

## **Tangents of Latin-Byzantine coexistence to the south of the Carpathians as an opportunity for the revival of values**

*Peter Zubko*

Western and Eastern Christians have lived side by side for centuries to the south of the Carpathians. During this time, a coexistence has developed that has been beneficial for both sides: an exchange of values, opinions and spiritual heritage along with material enrichment. The area and its inhabitants were not isolated, nor did the mutual tangents have an explicitly local context and meaning. They belong to the mosaic of the great world story of relations between the Latin (Western) and Byzantine (Eastern) worlds and their cultures. Although some relations are interpreted as strained, paradoxically they have always advanced the quality of life, spirituality and culturality.

The early Christians had a great tolerance for difference. We already find a variety of perspectives on the same issue in the biblical texts of the New Testament. Different or divergent views were not a pretext for division because mutual unity was important.<sup>1</sup> However, it should be added that Christians were distinct from the community from which they came (the first Christians were distinguished from their surroundings, they were called a Jewish sect), from the heathens (in several martyrologies, the non-worship of pagan deities is described as ‘impiety’ and was the reason for the death sentence for the first martyrs) and from traditions (Easter was celebrated essentially at a time different from the Jewish calendar). These differences reinforced a distinctive Christian identity. Nevertheless, the Christian community was diverse within itself.

Christians were not a uniform mass; circles of two great ecclesial communities formed naturally already in antiquity, originating in different geo-

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g. Acts of the Apostles 15:1-35 and Galatians 2:1-10. These are two views on the apostolic council in Jerusalem (around 50 AD), the Petrine and Pauline versions of the same event.

graphical circumstances. They were not isolated, for the circulation of persons, material and spiritual goods and power influences contributed to the interest in the other. The differences between the Latin/Roman West and the Greek/Byzantine East are well known,<sup>2</sup> they usually caused major and minor tensions, not only in their own time, but on account of the memory effect, they were also later emphasised artificially, even deliberately. These tensions depended on the severity of the problem, but also on the personalities involved in the solution. Although many might seem negative, most of them positively moved the times forward, contributed to mutual knowledge and the consolidation of unity in differences, or enriched the other with their own spiritual richness.<sup>3</sup> The primary nature of the problems was theological or religious; both sides liked to stress the other's own orthodoxy and the other's unorthodoxy (heresy, schism, sectarianism) in defining theological views, religious truths and their application in practice and adherence to church discipline.

Other problems, such as cultural issues, have often been interpreted as theological. The sacralisation of everyday life was beneficial until it turned into militant fundamentalism without inner freedom. These differences can be divided into liturgical, customary and theological, some of which overlap and complement each other. Among the best-known liturgical differences are the rite/ritual and the liturgical regulations and customs related to it, especially the calendar (Julian or Gregorian), the date of Easter, different liturgical feasts, the Lenten discipline (fasting days and forbidden foods), the eucharistic matter (leavened or unleavened bread). Customary differences include e.g., the (non-)wearing of beards and celibacy. The best-known theological differences encompass the question of papal primacy, the Filioque issue, for some time they also included the views and practice of the Marian cult and the cult of icons/images, and finally the doctrine of purgatory. Some of the differences have a cultural context; the distinctions have resulted from pastoral accents and approaches (administering of

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chadwick, H.: *Historia rozłamu Kościoła Wschodniego i Zachodniego od czasów apostoelskich do Soboru florenckiego* [The History of the East-West Schism in the Church from the Apostolic Times to the Council of Florence]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2009; Špirko, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny s osobitným zreteľom na vývin cirkevných dejín Slovenska I – II*. [Church History with Special Reference to the Development of the Church History of Slovakia] Martin: Neografia, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the exchange of feast days: the West took over the Feast of the Epiphany and the East the Feast of the Nativity. Furthermore, the West took over the Marian cult.

the sacraments of initiation, spiritual guidance, dealing with moral issues, spiritual priorities). The issues that caused real controversy and division were political and power-related in nature linked to the high ambitions of the originators.

Tangents, contacts, clashes between East and West occurred regularly from one side and the other. In the first millennium of Christianity, these were various tensions used as a pretext for condemnation, distancing and accusations. They culminated in 1054 in the clash between Humbert and Cerularius and mutual excommunication. This date is a symbol of division to this day. Subsequently, in the second millennium, several dialogues took place, more or less successfully. In the first millennium, they concerned all religious and social areas, in the second millennium, they predominantly revolved around theological issues and ecclesiastical discipline. It was precisely these common interests of restoring ecclesial unity which were beneficial for the development of dogmatic theology. This led to the definition of the seven sacraments, purgatory, trinitarian doctrine, ecclesiology, canon of biblical books and the understanding of primacy. These doctrines were last defined at the 17th ecumenical council in Florence: Bull of Union with the Greeks *Laetentur caeli* (6 July 1439), Bull of Union with the Armenians *Exultate Deo* (22 November 1439), Bull of Union with the Copts and Ethiopians *Cantate Domino* (4 February 1442), Bull of Union with the Syrians *Multa et admirabilia* (30 November 1444), Bull of Union with the Cypriot Chalcedonians and Maronites *Benedictus sit Deus* (7 August 1445).<sup>4</sup> This resulted in another practice; the Roman Church recognised Orthodox saints who had died before the adoption of these bulls, except for saints in the rank of bishops.

In the modern ecclesiastical history of Central Europe, two important unions are mentioned, which survived their formation and early crises, and their consequences are still evident today; they have heirs in several countries. The first was the Union of Brest in 1596 and the second the Union of Uzhhorod in 1646. There is no direct causal relationship between them, but several related cultural and social circumstances that are similar can be identified. Some phenomena from the Polish environment inspired the

---

<sup>4</sup> Alberigo, G. et al. (eds.): *Conciliarum Oecumenicorum Decreta*. Bologna: EDB, 2013, pp. 523, 534, 567, 586, 589; Baron, A. – Pietras, H. (eds.): *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych III (1414 – 1445)*. [Documents of General Councils III (1414 – 1445)]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM – Księży Jezuici, 2003, pp. 458, 492, 570, 628 (the date of 30 September 1444 is mentioned here), 636.

Hungarian environment. The relations and tangents of the Catholic-Orthodox or rather Latin-Byzantine neighbourhood have two distinct and separate stages: before and after the conclusion of the union. In the first phase, a strong affinity of the East with the West can be registered while in the second phase, periodic critical events occurred. These were sporadically revisited and reinterpreted by the East according to the needs of the time. This is how the East sought to reinforce its own identity when it found itself or felt to be in crisis or danger. The Latin Church played a decisive role, especially in raising and maintaining awareness of the union, because the union allowed it to justify the emergence of a new ecclesiological entity.

According to the testimony of the canonical visitation of Franciscus Barkóci, Bishop of Eger, in the middle of the 18th century, the union as such was generally ignored by the Eastern milieu to the south of the Carpathians, which attempted to achieve its own independence. Ignoring the state of the union led the Latin milieu to take an increasing interest in the Uniates. The efforts of the Uniates to achieve outward equality with the Latin Church provoked a reciprocal reaction on the part of the Uniates, aimed at intellectual (spiritual, dogmatic and cultural) equality with the Latin milieu. It was always possible to identify Byzantine milieu religiously by rite and liturgical discipline. The prevalent Latin milieu referred to them by the following religious terms: *Rutheni*, *the Ruthenes*, (in the religious sense Rusnaks, not in the ethnic sense of Rusins), the schismatics (the Orthodox), the Disuniates (the non-unionists or those who left the union or, in a minority position, opposed the union). To this day, this issue sparks off terminological disputes, which have a positive impact on the identity of the Eastern Church itself.

The Uniates were not a linguistically homogeneous community as they spoke several languages (Slovak, Ruthenian, Hungarian, Romanian). During the Wallachian colonisation, the Orthodox Wallachians dominated the Ruthenians, and according to the sources, it can be assumed that these were not ethnographic terms, but ethnic names; while the Ruthenians have preserved their own identity to this day thanks to their distinct language (clearly different from the majority language), the Wallachians were Latinised (they became Roman Catholics or Latin Catholics) in the first or second generation after the settlement. In this context, it would be possible to interpret the origin of some of the depictions on medieval frescoes (the Nativity of Christ in the Latin churches in the villages of Kostol'any pod Tríbečom, Ludrová, Vizsoly), which have a typical Eastern appearance. On the other hand, this proves a closer connection and unity between Eastern and

Western culture before the Reformation, which is also exemplified by the embroidered Virgin Mary (the Mother of God) as an orant on the coronation robe of Hungarian kings.<sup>5</sup>

Without knowing, understanding and comparing the key events of unionism in Poland, it is impossible to have a good understanding of unionism to the south of the Carpathians. The Union of Uzhhorod and some other events have been identified with developments in Poland, namely the Union of Brest, or put in direct relationship with the Synod of Zamość. The comparison confirms the Polish union as a moral model, but the Uzhhorod Union developed and went on in a completely different direction so it is incompatible with the Polish union; the Hungarian result was not a conventional church union, but a personal union, which was created after the oath of loyalty to the Bishop of Eger in 1646 and was renewed several times (1649 and 1652), the last time in 1726/7 in connection with events in Poland. The influence of the Synod of Zamość is not demonstrable in the sources; it is only perceived indirectly. The exact date of the union was for a long time not important for the Uniates, oscillating between 1649 and 1646, but more general opinion leaned towards 1649.<sup>6</sup> In fact, for a long time, it was not doubted at all,<sup>7</sup> although some historians have also argued in favour of 1652.<sup>8</sup> It was only research associated with the search for its own roots and identity that helped fix the year of its foundation for 1646, but the philosophical and theological decision to search for God in Ruthenian history played a greater role; this principle is called the *locus theologicus*.

From the foundation of the Uzhhorod Union until the canonical establishment of the Greek Catholic bishopric of Mukachevo (1646–1771), the regular local ordinaries were the Eger bishops of the Latin rite. For the faithful of the Eastern rite, a rite vicar was appointed, who was a con-

---

<sup>5</sup> Tóth, E.: A magyar szent korona és a koronázási jelvények. Budapest: Országház könyvkiadó, 2018, pp. 284–285.

<sup>6</sup> This ambiguity of the beginning of the union still existed in both 1950 and 1960 (cf. Lacko, M.: Gréckokatolíkom. Výber z diela [To the Greek Catholics. Selected works]. Košice: Byzant, 1992, pp. 43, 52).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Sirmaj, A.: Historické, topografické a politické poznatky stolice zemplínskej [Historical, Topographical and Political Knowledge of the Zemplín County]. Michalovce: Zemplínska spoločnosť, 2004, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Marianov, I.: Aby všichni jedno byli. Výklad unijní otázky a sbírka modliteb za sjednocení církví [So That All May Be One. Interpretation of the Union Question and Collection of Prayers for the Unification of the Churches.] Olomouc: Apoštolát sv. Cyrila a Metoděje, 1939, p. 23.

secrated bishop, chosen from among the Uniate presbyters. Bishops of the Eastern rite existed here before the union, although there is no direct and unequivocal evidence of a properly organised eparchy. The position of the rite vicar was not a sign of Latin arbitrariness, but respect for canon law and the proper integration of the Eastern faithful into the structures of the Catholic Church. Created by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), this appointment was known to people at the time when the Uniate presbyters took the oath of loyalty (1646) as well as in the 18th century. The establishment of a Greek Catholic bishopric was within the exclusive competence of the pope. The reluctance to support such a solution did not lie in the prejudices of the Eger bishops towards the Eastern milieu; there was the same reluctance to dismember one's own Latin Eger bishopric into new dioceses between 1746 and 1804, a period of almost 60 years. The Eger bishops, especially Bishop Barkóci, protected the Eastern rite<sup>9</sup> from Latinisation, which came only in the 19th century on the initiative of the Greek Catholic bishopric of Mukachevo. It was largely linked to the Magyarisation, which was intensely manifested under Bishop Štefan Pankovič (1820–1874, Bishop of Mukachevo from 1867)<sup>10</sup> after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. This apparently did not sit well with some of the Greek Catholic clergy, which was reflected, for example, in Lučkaj's views of the common Byzantine-Latin past, and that was already an apologetic reinterpretation of events. In fact, the period of the existence of the rite vicariate disciplined the Eastern community, opening the way for quality Latin education and culture, which gave rise to a generation of priests who put their education to good use to build the newly established

---

<sup>9</sup> A similar phenomenon of protecting the Eastern heritage from uncritical imitation of the Latin milieu was also addressed by the Polish bishops of the Latin rite in the same period (Vilinskij, V. S.: *Unionizmus [Unionism]* Trnava: Spolok sv. Vojtecha, 1932, pp. 80-81).

<sup>10</sup> Pankovič's creed was as follows: 'We live under the rule of the Hungarians and we must become Hungarians.' (Pop, I.: *Malé dejiny Rusínov [A Little History of the Ruthenians]*, p. 55; Pop, I.: *Podkarpatská Rus [Subcarpathian Ruthenia]*, pp. 184-185). On political and linguistic developments, research and related reflections in the second half of the 19th century: Švorc, P.: *Krajinská hranica medzi Slovenskom a Podkarpatskou Rusou v medzivojnovom období (1919–1939) [The Regional Border between Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the Interwar Period (1919–1939)]*. Prešov: Universum, 2013, pp. 11-62; Švorc, P.: *Zakliata krajina (Podkarpatská Rus 1918–1946) [The Enchanted Land (Subcarpathian Ruthenia 1918–1946)]* Prešov: Universum, 1996, pp. 14-37; Švorc, P.: *Zakletá zem. Podkarpatská Rus 1918–1946 [The Enchanted Land (Subcarpathian Ruthenia 1918–1946)]*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2007, pp. 33-56.

Mukachevo Greek Catholic bishopric; this period is called the ‘golden’ age of the bishopric.

The cultural comparison shows that the Eastern milieu was lagging behind the Western one, but it also shows a search for inspiration in the Western milieu. The supposed tensions between Western and Eastern Christianity in the Carpathian Mountains were in fact a creative demiurge for the cultural, thought and spiritual life<sup>11</sup> and growth of the Eastern Church in Hungary. In the Middle Ages, Eastern Christians sought out Latin pilgrimage sites (Košice, Spišská Kapitula) and converted to Roman Catholicism. During the Reformation they were rather sympathetic to Calvinism. In the 18th century, the Eastern cultural milieu attempted to achieve the same cultural level as the Latin milieu, in the 19th century, these attempts were manifested in the imitation of Latin theology, art (icons resembled Latin paintings, the so-called Theresian churches were built) and Hungarian patriotism (a euphemistic name for Hungarian nationalism), in the 20th century, the focus was on the search for ethnic roots by stressing Ruthenian, Ukrainian or Slovak autochthony and emphasis was placed on the common task of sharing the burden of the state’s anti-religious policy. In the 21st century, spiritual roots are being sought.<sup>12</sup> Slovak Greek Catholics have embraced the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition, which at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was still viewed more as part of the Latin heritage, despite being espoused by Greek Catholics in several countries all over the world.

The Cyrillo-Methodian idea led to the creative birth of the idea of direct continuity with the Great Moravian Church; however, this is a cultural phenomenon called interculturation, which has theological and pastoral goals, it is not a historical interpretation.

The mutual relations between Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics are characterised by an address connected with the statement of several realities by the Bishop of Košice Jozef Čárský on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Uzhhorod Union of 1946, published by the Bishop of Prešov Peter Pavel Gojdič in the magazine *Blahovistnik*:

---

<sup>11</sup> The Eastern theological heritage is also inspiring for the Protestant milieu. Cf. Svatoň, R.: *Doteky křesťanského Východu v protestantské teologii 20. století*. Schlink, Pelikan, Torrance, Mannerman, Moltmann. [Tangents of the Christian East in the Protestant Theology of the 20th Century.] Červený Kostelec : Pavel Mervart, 2018, 245 p.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Taft, R. F.: *Katolicizmus východného obradu. Jeho dedičstvo a poslanie* [Catholicism of the Eastern rite. Its Heritage and Mission.] Košice – Bratislava: Centrum spirituality Východ-Západ Michala Lacka – Teologická fakulta Trnavskej univerzity, 2007, 48 p.

*“(...) For the Catholics of the Latin rite here in eastern Slovakia, this jubilee is all the more precious because the faithful of both rites live in the same territory, in the same towns and villages; they share a common political, economic and social destiny, a common prosperity or misery; they have rejoiced together and suffered together for centuries. In many places they share churches or allow the worshippers of the other rite to hold services in them; believers distant from their church perform their Sunday duty in the church of the other rite.*

*The clergy of both rites help each other with sermons, confessions, care of the sick, etc.; the bishops of both rites go to the church of the fraternal rite on their official visits. Misunderstandings, which, praise God, seldom occur, do not come from the worshippers, but from tactlessness or misunderstood zeal on the part of the clergy for their own rite, are avoided and resolved by the episcopal offices of both rites. We regard ourselves as children of the common mother, the universal (Catholic) church, who profess the same faith, receive the same sacraments and acknowledge the same Holy Father as the head of the church. Only the rite (vestments and language of worship) is different, but we have one and the same love for Christ and loyalty to his church. On behalf of the clergy and faithful of the Latin rite of the Apostolic Administration of the Diocese of Prešov and the Diocese of Košice, on the occasion of this jubilee, I send to my brother in the apostolic office, H[is]. E[xcellency], the M[ost] R[everend], Bishop of Prešov and the Apostolic Administrator of the parts of the diocese of Mukachevo, the V[ery] Rev[erend] clergy and all the faithful of the Eastern rite, greetings and the wish, accompanied by prayer, that the hearts of all may be filled with the spirit of Christ and devotion to the Mother Church, that everyone may observe the commands of God and of the church as conscientiously as possible, that each one also publicly profess Christ, the church and its teaching, and that they may not be separated from it, neither by promises nor by threats, so that their zeal, their piety and their dedication may be an example to the faithful of the Latin rite. (...)”<sup>13</sup>*

---

<sup>13</sup> Čársky, J.: Spolu jubilujeme. [Celebrating a jubilee together]. In: БЛАГОВѢСТНИК (Blahovistnik) I (1946), issue 7, p. 4. (The spelling in the transcription has been adapted



In 1950, the Greek Catholic Church was ‘abolished’ after the so-called Prešov Sobor (sobor, church gathering or assembly of members of the Orthodox Church) as part of the so-called Action P (the abbreviation ‘P’ means ‘pravoslávny’ in Slovak language, i.e. Orthodox). Subsequently, the Latin Church played a key role in the universal Catholic communion by accepting and taking care of the Greek Catholics who refused to become Orthodox. These were believers who considered their faith to be Catholic; they did not “just” care about the rite, which in this context was an attribute of culture. Key figures of the Greek Catholic intelligentsia were unjustly imprisoned, or they had to go into exile in the Czech borderlands as part of Action 100, or they withdrew from public life for health and emeritus reasons. This absurd period lasted until the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church in 1968, but all the wrongs could no longer be righted. The consequences of the Prešov Sobor did not initially manifest themselves in any way in the agenda of the Košice bishopric (of the Latin rite).<sup>14</sup> Shortly after 28 April 1950, official conversions from the Greek Catholic rite to the Latin rite continued to take place, based on the consent of the Greek Catholic Ordinariate and the indult from Rome. These were, for example, the cases of the theologians Jozef Repko from Dulova Ves (parish of Kokošovce),<sup>15</sup> Ján Džatko from Vranov<sup>16</sup> and Michal Janočko from Barca in Košice.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of autumn 1950, Bishop Jozef Čársky began to appear passive in his relations with the state, apparently realising that any resistance was futile and even counterproductive. According to the literature, in this state of mind, he reportedly published a confidential circular on the re-

---

to the current rules of Slovak orthography; archaic words are left in the original wording because they are sufficiently comprehensible.)

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Zubko, P.: Dôsledky tzv. Prešovského soboru v agende Jozefa Čárskeho a Štefana Onderka. [The consequences of the so-called Prešov Sobor in the files of Jozef Čársky and Štefan Onderko] In: *Cirkev v okovách totalitného režimu. Likvidácia Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Československu v roku 1950.* [The Church in the Shackles of the Totalitarian Regime. The Elimination of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia in 1950]. Coranič, J. – Šturák, P. – Koprivňáková, J. (eds.). Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2010, pp. 209-219.

<sup>15</sup> Archív Košickej arcidiecézy (Archivum Archidioecesis Cassoviensis = AACass). Administratívne spisy [Archives of the Archdiocese of Košice. Administrative Files], sign. 661/1950, 29 April 1950; 971/1950, 29 April 1950; sign. 991/1950, 3 May 1950.

<sup>16</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 452/1950, 3 May 1950; 991/1950, 3 May 1950.

<sup>17</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 453/1950, 3 May 1950; 991/1950, 3 May 1950.

lations with former Greek Catholics<sup>18</sup> on 10 November 1950. So far, the aforementioned circular has been found neither in the archbishop's archive nor in the parish archives. From the context of the other agenda, it appears that it did exist, it did not recognise the Prešov Sobor and its consequences, and the resulting situation was taken note of only in a purely formal way. Roman Catholic priests followed the will of their bishop until 1968, although by then the bishop was no longer alive. This approach of the bishop was extremely important; the bishop was aware of the universality of the Catholic Church and of the current historical responsibility of the Latin Church not only for its own faithful, but also for the Greek Catholics who had lost their shepherd and their own church. In the earlier past, a similar Latin approach had proved counterproductive; this time it was needed not only in conscience, but there were insurmountable obstacles to free access to the sacraments (and thus to salvation) in their own rite. Given the extraordinary nature of the situation, an extraordinary but simple solution was needed, one that the regime had not anticipated: the Latin Church took care of the Greek faithful, which led to their rapprochement. God brought good out of evil. The emergency measure was not only applied until 1968, but it also had later consequences in the mixing of believers of both rites.

The state authorities intercepted the secret circular and Bishop Jozef Čársky was forced to issue an official statement, which did not contest the already issued decree, but it only sort of stated the situation. The bishop's official circular letter of 15 November, 1950, reads as follows:

*'Subject: Interfaith Law – compliance. To V[ery] rev[erend]... Rom[an] Cat[holic]. parish offices! I am informing the V[ery] Rev[erend] clergy that after 28 April 1950, the state public administration considers all former Gr[ee]k Catholics to be Orthodox. Consequently, it applies to them as well as to their relations with the Rom[an] Catholics the laws (regulations) in force regarding the relationship between the various denominations. A number of clergymen who did not comply with these regulations were greatly inconvenienced. I remind the Very Reverend clergymen that they should be aware of this in*

---

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Vnuk, F.: Vládni zmocnenenci na biskupských úradoch v rokoch 1949–1951. [Government Commissioners in Episcopal Offices in 1949–1951] Martin: Matica slovenská, 1999, pp. 179-180.

*their practice. Precibus commendatus + Jozef, in his o[wn]. h[and], Bishop, Apostolic Administrator.*"<sup>19</sup>

The practice was that the Roman Catholics administered sacraments and sacramentals to Greek Catholics as well; they were recorded in the Roman Catholic registers (of births, marriages and deaths). In order to distinguish Roman Catholics (referred to as 'r. cath.' in the registers) from Greek Catholics ('gr. cath. '), some parish priests included in the registers the abbreviation 'cath.' with the understanding that one day it would be possible to add 'gr.' Only exceptionally were former Greek Catholics referred to as Orthodox ('orthod. '). The most serious problem when it was necessary to deal with the rite affiliation officially was with weddings, which were not private; weddings were publicly known ceremonies with numerous guests. If a Roman Catholic was marrying a former Greek Catholic who was officially designated as Orthodox, it was a mixed marriage and a dispensation was required to marry in the Latin rite. The bishop's office thus had an extremely increased administrative burden, yet dispensations were routinely granted.

On 15 May 1953, the Church Department of the Regional National Committee (Slovak abbreviation: KNV) in Prešov stated that 'Bishop Jozef Čársky is obstructing the successful work of the regime among the Greek Catholics who have become Orthodox.'<sup>20</sup> His stance at that time therefore appears to be one of conscience, not lawlessness. It was an act of courage on his part for which he could have been penalised; fortunately, in these cases, it remained only a statement.

The official agenda of the Košice bishop's office until 1955 records almost no official documents on the subject of relations with the Orthodox Church (with the exception of the aforementioned dispensations from the *religio mixta*). This does not mean that the bishop did not have unofficial or confidential information. He obtained it from personal meetings with priests, but also from personal letters. Something similar happened in other pastoral matters. Documents on relations with the Orthodox have not been preserved in Čárský's estate. Only one letter from 1953, which was a response to a request from the Eparchial Council of the Orthodox Church

---

<sup>19</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2676/1950, 15 November 1950 (circular), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Pešek, J. – Barnovský, M.: Štátna moc a cirkvi na Slovensku 1948–1953. [State Power and Churches in Slovakia 1948 – 1953]. Bratislava: VEDA, 1997, p. 269.

in Michalovce dated 19 September 1953 (No. 1583/1953.-II/1.-Va), has remained in the official files:

*“We have asked the Slovak Office of Church Affairs to supply us with the form ‘Statement of Revenue and Expenditure for the Period from ... to ...’; since the office [currently] does not have this form in stock, they recommend us to ask to the Most Rev[erend] episcopal offices for some copies. We would need about 300-400 copies of the aforementioned form. We ask you, therefore, to kindly lend and send us this form depending on the quantity of your stock. We thank you in advance for your kindness and will gladly return the favour.’*

The reply of 25 September 1953 describes the nature of mutual relations at that time:

*‘We do not have the requested forms in stock. Our clergymen type these forms themselves.’<sup>21</sup>*

However, the situation was very serious, many former Greek Catholics were unable to come to terms with the orthodoxification and saw the way out in the ‘conversion’ to the Roman Catholic Church. It was also important to take a stand on the former sharing of churches, which the Orthodox continued after the Greek Catholics. Sometime shortly before 12 May 1955, bilateral Roman-Catholic-Orthodox negotiations were held in the KNV in Prešov. The representatives of the churches met to resolve the contentious issues between the believers of the Latin rite and the Orthodox. Many Greek Catholics refused to accept the situation so they joined the Roman Catholics for conscientious objection. In order to avoid further problems, a joint record of the meeting was made, the addendum to which was written personally by Bishop Jozef Čársky on 2 June 1955, explicitly stating that the joint record of the meeting was valid only with the attached instructions (clause, directives), ‘which is an integral part (sic!) of this record.’ The Roman Catholic Church was represented by Vicar General of Košice Štefan Onderko and Deputy Vicar General Štefan Benkö; the Orthodox Church

---

<sup>21</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2320/1953, 25 September 1953.

was represented by Vicar General of Michalovce Peter Spišiak, Director of the Eparchial Council in Prešov Andrej Mihal'ov, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Prešov ThDr. Kernašovič and Chair of the Missionary Department of the Eparchial Council in Michalovce A. Tóth.<sup>22</sup> Bishop Jozef Čársky was not present in person; he received the document from the meeting for approval and signature. The bishop realised and pointed out to the KNV that if the agreement was to be signed, other Roman Catholic bishops from eastern Slovakia had to do so as well, since Orthodox believers lived not only in the territory of the Košice bishopric, but also in the bishoprics of Spiš and Rožňava. As the record of the negotiations only laid down general principles, Bishop Jozef Čársky asked for detailed instructions in the form of an addendum to the record so that in the future, there would not be different interpretations of the agreement. And as a third comment, the bishop stated that the conversion of believers from one church to another cannot depend on the consent or disapproval of one or the other church, but on the free will of the converting person. The target Ordinary *ad quem* is competent to make this will legitimate.<sup>23</sup>

According to the established dates of other archival sources, the detailed guidelines were in fact drawn up within two weeks, apparently by Bishop Čársky himself or by people in his circle. The record of the aforementioned meeting and the addendum, the drafted directives, were signed by Jozef Čársky only on 2 June 1955. Both Orthodox bishops subsequently signed them on 3 June 1955. Bishop Čársky sent a letter of information about the agreement with the Orthodox Church to the Roman Catholic ordinariates in Spišská Kapitula and Rožňava. Both of the vicars capitular involved agreed without comment<sup>24</sup> to everything negotiated by Bishop Čársky and signed the directives without indicating the date, but next to the signature of the Bishop of Košice, which implies that their consent should be dated back to 2 June 1955,<sup>25</sup> although this apparently happened a day later.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> AACass, Episcopalia – Jozef Čársky (E–JČ), sine sign. (original); Zubko, P.: Dejiny Košickej cirkvi v prameňoch (1803–2006). [History of the Košice Church in Sources (1803–2006)]. Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2006, document no. 117, pp. 382–385.

<sup>23</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 1089/1955, 12 May 1955.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Archív Spišského biskupstva, Administratívne spisy [Archive of the Bishopric of Spiš, Administrative Files], sign. 686/1955, 3 June 1955.

<sup>25</sup> AACass, E–JČ, Pravoslávna otázka, Záznam a Smernice (originály) [The Orthodox Issue, Record and Directives (originals)].

<sup>26</sup> AACass, E–JČ, sine sign. (original); ZUBKO, Peter: Dejiny Košickej cirkvi v prameňoch [The History of the Košice Church in Sources] (1803–2006), document no. 117, pp. 382–385.

The Roman Catholic priests of the Košice diocese were informed about the agreement at retreats on the following dates and locations: on 16 June 1955, the deaneries<sup>27</sup> Prešov and Sabinov; on 20 June 1955, Humenné, on 21 June 1955, Sobrance and Michalovce; on 22 June 1955, Vranov nad Topľou and Trebišov; on 23 June 1955 Kráľovský Chlmec; on 24 June 1955 Giraltovce; on 27 June 1955 Košice-Juh and Košice-Sever; on 28 June 1955 Moldava nad Bodvou; on 30 June 1955, Bardejov.<sup>28</sup> This *modus vivendi* was intended to bring satisfaction and remedy the situation and contributed to the consolidation of the state of affairs.<sup>29</sup>

The official protocol of Čársky's office in the following period registers only one fourfold complaint by the Orthodox eparchy of Michalovce, dated 19 August 1955, about the failure to follow the directives on the part of the Latin Church. According to the summaries in the filing protocol, these were about baptisms in Čemerné, in the district of Vranov nad Topľou,<sup>30</sup> the use of churches in Sliepkovce-Judkov<sup>31</sup> and Biel<sup>32</sup> and a general statement of violation of the directives.<sup>33</sup> Officially there were not more of such complaints.

Bishop Čársky died in March 1962 and Štefan Onderko was elected as the Vicar Capitular, who made it possible for the Greek Catholics to restore the Greek Catholic Church on the premises of the Roman Catholic bishop's residence in 1968. The Vicar Capitular Štefan Onderko had earlier written in one of his circulars:

*'Dear altar brothers, the renewal process of our whole public life affects the holy church and us and our faithful. After all, we live here in this homeland. It is my duty to inform you all, and through you our faithful as well, about all that has happened or is happening in the domain that touches our church*

---

<sup>27</sup> The deaneries corresponded to the political districts of that time.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. AACass, E-JČ, Pravoslávna otázka, Záznam a Smernice (obal spisu). [The Orthodox Issue, Record and Directives] (file cover).

<sup>29</sup> Marek, P. – Bureha, V.: Pravoslavní v Československu v letech 1918–1953. Příspěvek k dějinám Pravoslavné církve v českých zemích, na Slovensku a na Podkarpatské Rusi. [Orthodox in Czechoslovakia in 1918–1953. A Contribution to the History of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia]. Brno: CDK, 2008, p. 433.

<sup>30</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2072/1955, 19 August 1955.

<sup>31</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2073/1955, 19 August 1955.

<sup>32</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2074/1955, 19 August 1955.

<sup>33</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy [Administrative Files], sign. 2075/1955, 19 August 1955.

life. In a way the process of democratisation is taking place in all branches of public life as well as in the church.<sup>34</sup>

Vasil' Hopko described the current social and political situation in a letter of 19 March 1968, written in Osek and addressed to the Orthodox bishop's office in Prešov and to the Roman Catholic bishop's office in Košice:

*"(...) I therefore consider it my civic duty, after long years of imprisonment, to demand that the aforementioned government decree be revoked as soon as possible, that the Greek Catholic Church be rehabilitated, along with its bishop, Pavel Gojdič, who perished in prison, and that its legitimate rights be granted anew, as are those of other churches. After so many years of trials and wrongs suffered, we want to live in this state as equal citizens... I do believe that the National Assembly will give due attention to these matters and resolve them in the spirit of the initiated democratisation to the full satisfaction of all citizens of the Greek Catholic denomination."*<sup>35</sup>

A copy of the letter was sent from Osek on 26 March 1968 together with another cover letter to the Ordinary of Košice, Štefan Onderko, as to 'a neighbour of the Greek Catholic bishopric of Prešov'. In this accompanying letter, Vasil' Hopko wrote:

*'First: Thank you for having served our faithful, conscientiously in the spirit of charity and in the spirit of Catholic law. May the Lord bless you! I, the undersigned Greek Catholic Bishop of Midila, Auxiliary Bishop of Prešov, respectfully and lovingly send you our submission to the National Assembly. I do this, firstly, to keep you informed, as a Hungarian poet says: 'Megfogyva bár, de törve nem'<sup>36</sup> – we are weakened, but not broken, we profess life because the Lord of Life has given us the right to life too. It is written in the H[oly] Scripture that the last will be the first. We want to preserve that primacy*

---

<sup>34</sup> AACass, Circulares, Obežník 544/1968 [Circular 544/1968], 1 April 1968, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy 1968/514 [Administrative Files 1968/514] (GR, 1968–1970, fasc. 1).

<sup>36</sup> The verse comes from the Hungarian romantic poem *Szózat (The Word)*, written in 1836 by Mihály Vörösmarty (1800 – 1855). It is considered one of the key patriotic hymns of the Hungarian national revival.

*in our love for God and in our love for the Catholic Church, which is now restored at the Council... We suffer only because we are faithful to the will of Christ the Lord, who said at the Last Supper (that is, before his death, as a testament): That all may be one; I wrote recently to the H[oly] Father, Paul VI, when I expressed my gratitude for a great gift, I mentioned this saying to him that is passed down from generation to generation: When the Greek Catholic pilgrims came to Rome, the Holy Father welcomed them saying, "Oh, you poor Greek Catholics, whom the Latins do not love and the Orthodox hate" – These are now "tempi passati", I wrote to the Holy Father, and we are pleased about this distinction that they look on us that way as it is purely for Catholicism that we suffer. (...) "Tempi passati", it is all a thing of the past. And now a bright, joyful future lies ahead of us. We want to work together as Uniates, but in doing so we want to preserve everything that Catholic law has prescribed about the rites. This means that when the father is Roman Catholic, all the children are Roman Catholic, when the father is Greek Catholic, all the children are Greek Catholic. Be assured that this is holy to us and will remain holy. And we are confident that a post-Council Catholic Roman Catholic parish priest and a post-Council Greek Catholic pastor will not steal (unlawfully rebaptise) children. If we are now to be brothers with Lutherans, etc., how much more are we Catholics to be brothers, and sincere brothers, among ourselves. When I have agreed to write this to you very sincerely, be assured that I will not put nationality first and then the Eastern rite. But Catholicism will come first, rite second and nationality third. We are to be good patriots, but first good Catholics. I pray for our dioceses that God may help you sort out everything in a Catholic spirit.*<sup>37</sup>

After eighteen years of illegality, the Greek Catholic Church was officially restored in 1968.

---

<sup>37</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy 1968/514 [Administrative Files 1968/514] (GR, 1968–1970, fasc. 1).



The Roman Catholic Church played an important role in this regard. On the Wednesday of the Holy Week, 10 April 1968, representatives of Greek Catholics met with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Košice at his residence to lead their church out of illegality. The favourable sociopolitical climate worked to the advantage of this effort; on 13 June 1968, the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic issued a decree on the economic security of the Greek Catholic Church by the state,<sup>38</sup> which legalised this church and allowed it to operate publicly again. In this case the state for the first time implicitly acknowledged the wrong it inflicted through the so-called Prešov Sobor, which it now partly redressed; the second time was in the early 1990s when the government financially compensated those Orthodox parishes that had given up their churches and returned them to the Greek Catholics. Between 1950 and 1968, the Greek Catholic Church was outlawed, actually operating illegally. The government felt obliged to make amends for the once immoral decision, even though the remedy could not be and was not ideal. It is common knowledge what happened in 1950 and after in Slovakia and other Soviet bloc countries.<sup>39</sup> However, few people now realise that it was a time not only of the martyrdom of the Greek Catholics,<sup>40</sup> but also of the paternal or maternal embrace of the Greek Catholics by the Roman Catholic Church.

The time was truly ripe and the situation favourable. On 10 April 1968, 133 priests and members of religious orders and 66 laypersons from all over Czechoslovakia met and, founded the Action Committee of Greek Catholic Clergy, following the Roman Catholic Prague model. Its activities were backed by the authority of the Work of Conciliar Renewal established on 14 May 1968<sup>41</sup> on the initiative of the Second Vatican Council, and it successfully operated in the Košice diocese at that time, enjoying authority among the clergy. It was also morally helpful to the developments in the Greek Catholic Church. On 29 April 1968, the Action Committee in Košice approved the Memorandum on the Rehabilitation of the Greek Catholic

---

<sup>38</sup> Vládne nariadenie 70/1968 Sb [Government Regulation 70/1968 Coll.]

<sup>39</sup> Wolf, J. M.: Být katolíkem je zločin [It is a crime to be Catholic]. Translatio: 18 01. [Samizdat], 244 p.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Babjak, J.: Zostali verní. Osudy gréckokatolíckych kňazov. [They Remained Faithful. The Fates of Greek Catholic Priests. Volumes I–II (Parts 1–8). Prešov: Petra, 2009–2011, 638 + 590 p.

<sup>41</sup> Hlinka, A.: Sila slabých a slabosť silných. Cirkev na Slovensku v rokoch 1945–1989. [The Strength of the Weak and the Weakness of the Strong. The Church in Slovakia in the Years 1945–1989.] Zagreb: Grafički zavod Logos, 1989, p. 122.

Church.<sup>42</sup> On 13 June 1968, the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic adopted a resolution on the resumption of the activities of the Greek Catholic Church.

On the memorable 10 April 1968, in the bishop hall in Košice, the priest of the Košice diocese and judicial vicar Anton Harčar spoke on behalf of the Roman Catholics and said at that time:

*'Beloved Very Reverend brothers! The Action Committee of the Conciliar Movement of the Catholic Clergy has authorised me to participate in your meeting. I consider it a great honour and a special grace to be able to greet you on his behalf in this historic moment and to wish you a successful discussion. Beloved brethren, today is a historic milestone in the life of the Greek Catholic Church in our state, for after 18 years of violent silencing, with this gathering the church announces that it is alive, that it lived in you and in your faithful believers. Today, through you, it joins the revival movement for the welfare and happiness of all the citizens of our state. In this historic moment, let us first and foremost thank the Lord God, Father of all comfort and mercy, and for the 18 years we have lived. Let us give thanks that the Lord has allowed us to suffer positively with Christ. I am convinced that the ongoing renewal of*

---

<sup>42</sup> Lipták, R.: Znovuzrodenie Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v roku 1968. [The Rebirth of the Greek Catholic Church in 1968]. Prešov: Universum, 2016, 192 p.; Katolícke noviny. 21 April 1968, issue 16; Kalendár gréckokatolíkov 1969 [Calendar of Greek Catholics 1969]. Bratislava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha v Trnave, 1969, pp. 46-49; Vnuk, F.: Popustené putá. Katolícka cirkev na Slovensku v období liberalizácie a normalizácie (1967–1971) [Loosened Bonds. The Catholic Church in Slovakia in the Period of Liberalisation and Normalisation (1967–1971)]. Martin: Matica slovenská, 2001, p. 187; Šturák, P.: Dejiny Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Československu v rokoch 1945–1989 [The History of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1945–1989] Prešov: Petra, 1999, pp. 138-143; Šturák, P.: 45 rokov od obnovenia činnosti Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Československu [45 years since the restoration of the activity of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia]. In: Gréckokatolícka cirkev na Slovensku vo svetle výročí III. [Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia in the Light of Anniversaries III]. Coranič, J. (ed.). Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2013, pp. 409-422; Borza, P.: Proces legalizácie Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Československu. [The Process of Legalisation of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia]. In: Gréckokatolícka cirkev na Slovensku vo svetle výročí [Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia in the Light of Anniversaries III]. Coranič, J. – Šturák, P. (eds.). Prešov: Gréckokatolícka teologická fakulta, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2009, pp. 112-119.

*our social life is above all the fruit of this suffering of many, and foremost among them are you and your faithful. The suffering for many has changed people's mindset, transformed things and people's destinies. Therefore, let us give thanks! Thank God that the suffering has passed away, but its fruit remains, it is our wealth. In this regard, the words of St. Paul to the Philippians take on a comforting meaning: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29). We bless the life of today, born of suffering, the fruit of which is love and mercy... We Catholic Christians, with these values in mind, volunteer to work in this state because we are convinced that the moral values represented by Christianity are indispensable to the creation of the material values sought by our state... Beloved brothers! Eighteen years of difficult visitation have enabled us to grasp more firmly many Christian truths, including the truth of the unity of the church of Christ. Instructed by the past, we carry out Christ's wish with our minds and hearts: "Ut omnes unum sint – That all may be one". Let us not emphasise what divides us, but what unites us. We are children of one mother, the bride of Christ. Let us strive for what is salvific: "Sentire cum Ecclesia – To feel with the church" so that the world may know that we are disciples of Christ. Let it be a symbol and a challenge to us that the manifestation of the Greek Catholic Church takes place in the building of a Roman Catholic bishopric. In this sign of mutual love and trust, I wish success to your discussion. Sláva Isusu Christu [Glory to Jesus Christ]!"<sup>43</sup>*

The Roman Catholic Saint Adalbert Society in Trnava proposed to set up a subcommission for the Greek Catholic Slovaks so that they could publish their religious books until they had an organisation of their own. Such books were indeed published (prayer books, calendars). It was another step on the part of the Catholic Church of the Latin rite towards the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church.

It is known from several oral accounts that in many places, after the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church, a welcoming of Greek Catholic priests

---

<sup>43</sup> Harčar, A.: Žil som v Košiciach [I lived in Košice]. Košice: Vienala, 2008, pp. 448-449.

took place. An authentic description of one such event has been preserved. It was written by the Greek Catholic curate Juraj Zubko and signed by thirteen other believers from Nacina Ves on 18 October 1968, and we also learn from it a testimony of the Roman Catholics' involvement in a difficult time:

*'Since time immemorial, Greek and Roman Catholic believers have coexisted in absolute harmony and love in our village. There has always been and still is today a sincere and good relationship between us. We have all attended Greek as well as Roman Catholic services together. Together we have contributed to the repair and maintenance of the Roman Catholic church and its facilities. We are bound by sincere Christian relationships. In many cases we live in mixed marriages, the wife being Roman Catholic and the husband Greek Catholic or vice versa. (...) This nice relationship and coexistence prevailed and was well established until 1950 when our spiritual father did not bow to the pressure of the time, but rather chose the path of exile and disgrace. Following his example, we, the Greek Catholic faithful, did not falter, but attended exclusively Roman Catholic churches, received Roman Catholic worship and are truly grateful from the bottom of our hearts to the Roman Catholic clergy and the Roman Catholic faithful for accepting us among them, for strengthening us in our faith, and for fulfilling our spiritual needs. We overcame the denominational difficulties of the years 1950 – 1968, and in July of this year [1968], our Reverend Dezider Tink returned to us after 18 years of hardship and suffering. At that time, the Most Reverend deans of the Roman Catholic Church, Dean [Vojtech] Kmec, the clerk of the Roman Catholic parish in Strážske (and thus also of our branch church) and District Dean [Ján] Tokár, clerk of the Michalovce parish, were present in brotherly understanding at the welcoming reception in the Greek Catholic parish church in Voľa. To all of us present, the way of welcoming the returned Reverend D. Tink was deeply moving, and with tears in our eyes, we felt immense joy at the fact that we would once again be able to enjoy together and freely the celebration of the Roman and Greek Catholic services in Nacina Ves, as it had been until 1950.'*<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> AACass, GR, 1968-1970, fasc. 32.

The restoration of the Greek Catholic Church was a resurrection that naturally brought problems in relations with the Roman Catholic Church as it took several years to clarify, above all, the legal positions on the existing situation. Until then, there would be natural conflicts, not because of bad intentions on the part of those involved, but because of ignorance or lack of clarity of canon law. Sometimes the formal problem was exacerbated by the personal prejudices of the clergy.

An overview of the problems is given in the notes from the retreats of the priests of the Košice diocese. In 1968 the following observations were made:

*'If the believers of the Gr[reek] C[atholic]. religion would like to hold services in a Rom[an] Cath[olic] church, the clergy of the former should apply through the parish authorities to the D[iocesan] Office for the use of the church building. The request should state which church is to be used and when the services will be held.'*<sup>45</sup>

*'In the discussions in Košice and Prešov, the clergy put forward a number of practical ideas, among them being: (...) The clergy of the Greek Catholic rite and the Orthodox issued a joint statement calling on their faithful to embrace the spirit of ecumenism. Should their negotiations fail to reach an agreement on the use of the common church if the Orthodox also ask us, let us forward the request to the ordinariate and let it decide.'*<sup>46</sup>

*'Before the discussion, the District Church Secretary of Vranov suggested that by reasonable actions, the priests contribute to the consolidation of the conditions in their parishes and avoid all misunderstandings, especially where there are mixed faiths.'*<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> AACass, Obdobie vakancie (1962–1990), Zápisnica z liturgických dní, ktoré boli v Košiciach 25. septembra 1968 a v Prešove 26. septembra 1968 [Period of Vacancy (1962–1990), Minutes of the Liturgical Days held on 25 September 1968 in Košice and on 26 September 1968 in Prešov], p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> AACass, Obdobie vakancie (1962–1990), Zápisnica z liturgických dní, ktoré boli v Košiciach 20. novembra 1968 a v Prešove 21. novembra 1968 [Period of Vacancy (1962–1990), Minutes of the Liturgical Days held on 20 November 1968 in Košice and on 21 November 1968 in Prešov], p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> AACass, Obdobie vakancie (1962–1990), Zápisnica z liturgickej porady konanej dňa 22. októbra 1968 vo Vranove n/T za účasti kňazov vranovského a humenského dekanátu [Period of Vacancy (1962–1990), Minutes of the Liturgical Consultation held on 22 October

In 1971:

*'In the discussion the question was raised who should be considered an Orthodox Christian. Is it the one who has been baptised and brought up Orthodox, or the one who has been baptised but no longer brought up Orthodox? [...] The following questions were also asked: Is the marriage of two Greek Catholics contracted before a Roman Catholic clergyman invalid or only illicit? Can assimilation change the rite? How should a Roman Catholic clergyman act when he is asked by Greek Catholic parents to baptise their child and they are fundamentally opposed to the baptism being reported to the proper Greek Catholic parish authority? The Very Reverend Vojtech Jenčík, clerk of the parish of Žalobín, pointed out that the casus or cases concerning the two Catholic rites could be resolved legally and psychologically, but we have to bear in mind that the Holy See always prefers the minority rite. The Very Reverend Tibor Umstädter encouraged all priests to show sympathy to the priests of the Eastern rite and live with them like brothers, to put themselves in their shoes and to regard the Eastern rite as Catholic. The Very Reverend Anton Szekely, clerk of the parish of Kamenica nad Cirochou, said that in some parishes, by acculturation of the Greek Catholic faithful, individual villages were considered to be purely Roman Catholic even in times of the Orthodox action, and a Roman Catholic clergyman, with the consent of the regional state officials, could serve all of them; now, at the insistence of some Greek Catholic clergymen, this acculturation is being forcibly eliminated. The Very Reverend Ján Zbojovský, clerk of the parish in Sol', outlined the difficulties he has in his mixed parish and demanded in particular an explanation as to why he still does not have the state's approval to teach religion in school. The district church secretary said that the state authorities do not want to meddle in internal church affairs, but where this culminates in unrest among the citizens in individual villages, they are forced to intervene.'*<sup>48</sup>

---

1968 in Vranov nad Topľou with the participation of the priests of the Vranov nad Topľou and Humenné deaneries], p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> AACass, Obdobie vakancie (1962–1990), Zázpisnica z liturgickej porady rím. kat. duchovných humenského a vranovského dekanátu konanej vo Vranove n/T dňa 17. februára

*'The Very Reverend [Jozef] Szócs raised the issue of those who left the Orthodox Church over the past years, according to the CIC, they are Greek Catholics, but they want to be recognised in everything as Roman Catholics. The comments of several people present indicated that these are not isolated cases, but this is a phenomenon that needs to be addressed.'*<sup>49</sup>

In the light of the above-mentioned quotes from Roman Catholic priests from diocesan retreats, it is clear that the mixing of rites after the Prešov Sobor affected the district of Vranov nad Topľou the most, but these problems occurred in the agenda of the Košice bishop's office in all districts, only they had a rather specific local dimension, which concerned rite affiliation and the resulting consequences, or it concerned the use of churches. Much greater problems existed in relations with the Orthodox Church.<sup>50</sup>

Several of Roman Catholic priests closely observed the milieu of the restored Greek Catholic Church, meeting Greek Catholic clergymen. In various Roman Catholic parish archives, for example, the Ordinariate Letter of the Prešov bishopric and assigned administrations of the Greek Catholic

---

1971 [Period of Vacancy (1962–1990), Minutes of the Liturgical Consultation of Roman Catholic clergy of the Humenné and Vranov nad Topľou deaneries held on 17 February 1971 in Vranov nad Topľou], pp. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> AACass, Obdobie vakancie (1962–1990), Zázpisnica napísaná na kňazskej rekolekcii v Prešove dňa 16. februára 1971 [Period of Vacancy (1962–1990), Minutes written at the priestly retreat on 16 February 1971 in Prešov], p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Lupčo, M.: Gréckokatolícka a pravoslávna cirkev na Slovensku v rokoch 1968 – 1980. Hľadanie spoločného 'modus vivendi' [The Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church in Slovakia in 1968 - 1980. The search for a common 'modus vivendi']. In: Gréckokatolícka cirkev na Slovensku vo svetle výročí II. [Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia in the Light of Anniversaries II] Coranič, J. – Koprivňáková, J. – Šturák, P. (eds.). Prešov Gréckokatolícka teologická fakulta, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, 2012, pp. 165-177; Borza, P. – Mandzák, D. A.: Sonda do života Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Československu v období normalizácie [Probe into the life of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia in the period of normalisation]. In: Velehrad volá! [Velehrad Calling]. Doležalová, M. (ed.). Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2017, pp. 22-240; Pešek, J. – Barnovský, M.: V zovretí normalizácie. Cirkvi na Slovensku 1969 – 1989 [In the Grip of the Normalisation. Churches in Slovakia 1969–1989]. Bratislava: VEDA, 2004, pp. 159-185; Marek, P. – Lupčo, M.: Nástin dějin pravoslavné cirkve v 19. a 20. století. Prolegomena k vývoji pravosláví v českých zemích, na Slovensku a na Podkarpatské Rusi v letech 1860–1992 [An Outline of the History of the Orthodox Church in the 19th and 20th Centuries. A Prolegomenon to the Development of Orthodoxy in the Czech Lands, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the Years 1860-1992]. Brno: CDK, 2012, pp. 327-390.

Church no. 2/1969 of 13 May 1969,<sup>51</sup> has been preserved, in which Ján Hirka reminded of Bishop Gojdič and the rehabilitation of Bishop Hopko and proclaimed the Marian year. The mutual relations were largely influenced by the sociopolitical situation: the experience of persecution after Action P and Action 100, the state church policy, the danger of state intervention in the event of disagreements, for which the faithful would ultimately pay the price if they lost their clergyman.

Eighteen years of the official non-existence of the Greek Catholic Church is a period of one human generation, but it has affected all living generations and both Catholic rites. Figuratively speaking, an unprecedented and violent intervention has tested the Catholic Church on both banks of the same river. Orthodoxification was supposed to make the imaginary river into an impassable border, but instead bridges, passageways and fords were created. The Roman Catholic Church virtually demonstrated universality and drew on the historical experience known from church history because it practically manifested itself as a mother who (1) has a great heart to love her children; (2) is guided by her conscience and acts freely; (3) has the fullness of means of God's grace, which is necessary for salvation, since the salvation of souls is its main mission; (4) is willing to help those who need help, especially if they are in need; (5) cared practically for the spiritual and sacramental life of Greek Catholics; (6) provided material support for Greek Catholic clergy (e.g. Roman Catholic priests gave Mass scholarships to Greek Catholic priests, the Saint Adalbert Society printed religious books for Greek Catholics). It was a special time, which called for a special measure. Catholicity and loyalty to the pope was put before the rite. On both sides it was a matter of conscience, which they felt equally. Certainly, it is absurd to view this time and situation as Latin ruthlessness, domination or even Latinisation – there were no such intentions; the Roman Catholic Church did only what it was obligated to do and did it gladly. This situation led to some confusion in inter-rite relations, which still persists today, but this is the result of the diabolical action of the totalitarian regime, the attack from outside that caused it. The Roman Catholic priests of the Košice diocese adhered to the will and guidance of their bishop, even at a time when Jozef Čársky († 1962) was no longer alive, and in many places, they sustained the Greek Catholics in their faith and practical Christian life. That is why in 1968 it was also possible to quickly as well as practically

---

<sup>51</sup> Ján Hirka assumed the office of Ordinary on 23 April 1969, the same day the Action Committee was dissolved. VNUK, František: *Popustené putá [Loosened Bonds]*, p. 203.



consolidate and restore the Greek Catholic parishes. While on the Greek Catholic part, we speak of martyrdom, on the Roman Catholic part, we can also speak of heroism and sacrifice, which was not easy because of the state (anti-)church policy and the capacity constraints of the Roman Catholic clergy. However, divine providence prevailed over the enemies of the Catholic Church because instead of mutual estrangement, a closer bond was forged and brotherhood deepened, not only among the priests of the two rites, but also among the faithful. The Roman Catholic Church indirectly supported and encouraged the Greek Catholics through its own renewal process, which took place at the time of the Prague Spring and the Second Vatican Council: The Action Committee, which was formed in Prague, was instrumental in the end of the previously pro-state tendencies of the church because it contributed to the demise of the Peace Movement of Catholic Clergy; in the same spirit, the Action Committee, but regarding the Greek Catholics, was formed in Košice, on the premises of the Roman Catholic bishop's office and it played a part in the renewal of the Greek Catholic Church. This Action Committee was under the umbrella of the Work of Conciliar Renewal, which worked successfully in the Košice diocese.

The specific situation after the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church is captured by several authentic documents. Their substance was not so much the legitimate renewal of the Greek Catholic faithful and their return to the practice of the rite, but nationalisation, especially in the northern regions of eastern Slovakia. Probably at the beginning of July 1969, Bishop Hopko sent a letter to the Roman Catholic parish priest Štefan Koromház in Plavnica. On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June) 1969, Bishop Vasil' Hopko's letter was read in the church during the Greek Catholic services in Hromoš (the seat of the Greek Catholic parish and at the same time a branch of the Roman Catholic parish of Plavnica). This and another letter led Koromház to write an extensive seven-page reply to Bishop Hopko. The reply is respectful but at the same time realistic, identifying several issues that arose after the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church and concerned inter-rite relations.

The relationships between Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics were very tempestuous in several places, but they were established by priests who were 'trying to find themselves and not Christ'. He saw this selfishness in impatience and materialism. In the 18 years of the ban of the Greek Catholic Church, the faithful of both rites created 'a very warm relationship', a *modus vivendi* based on understanding and unity:

*'This has been buried in less than a whole year. Again, suspicions, distrust, even hostility followed. How the priests got along with each other not long ago, helped, encouraged, strengthened one another, and now, watching what is being done and said, I admit that I would be ashamed to look in the eyes of those many with whom I have maintained a brotherly relationship for so many years, and sought them out at least once in a while.'* He continues, *'If we have begun as in the old ways, it is a pity so much suffering has been caused.'*

A personal passage is followed by an analysis of the origins of the unrest, which then tackles questions of culture, language and customs that are not related to religion, but to nationality. Customary law, which was placed above canon law, was misused for this nationalisation:

*'Why then do you unlawfully demand that the sacrament of marriage in mixed ceremonies take place before the parish priest sponsae (of the bride) when the church law requires the celebration of the sacrament of marriage in various rites before the parish priest sponsi (of the groom). (...) Whoever is of the Greek or Roman rite is prescribed by ecclesiastical law. But who is Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Hungarian or Slovak is not stipulated by law; it is each person's own conviction. (...) Why, in a village where Slovak is spoken, does the parish priest preach in Ukrainian, even though they ask for sermons in Slovak? If missionaries want to win over someone in Japan for Christ, they first learn Japanese.'* He continues with his own experience, *'When, after introducing the vernacular into the Roman rite, a dispute arose among the priests as to the merits of it, I asked the faithful at Sunday services, "Who is in favour of Latin? Raise your hands." No one raised their hands. Nor is Old Church Slavonic an exception. The spirit of Cyril and Methodius is to render the liturgy in an intelligible language. Cyril and Methodius brought the Greek rite, but not the Greek language. The Old Church Slavonic was modern a thousand years ago. Today it is just as intelligible as Latin or Greek. The Council directs us to introduce the language of the people.'* After analysing the liturgical reform in the Latin rite, the letter continues, *'There are Greek Catholics as well*

*as Slovaks in Slovakia. Not only in Canada, but also at home, they wish for a Slovak bishop.*' The letter ends with an observation that concerned both churches: *'The superiors are not role models. There are still obvious conflicts in the ordinariates. A large section of the clergy distrusts the superiors. The latter do not know, nor do they try to learn about the situation in the bishopric. They act arbitrarily without the cooperation of the clergy and people. Cars are only for trips. Though today in two or three days with fatherly love, he could run around the whole diocese. Let the people in the highest positions be the finest the diocese has. Freely ordained by the church in accordance with ecclesiastical laws. We reap what we sow.'*<sup>52</sup>

The faithful of Hromoš shared a similar view, which they justified by their own historical testimony.<sup>53</sup> Bishop Vasil' Hopko himself was also aware of the problem of the advanced Slovakisation and the preference for Slovaks in the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church.<sup>54</sup>

The restoration of the Greek Catholic Church in 1968 ushered in a new era of relations with the Roman Catholic Church. In many places Roman Catholic priests with the faithful spontaneously welcomed Greek Catholic priests returning to their parishes. Many Greek Catholic parish priests shortly asked to be allowed to hold their services in Roman Catholic churches, usually in accordance with pre-1950 customs. The agreement was always concluded by the Ordinaries of both churches after the parish priests in question had expressed their views. The Vicar Capitular of Košice, Štefan Onderko, dealt with these cases individually, but always reciprocally. He asked for the possibility to celebrate Mass in Greek Catholic churches in other places of the diocese. The priests were the key figures who influenced their parishioners in a positive or negative sense. On both sides, various cases of manipulation often occurred, escalating into unwanted village divisions. If a side failed to win over the church superiors, it used the pressure

---

<sup>52</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy 1969/1698 [Administrative Files 1969/1698]. (GR, 1968–1970, fasc. 20).

<sup>53</sup> AACass, Administratívne spisy 1969/1698 [Administrative Files 1969/1698]. (GR, 1968–1970, fasc. 20).

<sup>54</sup> Bujda, S. Jr.: *Náš zlatý muž. Rozhovor s o. Františkom Dancákom o bl. hieromučeníkovi Vasiľovi Hopkovi* [Our Golden Man. An Interview with Father František Dancák about Blessed Hieromartyr Vasil' Hopko]. Uzhhorod: RIK-U, 2017, pp. 70-71.

of state's party authorities when complaining about its discontent. The frequent anonymous letters addressed to the church and state hierarchy played a particularly negative role. The Greek Catholics tried to acquire their status ('their rights', as Ján Hirka put it) following 1950, but eighteen years had passed in the meantime and a new generation of believers had grown up who, despite canonically belonging to the Greek Catholic Church, did not know its rites or discipline. Today, several uncritical writers blame the Roman Catholic Church for the so-called Latinisation, but according to the sources, this claim is absurd. Roman Catholics had no interest in absorbing other believers. It was a very unusual time, which in 1950 no one foresaw when or if it would ever end. The Greek Catholic priests themselves, who had been eliminated by the state in 1950, urged their parishioners at that time to remain faithful to the pope and only the Roman Catholic Church was the guarantee of catholicity. There was a lack of sensitivity on the Greek Catholic part and the north of eastern Slovakia took on a nationalist dimension. After two years, the two Ordinaries decided that the inter-rite issues would be addressed on the spot by authorised experts. This meant a significant decrease of problems as objective information was almost immediately obtained and presented in duplicates to both Ordinaries.

After the Second Vatican Council, there was a growing interest of the Roman Catholic Church in the Christian East at the highest level. The Congregation for Eastern Churches was created, which primarily covers all the Eastern Church communities. A key task was the codification of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, which was promulgated in 1990.

In Slovakia after 1989, the Greek Catholic Church went through a new stage of development. It includes external renewal, the constitution and improvement of the church organisation and the search for its own roots. For the time being, it appears to be a search for external signs (robes according to Orthodox patterns, building new churches and painting icons according to Greek patterns, all this for the purpose of distinguishing it from the previous development) and the establishing of its own authority based on the recent martyr past (beatification of martyrs from the period of communist unfreedom). As an added value, this has kindled interest in Eastern patrology, although the West did the same long ago (many of the lessons of the second reading in the Liturgy of the Hours, the breviary, come precisely from the Fathers of the Eastern Church). The authentic local Carpathian tradition, however, is still little explored and not that well established. These sources are systematically made scientifically accessible by the Ján Stanislav Institute of Slavistics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. These

are, for example, the Uzhhorod Pseudozonar,<sup>55</sup> Statutes of the Mukachevo Greek Catholic Bishopric,<sup>56</sup> Handbook of Church History,<sup>57</sup> and A Picture of Monastic Life. These point to the one and only spiritual lineage that was neither interrupted nor destroyed by the Uzhhorod Union, but it continued and advanced. History bears witness to the progress when the two communities, Eastern and Western, approached each other or touched as tangents. But this was only possible when they themselves fostered their own spiritual and cultural heritage, which they then used to enrich the other. In the end, the common tangents and overlaps of the interests of the Latin Church and the Western Church to the south of the Carpathians have always been mutually beneficial, leading to intellectual, religious and cultural enrichment, to the purification of the historical memory and to the revival of moral and spiritual values.

---

<sup>55</sup> Užhorodský rukopisný Pseudozonar. Pravidlá mníšskeho a svetského života z prelomu 16.–17. storočia. Ужгородський рукописний Псевдозонар. Правила монашеской и светской жизни рубежа XVI–XVII вв [Uzhhorod Pseudozonar Manuscript. Rules of monastic and secular life from the turn of the 16th–17th centuries]. Monumenta byzantino-slavica et latina Slovaciae V. Žeňuch, P. (ed.). Bratislava – Moskva – Софія – Košice: Veda, vydavateľstvo Slovenskej akadémie vied – Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV – Институт российской истории РАН – Кирило-методиевски научен център БАН – Slovenský komitét slavistov – Centrum spirituality Východ-Západ Michala Lacka Teologickej fakulty TU, 2018, 448 p.

<sup>56</sup> Diecézne štatúty Michala Manuela Olšavského z rokov 1752 – 1758 [Diocesan Statutes of Michael Manuel Olšavský from 1752 – 1758]. Zubko, P. – Žeňuch, P. (eds.). In: Slavica Slovaca 54 (2019), 3-4 (supplement), pp. 5-100.

<sup>57</sup> Žeňuch, P. – Zubko, P.: Michal Bradač – Rukoväť cirkevných dejín [Handbook of Church History]. Михаилъ Брадачъ – Спутомъ Истории церковныя. Monumenta Byzantino-Slavica et Latina Slovaciae VIII. Žeňuch, P. – Zubko, P. (eds.). Bratislava: Veda – Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV, 2021, 464 p.