) to Khodchenko (head of CAROC Ukraine)*. Fond R-6991, opis 1, delo 103, p. 18. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) Moscow, Russia
- Karpov, G.G. (1949 February 28). *Report to D.T. Shepilov*. Fond 17, opis. 132, delo. 111, pp. 17-20. Rossiskikh gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsialno-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) Moscow, Russia
- Khodchenko, P. (1946 May 15). *Quarterly Report*. Fond R-6991, opis. 1, delo. 99, p. 65. GARF.
- Khodchenko, P. (1947 April 25). *Protocols of the Meeting of CAROC Representatives for the Western oblasts*. Fond R-6991, opis. 1, delo. 216, pp. 61-73. GARF.
- Khodchenko, P. (1947 September 24). *Quarterly Report*. Fond 1, op. 23, delo 4555, pp. 172-200. Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromadskykh obiednan Ukrainy (TsDAHOU) Kyiv, Ukraine
- Kolarz, Walter. 1961. *Religion in the Soviet Union*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Kolomiets. (1945 October 22). *On the Anti-Soviet Activities of the Uniate Clergy*. Fond 3 opis. 1, sprava. 230, pp. 22-27. Derzhavnyi arkhiv Lvivskoi oblasti (DALO) L'viv, Ukraine
- Kochetova, Anna and Odintsov, Mikhail. 2014. *Konfessionalnaia politika v Sovetskom soyuze v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1955*. Moscow: Rosspen.
- Kulichenko. (1949 February 18). *Report*. Fond 2, opis 3, sprava 1, p. 66 DA SBU.
- Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). *Appeal to Ukrainians* (1945 April) Fond 1, opis. 23, sprava. 1638, pp. 112-113. TsDAHOU.
- Sherstiuk. (1946 July 11). *On the status of the Orthodox Church*. Fond R-6991, opis. 1, delo. 102, pp. 64-7. GARF
- Sherstiuk. (1946 August 11). *Quarterly Report*. Fond R-6991, op. 1, d. 102, pp. 57-63. GARF.
- Shevtsov, I.F. (1949 September 24). *Proceedings of the September 5 Conference on the liquidation of the Uniates*. Fond R-6991, opis.1, delo. 519, p. 150. GARF.
- Shlikhta, Natalia. 2011. *Tserkva, tykh khto vyzhyv: Radians'ka Ukraina, seredyna 1940-x-pochatok 1970-x*. Kyiv: V-Vo Akta.
- Skinner, Barbara. 2009. *The Western Front of the Eastern Church: Uniate and Orthodox Conflict in 18th Century Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Steblovskii. (1949 July 30). *List: Former Uniate Priests, Reunited With Orthodoxy...* Fond 2, opis. 4, sprava. 16. DA SBU.

Vil'khovii. (1945 July 7). *Quarterly Report*. Fond 1, opis 23, delo 1640. TsDAHOU.

Vishnevskii. (1947 April 21). *Quarterly Report*. Fond R-6991, opis. 1, delo. 230, pp. 1-9. GARF.

Vishnevskii. (1949 March 9). *Quarterly Report*. Fond R-6991, opis.1, delo 217, p. 153. GARF.

Vishnevskii. (1952 July 3). *Quarterly Report* . Fond R-1332, opis. 2, sprava. 20, pp. 58-9. DALO.

Weeks, Theodore R. 2004. "Russification: Word and Practice 1863-1914. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148 (4): 471-489.

Werth, Paul. 2014. *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.