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THE SECURITY DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN UKRAINE: A FOCUS ON ORTHODOXY IN THE CROSS-BORDER CHERNIVTSI REGION

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Abstract

The article analyzes the modern tendencies in the religious space of Ukraine with a focus on the processes that are taking place in Orthodoxy in the context of transformations in the self-identification of the faithful. Changes in the jurisdictional affiliation of the Orthodox communities in Ukraine are taken into account. The dynamics of these processes are analyzed against the background of the full-scale war that Russia has unleashed and is waging against Ukraine. Special attention is paid to the situation in Chernivtsi border region, in particular, from the point of view of the Ukrainian-Romanian geopolitical and church relationships. A number of recent statements of religious leaders and decisions of church authorities are analyzed, and their social and moral role is interpreted. The text and conclusions correlate church-religious episodes in Ukraine and in Chernivtsi region with the most important security needs of Ukraine, which is the need to liberate the Ukrainian territories from the Russian occupiers and achieve victory and peace.

Keywords: religious life, security, Orthodoxy, social religion functionality, values, religious leaders.

The Orthodox Marker in Security Strategies in Ukraine

The church-religious situation in Ukraine has an important security dimension at a national level, and in the regions, in particular. Today we are witnessing active transformation, primarily in the Orthodox segment of the country's religious network, which is the largest in the country.

The jurisdiction of the Orthodox communities is increasingly changing in various regions of Ukraine. Almost every week, one or several communities across the country express their desire not to continue to be affiliated with a part of the power machine of the terrorist state

of Russia, which is waging a terrible war against Ukraine. Therefore, some of the communities are implementing a jurisdictional transfer of subordination from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) to the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Russian power machine includes the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), currently headed by Vladimir Gundyayev (Patriarch Kirill), and has jurisdiction over the UOC. The strong cohesion between the ROC and the Russian government is recognized by world religious leaders and high-ranking politicians, such as Pope Francis and German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The former hinted that Patriarch Kirill Gundyayev was playing the role of Putin's altar boy,¹ while the latter, in fact, stated the complicity of the ROC leaders in the crimes of Putin's war against Ukraine².

Back in 2018, when Russia's military aggression was already in full swing in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, and parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions had already been occupied (but long before the full-scale invasion of 2022), amendments were made to Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations." They concerned "the name of religious organizations (associations) that include the structure (are part of) a religious organization (association) whose governing center (management) is located outside Ukraine in a state that is recognized by law as having committed military aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine."³ In this way, the legislative body of Ukraine obligated that part of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy, which was Ukrainian only nominally, to indicate honestly in the names of their religious organizations their affiliation to the ROC. After all, by calling itself the "Ukrainian" Orthodox Church, this structure misled a significant segment of the faithful. Its own governance charter stated that it was a part of the

¹ Fontana, Luciano (2020). Intervista a Papa Francesco: «Putin non si ferma, voglio incontrarlo a Mosca. Ora non vado a Kiev». *Corriere Della Serra*. Available at: https://www.corriere.it/cronache/22_maggio_03/intervista-papa-francesco-putin-694c35f0-ca57-11ec-829f-386f144a5eff.shtml?fbclid=IwAR3xkyvrGtawUrSbswid5rbq-YhhkE9yM5NIrcj4ro1D_GWLod2w0TVIKo8

² Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2022). Speeches: 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. *Der Bundespräsident*. Available at: https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2022/220831-VV-OeKR.html?fbclid=IwAR2O-Oz3wtXWAcK7Z2SfKUVVJWce6kpwt3CZDL_isxxr3wF9pgCpHxdiQzU

³ Закон України. Про внесення змін до статті 12 Закону України «Про свободу совісті та релігійні організації» щодо назви релігійних організацій (об'єднань), які входять до структури (є частиною) релігійної організації (об'єднання), керівний центр (управління) якої знаходиться за межами України в державі, яка законом визнана такою, що здійснила військову агресію проти України та/або тимчасово окупувала частину території України. (Відомості Верховної Ради (ВВР), 2019, № 3, ст.23). [The Law of Ukraine. On Amendments to Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" regarding the name of religious organizations (associations) that include the structure (are part of) a religious organization (association) whose governing center (management) is located outside Ukraine in a state that is recognized by law as having committed military aggression against Ukraine and/or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine. (Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada (BVR), 2019, No. 3, p. 23)]. Верховна рада України : офіційний веб-сайт. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2662-19#Text>

ROC, albeit a self-governing one. In addition to the paragraphs of the ROC and the UOC Charter, this was evident by the participation of the Primate of the UOC (since 2014, Metropolitan Onufriy Berezovsky) in the work of the Holy Synod of the ROC as a permanent member of this Synod. Unfortunately, for various reasons, which we will not specifically dwell on here, this law has not begun to work in practice, yet. And there are new realities now. Legislative initiatives are already being considered that require not just renaming religious structures affiliated with Moscow but making it impossible for them to operate in Ukraine. But the analysis of these legal initiatives is an issue for a separate discussion. Recently, sociological research was released on public opinion on the government's policy toward the UOC.⁴ In sum, 66% of the respondents (on a national scale) believe that the activities of this structure should be prohibited completely. It is the full-scale invasion of Russia that determines the legality of posing a question in a sociological survey not merely about a positive or negative attitude towards the structure that has been affiliated with Moscow for many years. Many citizens of Ukraine now have a strong demand to prevent the existence of such a structure in Ukraine. The long-term pro-Russian manipulations carried out by the UOC for many years are now becoming apparent in the context of the war even to those citizens who had not noticed it before. Military aggression has exacerbated the security component of this issue. Manipulation is generally characteristic of Russia's information war against Ukraine. All possible resources (cultural, intellectual, political, etc.) are being used to justify its own aggression and creating additional platforms for imposing the "Russian world" narrative of alleged "persecution of Russian-speaking people," "persecution of the Orthodox Christians" in Ukraine, etc. These manipulations are often carried out according to the "laws" of post-truth: facts are presented only in part, with deliberate emotional emphasis. The purpose of this is to distort conclusions.

Some parishes in all the regions of Ukraine are passing from the jurisdiction of UOC to the jurisdiction of the OCU. The security agencies of Ukraine are revealing the ties of some religious leaders of the UOC to the aggressor state. The citizens of Ukraine are showing their just indignation at the ties of this church structure with Russia. Some authors, however, try to show that Metropolitan Onufriy, unlike Patriarch Kirill, takes a position of condemning the war and all its atrocities and continues to possess a high level of trust among the Ukrainian faithful. One of them is the author of the article with the eloquent title "Double Jeopardy: For

⁴ *Якою має бути політика влади щодо Української Православної Церкви (Московського Патріархату): результати телефонного опитування, проведеного 26 травня – 5 червня 2023 року* [What should the government's policy be towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of the Moscow Patriarchate): results of a telephone survey conducted on May 26-June 5, 2023]. Київський міжнародний інститут соціології: офіційний веб-сайт. Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1247&page=1>

Ukrainian Orthodox Church, A War on Two Fronts.”⁵ Although this is a subject for a separate article—to demonstrate how these condemnations from Metropolitan Onufriy are half-hearted while the context of the functioning of the UOC at least during the period of Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014 is taken into consideration. And in his appeal in February 2022, Metropolitan Onufriy condemned Russia’s war against Ukraine as Cain’s sin but claimed: “And the greatest shame for us is that we are fighting against each other.” Russia unleashed the war having come to Ukraine with weapons and bombs, and the Primate of the UOC formulated it as if it was the “shame for us”. The pronoun “us” has been used. Were these words not a blasphemy?⁶

In addition, the author of the article states:

When a late 2021 national poll asked Orthodox declaring allegiance to the UOC whether they trusted various church leaders, an overwhelming 81 percent responded that they trusted Metropolitan Onufriy but only 55 percent vouched the same of Patriarch Kirill. (Even Metropolitan Epiphanius – leader of the rival Orthodox Church of Ukraine [OCU]—scored 45 percent, while Pope Francis polled 48 percent).⁷

It is obvious that those who position themselves as the UOC followers trust the local leader of their own structure the most. Some other indicators of this research will be more important for demonstrating the level of trust.⁸ Let’s pay attention to the level of trust to religious leaders among the entire population of respondents, not just among the faithful of the UOC itself. So, despite the fact that, according to official statistics, the largest number of registered communities in Ukraine belongs to the UOC, back in 2021, the highest level of trust among the Ukrainians belonged to Metropolitan Epiphanius of the OCU (49.7%), followed by Pope Francis (42.4%) and the third in this trust rating was the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) (35.6%). Even Bishop Filaret, who headed the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP) until the Unification Council in 2018, had a higher level of trust than Metropolitan Onufriy according to this survey.

⁵ Fagan, Geraldine (2023) “In Double Jeopardy: For Ukrainian Orthodox Church, A War on Two Fronts,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 3 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol43/iss3/5>

⁶ His words can be seen in the video of the appeal at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34dSEGrQHxY>

⁷ Fagan, Geraldine (2023) “In Double Jeopardy: For Ukrainian Orthodox Church, A War on Two Fronts,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 3 , Article 5, p. 70.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol43/iss3/5>

⁸ *Особливості релігійного і церковно-релігійного самовизначення громадян України: тенденції 2000-2021 рр. (інформаційні матеріали)* [Peculiarities of Religious and Church-Religious Self-Determination of the Citizens of Ukraine: Tendencies in 2000-2021 (information materials)]. Центр Разумкова. Київ. p. 63. Available at: https://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/article/2021_Religiya.pdf

Bishop Filaret's support is 34.9%, while Metropolitan Onufriy's is 33.5%. These figures seem to be quite problematic for the UOC. The author of the article mentioned above claims that the UOC has now broken all the ties with Moscow and that was confirmed at the Council in May 2022. However, religious scholars and professors with many years of experience in this realm (in particular I. Kozlovskiy, O. Sahan, A. Smyrnov, L. Fylypovych, Ye. Kharkovshchenko, Yu. Chornomorets) point out something different:

The UOC in relation to the ROC has an ecclesiastical canonical connection of the part with the whole. The relationships of the UOC with the ROC are not those of one independent (autocephalous) church with another independent autocephalous church. The UOC does not also have the status of an autonomous church that will be recognized by other churches, and, therefore, from the point of view of ecclesiology and canonical law, it is a structural unit of the ROC that has separate rights of an independent entity without its own canonical subjectivity.⁹

The response of these experts is comprehensive and takes into account not only a "new" edition of the UOC Charter but also the Letter of Moscow Patriarch Alexy II, the Charter of the ROC, and letters from Metropolitan Onufriy, which are related to this issue. All of these documents are listed in the text with a clear reference to them, showing that the "break with Moscow" was only a screen to disguise the UOC's true nature. Indeed, the Council of the UOC on May 27, 2022, was, in our opinion, only a forced reaction of this church structure leadership to the high degree of public dissatisfaction with its longstanding service to the interests of the "Russian world."

This state of affairs makes it necessary to analyze closely the Orthodox communities in those regions of Ukraine that are characterized by additional peculiarities in the organization of their religious life. These are the cross-border regions, such as the Chernivtsi region, which borders with other states of a traditionally Orthodox religious culture, such as Romania and Moldova.

Some Ethno-Confessional Features of Religious Life in the Cross-Border Chernivtsi Region

In the Chernivtsi region, Orthodox communities are also changing their jurisdictions, though the intensity is considerably lower in comparison with other regions of Ukraine. These

⁹ *Висновок релігієзнавчої експертизи Статуту про управління Української Православної Церкви на наявність церковно-канонічного зв'язку з Московським патріархатом [Conclusion of the religious expertise of the Governance Charter of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the presence of ecclesiastical and canonical connection with the Moscow Patriarchate].* Державна служба України з етнополітики та свободи совісті : офіційний веб-сайт. Available at: <https://dessa.gov.ua/vysnovok-relihiieznavchoi-ekspertyzy-statutu-pro-upravlinnia-ukrainskoi-pravoslavnoi-tserkvy/>

days, according to the current governor of the region, Ruslan Zaporaniuk, 411 communities of the so-called UOC (and 211 of the autocephalous OCU) are registered in the Orthodox segment of the religious network of the region. He published this information on his own telegram channel in a post on April 5, 2023.¹⁰ This ratio differs a little from the proportion that existed at the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

We should emphasize, however, that the number of parishes does not allow us to draw quantitative conclusions about the number of adherents of specific denominations and jurisdictions (and such a situation is common for Ukraine). One jurisdiction may have more registered communities than another but plenty of them may be small. People's self-identification should also be taken into account here. For example, if there is only one church in a village and it belongs to the jurisdiction of the UOC, people will attend this particular parish because they do not have an access to another. But if you ask such a parishioner whether he or she considers himself an adherent of the UOC, the answer will not always be "yes." Many associate themselves with the OCU. For example, even before Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, in January 2022, Razumkov Center recorded at the national level¹¹ that 34% of all the respondents chose to belong to the OCU, and about 14% to the UOC. There were also those who chose the option "just Orthodox," without jurisdictional specification. And according to a survey conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology¹² in August 2022, only 4% of the respondents chose to belong to the UOC. Although we specify that at that time this Church had already formally removed a number of points of connection with the Moscow Patriarchate (hereinafter referred to as the MP) from its Governance Charter, the questionnaire still indicated "MP," and for good a definitive reason. According to this research, 54% of the respondents chose the option of belonging to the OCU. Therefore, in the Chernivtsi region, the numerical predominance of registered communities of the UOC over the OCU does not mean the quantitative predominance of real people who are supporters of the UOC over supporters of the OCU.

An additional factor worth paying attention to is that Chernivtsi region is the region with a rather significant representation of the ethnic Romanian/Moldavian population among

¹⁰ See more details at: <https://t.me/chernivetskaODA>

¹¹ *Конфесійна та церковна належність громадян України (січень 2020 року, соціологія)* [Confessional and church affiliation of the citizens of Ukraine (January 2020, sociology)]. Разумков Центр: офіційний веб-сайт. Available at: <https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/konfesiina-ta-tserkovna-nalezhnist-gromadian-ukrainy-sichen-2020r>

¹² *Динаміка релігійної самоідентифікації населення України: результати телефонного опитування проведеного 6-20 липня 2022 р.* [Dynamics of religious self-identification of the population of Ukraine: results of a telephone survey conducted on July 6-20, 2022]. Київський міжнародний інститут соціології: офіційний веб-сайт. Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1129&page=1&y=2022&m=8>

its residents. This is one of the “highlights” of the Ukrainian Bukovyna due to historical circumstances and geographical location. The Romania and the Romanian population are quite strongly supporting Ukraine at this stage and clearly condemning Russia for the war it started. Since the first days of the full-scale invasion, Romania has hosted a large number of Ukrainian refugees, sent a significant amount of humanitarian aid, etc. The results of the survey on the Ukrainian-Romanian relationship after the beginning of the aggression of Russia in Ukraine in 2014 show similar results:

According to an opinion survey (February 2015), 64% of Romanian citizens perceived the war in Ukraine as a threat to Romania. Moreover, the survey found that 70% of the respondents favored an increase in military spending in the country. According to the same survey, Russia was perceived most negatively by ordinary Romanians (66% view it negatively and a mere 25% positively).¹³

And although this research started back in 2014 and was published in 2016, it is indicative, because it reflects the situation at the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Its special significance lies in the fact that it is a joint Romanian-Ukrainian study that takes into account how Russian aggression affects cross-border regions and relations between the two countries. And though the mood and attitude towards Russia and Ukraine in Romania have somewhat transformed in view of the events of 2022, this study does not lose its relevance. In the end, it says that as early as in 2014, researchers, analyzing possible risks¹⁴ to the Ukrainian-Romanian relations, identified the main threat factors, among which disputes regarding the rights of the Romanian minority in Ukraine and, above all, the most relevant problem regarding the regional language for national minorities are in the first place.

As emphasized above, the majority of the Romanians and Moldavians are also Orthodox by religious affiliation. In the Chernivtsi region, there are a number of parishes with a significant ethnic representation of the Romanian-speaking population. These parishes are mostly part of the UOC, and worship is often being conducted in Romanian here.¹⁵ It is remarkable that worship is not being conducted in Ukrainian in the UOC churches in Chernivtsi region. In the liturgical affairs of the UOC in the region (as in the majority of other regions), the Ukrainian language is only used in sermons and, perhaps, at the level of single Ukrainian-language inclusions, such as, for example, the Ukrainian carols during Christmas holidays. No more. The dominant language being used in their worship, just as in Russia, is Church Slavonic

¹³ Solodkyy S., Racheru I. *Foreign Policy Audit: Ukraine-Romania : Discussion Paper*. Kyiv: Institute of World Policy, 2016. p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 36-38.

¹⁵ This video from the worship in Bancheny in October 2021 posted on YouTube can serve as a proof: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO1P_IS6SN4

with the Russian phonetic features. In other words, not only is the Ukrainian language neglected but even the Ukrainian phonetic “edition” of Church Slavonic is neglected in favor of a Russified version of this ancient language.

Thus, we can consider the use of Romanian, in addition to “Church Slavonic,” during worship in the parishes of the UOC in Chernivtsi region as taking into account the interests of the Romanian-speaking parishioners. That is normal. But in conditions when the use of the Ukrainian language in worship is practically reduced to nothing, and the elite of the UOC gives the faithful manipulative guidelines aimed at preserving this, the situation looks quite disproportionate. Metropolitan Onufriy’s words said in 2016¹⁶ are one of the examples of such manipulative guidelines. Addressing his subordinate clergymen, he essentially interpreted the Church Slavonic language (in its Russian version) as allegedly equivalent to the sacral style of the Ukrainian language, as allegedly historically typical for the liturgical language of the Ukrainians. But this is linguistically and historically untrue. This fact shows once again the dubious geopolitical game of the UOC. It should be noted that even after Russia’s full-scale invasion into Ukraine, Metropolitan Onufriy delivered many of his sermons in Russian. These testimonies are freely available at the official Internet resources of the UOC. Here is the example of one of these sermons (December 4, 2022).¹⁷

Role and Responsibility of Religious Leaders in line with National Security Building

In our previous publications,¹⁸ we have emphasized the crucial role of the religious leaders in broadcasting either a morally constructive or destructive narrative about the war in Ukraine and the movement towards a victorious peace. Local religious leaders are as significant to the local communities as the world’s religious leaders are to entire churches. It is known that there are quite odious functionaries of the UOC in the Chernivtsi region. Among them is the favorite of the former criminal president Viktor Yanukovych, Metropolitan Longin Zhar, who has long been known for his particular fanaticism and readiness to set up the faithful for intolerance towards representatives of other faiths and jurisdictions, to spew invectives and insults during sermons against fellow citizens of different views—and to do so no less vitriolically than his notorious Kyiv colleague-fellow, Metropolitan Pavlo Lebid. In particular,

¹⁶ This can be proved by a video where Onufriy answers a priest’s question about the opportunity of worshipping in Ukrainian and de facto considers this opportunity limited: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFZDbYw1s0>

¹⁷ See more there: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTs8-dCcT24>

¹⁸ Brodetskyi, Oleksandr; Horokholinska, Iryna; and Lahodych, Mykola (2022) “Value Vectors of the World Local Orthodox Churches Position Regarding Russia’s War Against Ukraine,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 8 , Article 2. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol42/iss8/2>

he is known for his extremely offensive statements about the Parliament of Ukraine, elected by the people, and about the OCU as something “demonic”: “Our Verkhovna Rada is a godless council, those who voted to create their church, the church of the antichrist, and the church of the devil are the servants of Satan. And we live in the church of God.”¹⁹

The quotation cited is from a local newspaper that provides a link to a video posted on YouTube²⁰ where one can listen to the bishop’s sermon. It is noteworthy that the sermon was delivered in Russian.

In particular, in January 2023 some Romanian media shared the “Appeal to the Romanian priests in Ukraine and Metropolitan Longin (Zhar), who were under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, derived from the Russian Patriarchate, to transfer to the traditional canonical jurisdiction of the RomOC,²¹” where, in fact, there was a call to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Church and a proposal to lead the parishes transfer in the cross-border regions of Chernivtsi, Odesa, and Zakarpattia regions was given to Longin Zhar. We cannot estimate the scale of the community of adherents of such appeals in Romania. But the very fact of their appearance is a certain sign of security risks. And, of course, these aspects require additional research. One way or another, such figures as Longin Zhar can play a two-layered game in their contacts with the relevant forces of the Romanian Church. On the one hand, this means to promote ostracism against the OCU, and on the other hand, to hint at a more active integration of a Bykovynian segment of the UOC into the Romanian sphere of influence if the favorability to the UOC leadership status quo is maintained and the RomOC does not recognize the OCU.

Metropolitan Meletius Yegorenko of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna (the UOC) traveled to Moldova at the end of 2022, where, according to the official version,²² he congratulated

¹⁹ Владика з Буковини назвав «служителями сатани» нардепів, які голосували за звернення до Варфоломія [A bishop from Bukovyna called the Parliament Members who voted in favor of the appeal to Bartholomew “servants of Satan”]. Молодий буковинець. 5.06.2018. Available at: https://molbuk.ua/chernovtsy_news/150850-vladyka-z-bukovyny-nazvav-sluzhytelyamy-satany-nardepiv-yaki-golosuvaly-za-zvernennya-do-varfolomiya.html

²⁰ See more details here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRZcM20OamU>. The quotation provided starts at 9.33 minute.

²¹ *Apel către preoții români din Ucraina și mitropolitul Longhin (Jar), aflat sub jurisdicția Bisericii Ortodoxe Ucrainene, derivată a Patriarhiei ruse, să treacă în jurisdicția canonică tradițională a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*. ActiveNews. 20 January 2023. Доступ: <https://www.activenews.ro/stiri/Apel-catre-preotii-romani-din-Ucraina-si-mitropolitul-Longhin-Jar-aflat-sub-jurisdicția-Bisericii-Ortodoxe-Ucrainene-derivata-a-Patriarhiei-ruse-sa-treaca-in-jurisdicția-canonică-tradițională-a-Bisericii-Ortodoxe-Romane-179095>

²² *Митрополит Черновицкий и Буковинский Мелетий и Архиепископ Унгенский и Ниспоренский Петр совершили литургию в Александро-Невском кафедральном соборе муниципития Унгены* [Metropolitan Meletius of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna and Archbishop Peter of Ungheni and Nisporeni celebrated the Liturgy at the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Ungheni Municipality]. 1 December 2022. Available at: <https://episcopia-ungheni.md/ru/fara-categorie-ru/%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82->

belatedly one of the local bishops on his anniversary (which happened a few months earlier). The latter, as it is known, in the autumn of 2022 participated in the work of the Council under Patriarch Kirill.²³ The fact that he participated in an official event of the ROC (even in a remote format) indicates that he belongs to its sphere. The Primate of the Moldavian Orthodox Church (MOC), which is part of the ROC, traveled to Moscow in October 2022 (Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine had already been going on for many months by that time). The Primate, Metropolitan Vladimir Cantarean, a native of Bukovyna, then received an order from Patriarch Kirill Gundayev and led worship there. This information is openly available on the official resources of the MOC.²⁴ Thus, in fact, during the war, Bishop Meletius Yegorenko has been in friendly communication with the ROC functionaries. It is noteworthy that he made this visit immediately after the Security Service of Ukraine inspected his office.

The Chernivtsi region is famous for its tolerance and generally good relations between representatives of different ethnic groups. However, there are also unfortunate facts. And in the face of the risks posed by war, they cannot be overlooked. The role of clergy is also important here, not only serving a particular church institutional and power aspect but working for harmony and education, which is one of the socially responsible expectations of religious community leaders. Unfortunately, the rhetoric of neglect, intolerance, and manipulation of individual clergy becomes public from time to time. For example, in 2021, a glaring fact reached the public when the UOC priest Vasyl Savka (Balkivtsi village) publicly shouted xenophobic exclamations, “promising” aggression from the “Romanians.” We quote his words, which can be viewed on videos posted on YouTube:²⁵ “The Romanians will come and will [an

<https://episcopia-ungteni.md/ru/fara-categorie-ru/%d0%b0%d1%80%d1%85%d0%b8%d0%b5%d0%bf%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%bf-%d1%83%d0%bd%d0%b3%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b8%d0%b9-%d0%b8-%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b8-22/?fbclid=IwAR0FmBg4AZejIn0MYNyG5-Ompu3YHWIw9nWgDJbrIq5QCxQTzff5w0xYhE>

²³ *Архиепископ Унгенский и Ниспоренский Петр принял участие в заседании Церковно-Общественного Совета при Патриархе Московском и всея Руси по увековечению памяти новомучеников и исповедников Церкви Русской* [Archbishop Peter of Ungteni and Nisporeni took part in a meeting of the Church and Public Council under the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia on the Commemoration of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Church of Russia]. 2 November 2022. Available at: <https://episcopia-ungteni.md/ru/fara-categorie-ru/%d0%b0%d1%80%d1%85%d0%b8%d0%b5%d0%bf%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%bf-%d1%83%d0%bd%d0%b3%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b8%d0%b9-%d0%b8-%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b8-22/?fbclid=IwAR0FmBg4AZejIn0MYNyG5-Ompu3YHWIw9nWgDJbrIq5QCxQTzff5w0xYhE>

²⁴ *Înaltpreasfințitul Mitropolit Vladimir a fost decorat de către Patriarhul Kiril cu una dintre cele mai înalte distincții ale Patriarhiei Moscovei. Mitropolia Chișinăului și a Întregii Moldove*. 13 octombrie 2022. https://mitropolia.md/inaltpreasfintitul-mitropolit-vladimir-a-fost-decorat-de-catre-patriarhul-kiril-cu-una-dintre-cele-mai-inalte-distinctii-ale-patriarhiei-moscovei/?fbclid=IwAR3m_zhJFTR30ha4Gy5V2dXVV7M_QxmYz6-GqTXH_JMUGy3T9Ly0JQY60uo

²⁵ See more details at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddJ3gpo9wAY>. The quotations provided start at 8:37 minute.

obscene verb that starts with the letter “f...”] all the Ukrainians completely.” It is important for such facts to receive a clear, principled, and unambiguous reaction from the highest leadership of those religious denominations whose individual priests allow themselves such destructive excesses. One cannot expect much from the leadership of the UOC, if Metropolitan Onufriy himself in 2008 (as the ruling bishop of Bukovyna) spoke about the causes of the Holodomor and allowed himself to be cynical in this context: “a dose of one is own medicine,”²⁶ as if it were not the communist bosses who were culprits for the Holodomor, but the people. The ordinary Ukrainian peasants suffered the most from it.

Perspectives on Some Conditions for Security

In February 2020, the RomOC declared²⁷ through its Synod that it agreed with autocephaly for Ukrainian Orthodoxy but set three requirements: 1) autocephaly not for a part but for the entire Orthodoxy of Ukraine (after all, the Ecumenical Patriarchate believes that in 2019 it granted autocephaly to the entirety of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy); 2) an understanding between the churches of Constantinople and Moscow on this issue; 3) the existence of a pan-Orthodox consensus on this topic. It is obvious what force incited the absence of this consensus: Moscow, through a system of incentives for its explicit or “canning” satellites throughout the Orthodox world.

In our opinion, any rhetoric that calls for a dialogue with Moscow (ecclesiastical and political) is considered to be immoral now. At this stage of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, a war fully supported and encouraged by the Moscow Patriarchate, it would be quite important to have a clear position of the Romanian Patriarch and members of the Synod on whether they still insist on any agreements with the Moscow Church on the way to recognizing the OCU, as they did in their definition in February 2020. Whatever the answer, its public coverage is important because it will allow us to understand more clearly: who is who? We believe that in the context of Ukraine’s security strategies, the Ukrainian diplomacy (as well as concerned media representatives) should use all opportunities to ask the Romanian Patriarch this question directly, and then to monitor and publicize whether the answer will be consistent

²⁶ *Митрополит Черновицкий и Буковинский Онуфрий: Голодомор – это было вразумление, усмирение со стороны господ нашей гордыни. 24 ноября 2008.* Metropolitan Onufry of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna: The Holodomor was an admonition, a pacification by God of our pride. November 24, 2008. Православие. Ru. Available at: <https://www.pravoslavie.ru/28395.html>

²⁷ The Holy Synod meets for first time this year, sends delegation to Amman: *communiqué*. 14.02.2020. Basilica.ro. Available at: https://basilica.ro/en/holy-synod-meets-for-first-time-this-year-sends-delegation-to-amman-communicue/?fbclid=IwAR1-EIB6m0Up71YW46Jz_CWvWLe1VGgXtpPnViXCgbg-7kWXUBAnAJe_pgU

with the general statements of the Romanian Church condemning Russia as the aggressor. If the Ukrainian diplomacy is aware of the paramount security importance of the Romanian Church's recognition of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, then it should be very active in this direction.

By the way, the OCU, as it is known, established the Romanian Vicariate in its structure, which guaranteed the Romanian-speaking parishes under its jurisdiction the opportunity to serve in Romanian and nurture their cultural and religious traditions.

Coordination of initiatives of local and central authorities and encouragement of those legislative initiatives that may prove to be the most effective in terms of preventing the activities of the most active "contactors" with the "Russian world" is important on the way to ensure the security strategies for the social and cultural life of Ukraine. These are often the bishops of the UOC who were members of the governing structures of the ROC.

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