



Missionary Action of the Orthodox Church among Greek Catholics in the Recovered Territories as Part of the Religious Policy of the State in the People's Republic of Poland

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the missionary action of the Orthodox Church undertaken among Greek Catholics in the Recovered Territories of Poland following World War II. As a result of “Operation Vistula” the Orthodox and Greek Catholic population was settled in the Recovered Territories. As a result of the communist policy implemented by the communist authorities, the Orthodox Church took action to provide religious care to Greek Catholics. This policy was aimed at significantly weakening the Greek Catholic Church. It was also hoped that it would be liquidated. Despite the attempts made, the Greek Catholics preserved their identity, and after 1956 they began the process of building their own parish structure.

Keywords: Orthodoxy, Greek Catholicism, Lemkos, religious politics

Słowa kluczowe: prawosławie, grekokatolicyzm, Łemkowie, polityka wyznaniowa

Introduction

The origins of the Orthodox–Greek Catholic relations date back to the Brest Union of 1596, as a result of which Orthodoxy, so far uniform within the borders of the Republic of Poland, was divided into two rival denominations: Orthodox and Greek Catholic.¹ The actions initiated in the past aimed at unification had not brought about any results. One of the aims of the displacement of the Ukrainian and Lemko

¹ The supporters of the union recognized, among others, the supremacy of the Pope and the dogmas of the Catholic Church. About the Brest Union see: *Unia brzeska, geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje*

population in 1944–1947 was to bring about the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church. Despite these attempts, the Greek Catholics remained in Poland. As part of “Operation Vistula” they were deported to the Recovered Territories.² Along with the forced resettlement, earlier conflicts with the Orthodox Church were also transferred. Despite the common tragedy, mutual animosities and prejudices were not buried.³

The purpose of the article is to analyze the missionary action of the Orthodox Church undertaken among Greek Catholics in the Recovered Territories:⁴ to indicate the extent to which the activities of the Orthodox Church resulted from its own initiative, and to what extent they fit into the implemented religious policy of the state; and to determine who was the initiator of the missionary action (state authorities or church authorities) and whether it was determined only to attract new believers or was also aimed at securing pastoral service for the Orthodox population (difficulties in establishing a parish). It should be noted that the missionary action of the Orthodox Church, apart from the Regained Territories, was also conducted after 1956 in the Podkarpackie region (mainly in the Lemko region) and to a lesser extent and on a smaller scale also among Greek Catholics in the Lublin region.⁵

The article uses source materials collected in state archives (The Archives of Modern Records, the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, archives in Koszalin, Olsztyn, Szczecin and Zielona Góra) and church archives (the Archive of Warsaw Orthodox Metropolis and the Archive of the Orthodox Diocese of Wrocław–Szczecin). In the article I use these terms synonymously: Greek Catholic Church = Uniate Church; Greek Catholics = Uniates.

Immediately after “Operation Vistula,” the faithful of the Orthodox Church, an institution that could conduct pastoral activity almost immediately after the displacement, found themselves in a more favorable situation. Already at the turn of 1947/1948, the first Orthodox pastoral institutions were established (e.g., in Barlinek, Michałów, Studzionki, Zimna Woda). The situation of the Greek Catholic Church, which was not recognized by the authorities, was completely different. Displacements

w kulturze narodów słowiańskich, R. Łużny, F. Ziejka, A. Kępiński (eds.), Kraków 1994; H. Dylągowa, *Dzieje Unii brzeskiej*, Warszawa–Olsztyn 1996.

² As a result of “Operation Vistula,” according to estimated data, about 150 thousand people (including about 45 thousand people of the Orthodox denomination) were resettled to the Recovered Territories. See: *Akcja „Wisła”. Dokumenty*, E. Miśiło (ed.), Warszawa 1993, p. 33; J. Pisuliński, *Akcja Specjalna „Wisła”*, Rzeszów 2017, pp. 412–413; S. Dudra, *Poza małą ojczyznę. Łemkowie na Ziemi Lubuskiej*, Wrocław 2008, p. 47.

³ On the subject of mutual relations between Orthodox and Greek Catholics see more: J. Moklak, *Aspekt polityczny życia religijnego Ukraińców w Galicji. Ekspansja prawosławia rosyjskiego*, [in:] *Polska–Ukraina. 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, vol. 1: *Studia z dziejów chrześcijaństwa na pograniczu etnicznym*, S. Stępień (ed.), Przemyśl 1990; *idem*, *Łemkowszczyzna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Zagadnienia polityczne i wyznaniowe*, Kraków 1997; W. Osadczy, *Święta Ruś. Rozwój i oddziaływanie idei prawosławia w Galicji*, Lublin 2007; B. Wójtowicz-Huber, *„Ojcowie narodu”. Duchowieństwo greckokatolickie w ruchu narodowym Rusinów galicyjskich (1867–1918)*, Warszawa 2008.

⁴ In the article I identify Recovered Territories with the area of the Orthodox Diocese of Wrocław–Szczecin (founded in September 1951) and the deaneries of Gdańsk and Olsztyn of the Diocese of Białystok–Gdańsk.

⁵ See more: S. Dudra, *Polski Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny w obszarze polityki wyznaniowej oraz polityki narodowościowej Polski Ludowej i III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 596–608.

in 1944–1947 were to lead to the complete annihilation of Greek Catholicism, which appeared to the new decision-makers as a strong element uniting the Ukrainian nation and being the basis of its identity. The status of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland and the USSR after the war was determined by the political decisions taken by the Polish and Soviet authorities in 1944–1948.⁶ The attack on the Uniate Church in Poland was an element of the process of liquidation of the Uniate Church in the entire camp of socialist countries and was a consequence of actions that had forced the Uniates in the USSR to convert to Orthodoxy a little earlier.⁷ Parishes established at that time became centers of interfaith conflicts. It was an element of the religious policy conducted by the state authorities (supporting the Orthodox Church).⁸ Basically, however, throughout the entire period of the People's Republic of Poland, Greek Catholics were hindered in organizing services and creating their own places of worship.

Missionary action of the Orthodox Church among Greek Catholics

The main element that determined mutual relations was the missionary action of the Orthodox Church among Greek Catholics. It should be remembered that it was a natural process aimed at regaining the faithful and thus strengthening its material base. From the point of view of the Orthodox hierarchy, it was a consequence of the Brest Union introduced in 1596 with the aim of breaking up and weakening the then Orthodox Church.

The missionary action had its legitimacy in the resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in April 1952.⁹ However, its origins should be sought as early as March 1950, when the question of creating a deanery or administration for parishes in which Lemko people constituted the majority of the population, including the Greek Catholic faith (the so-called Lemko deanery), was considered. The future unit was to cover the Wrocław, Szczecin

⁶ On the basis of the decree of 5 September 1947, the property of the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Church was taken over for the benefit of the state. On the situation of the Greek Catholic Church after 1945. See: S. Stępień, *Kościół greckokatolicki w Polsce po II wojnie światowej i w czasach współczesnych (do roku 1989)*, [in:] *Polska–Ukraina. 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, vol. 4, S. Stępień (ed.), Przemysł 1998; D. Iwaneczko, *Wysiedlenia Ukraińców a Kościół greckokatolicki w Polsce (1944–1947)*, [in:] *Akcja „Wisła”*, J. Pisuliński (ed.), Warszawa 2003.

⁷ J. Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944–1989)*, Warszawa 2003, p. 75.

⁸ It should be emphasized that despite the difficult situation in the Recovered Territories, thanks to the involvement of Greek Catholic clergy, after 1947 the first pastoral points began to operate (among others, from 1947 in Chrzanów and from 1948 in Nowy Dwór Gdański). Services in Cyganek, Bytów and Kwasów were also celebrated, Archives of Modern Records (AAN), Office for Religious Affairs (UdSW), sign. 24/43 List of reactivated Greek Catholic parishes until 1956.

⁹ State Archive in Zielona Góra (APZG), Presidium of the Voivodship National Council (PWRN), sign. 578, Resolution of the BP of the Central Committee of the PZPR on measures aimed at improving the economic situation of the Ukrainian population in Poland and at increasing political work among them of April 1952.

and Olsztyn provinces. However, this concept gave rise to organizational problems (the Lemkos lived in the area of various deaneries), which could have a negative impact on the formation and development of religious life and give rise to conflicts among the clergy. The Warsaw Clerical Orthodox Consistory even authorized Fr. Jan Lewiarz (to act as the dean) to prepare precise data concerning the number of Lemko population in particular parishes.¹⁰ However, these plans did not materialize. It can be assumed that the appointment of the position of the head of the Orthodox Church by Metropolitan Makary (Oksijuk) in 1951 was connected with the action being prepared among Greek Catholics (the hierarchy was one of the participants in the so-called Lviv Council in 1946, by which the Greek Catholic Church in the USSR was liquidated).¹¹

At the beginning of the 1950s, the initiative was taken by the state authorities. On 31 December 1951 a special commission was established in Warsaw, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Aleksander Zawadzki, to collect materials concerning the Ukrainian population. As a result of its activities, a note was drawn up on 13 March 1952 (handed over to the top management of the PZPR), which emphasized, among other things, the moods of impermanence and desire to return among this population. In addition, attention was drawn to discriminatory practices in cultural and religious life in relation to this population. A change in attitude towards the Ukrainian population (e.g., enabling free communication in the Ukrainian language and its teaching in schools with a majority of Ukrainian children) was postulated.¹² The abovementioned note became the basis for the resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the PZPR “On measures aimed at improving the economic situation of the Ukrainian population in Poland and intensifying political work among them” adopted on 4 April 1952.¹³ In matters of religion, it was intended to lead to the normalization of religious relations in Ukrainian population centers. Its provisions supported the establishment of Orthodox parishes and at the same time pointed towards limiting the creation of Greek Catholic pastoral institutions. To this end, it was intended to support the Orthodox clergy in carrying out religious worship and establishing parishes, while at the same time combating the underground Greek Catholic faith organized by nationalist Ukrainian agents.¹⁴

¹⁰ Archive of the Warsaw Orthodox Metropolis (AWMP), RV-4C 579, Fr. Wieżański’s report to Archbishop Tymoteusz of 22 March 1950. According to Kazimierz Urban, missionary activities were already undertaken in autumn 1951. See: K. Urban, *Obrządek greckokatolicki a Kościół prawosławny w Polsce u progu lat pięćdziesiątych*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie” 1998, nr 50, p. 25.

¹¹ K. Urban, *Kościół prawosławny w Polsce 1945–1970 (rys historyczny)*, Kraków 1996, pp. 314–315; see more: R. Michalak, *Polityka wyznaniowa państwa polskiego wobec mniejszości religijnych w latach 1945–1989*, Zielona Góra 2014.

¹² I. Hałagida, *Między Moskwą, Warszawą i Watykanem. Dzieje Kościoła greckokatolickiego w Polsce w latach 1944–1970*, Warszawa 2013, p. 208.

¹³ Genesis of the resolution and its effects see: L. Olejnik, *Polityka narodowościowa Polski w latach 1944–1960*, Łódź 2003, pp. 316–326.

¹⁴ APZG, PWRN, sign. 578, Resolution of the BP of the Central Committee of the PZPR on measures aimed at improving the economic situation of the Ukrainian population in Poland and at increasing political work among them of April 1952; S. Dudra, *Polski Autokefaliczny...*, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

It was probably realized that a complete eradication of Greek Catholicism might not be possible (the people's attachment to "their" religion), but at least it was intended to weaken it. The authorities of the Orthodox Church took advantage of the situation, partly from the inspiration of the authorities (the whole action saw political benefits in the form of weakening Ukrainian nationalism), partly for their own religious benefit (the possibility of rebuilding and expanding religious life and increasing the number of believers). Actions in this direction were taken at the beginning of 1952, before the April resolution.¹⁵ On the basis of the preserved source materials, it can be concluded that the initiator of the missionary action among Greek Catholics was the Orthodox Church (especially the new metropolitan Makary), which in due course received the support of the party and state authorities. At the same time, part of the Orthodox clergy was deeply involved.

In the Recovered Territories, the missionary action covered the provinces of Koszalin, Szczecin, Olsztyn, Wrocław, and Zielona Góra. Individual Voivodship Departments for Religious Affairs were to develop appropriate strategies in this direction. The pastoral work of the Orthodox clergy among the Greek-Catholic Ukrainian and Lemko populations was to maintain all external forms of the Greek-Catholic rite (liturgical texts with Ukrainian pronunciation, melodies, carols, religious songs), preaching in the language of the faithful, and catechizing children according to local customs. The Orthodox clergy was not supposed to distinguish themselves from the Greek Catholic priests by their external costumes. In addition, the local administration was to enable the resettled population to satisfy their religious needs by allocating sacred buildings and apartments to the clergy and legalizing the emerging Orthodox parishes. In the opinion of the authorities, the condition for success was to gain the trust of the Greek Catholic population by using their mother tongue in communication with the faithful and by preserving folk rituals and customs. The missionary action was carried out in close cooperation with the Office for Religious Affairs. It also received appropriate financial support (it was earmarked, among others, for subsidies for the clergy, additional funds for the renovation and furnishing of temples). This goal was also to appoint and prepare appropriate staff among the Orthodox clergy (speaking Ukrainian or Lemko), who would then be appropriately trained.

From the beginning of the 1950s, the activities of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (PAKP) showed a clear desire to "attract Greek Catholic brothers separated in faith to the Orthodox Church."¹⁶ In principle, until 1956, the missionary action covered the whole area of the Recovered Territories, but it was mainly focused on the Koszalin and Szczecin deaneries (Wrocław–Szczecin diocese) and Olsztyn deanery (Białystok–Gdańsk diocese). This was due to the large number of Greek Catholics settled there, as well as the poorly organized Orthodox parish network in the area. Of course, the "acquisition" of Greek Catholics took place in the deaneries of Wrocław and Zielona Góra. As early as at the end of 1952, part of the Orthodox clergy, received a mission to "take pastoral care of the Greek Catholics" (their task was to find more Greek Catholics and a suitable sacred object). In

¹⁵ I. Hałagida, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–152.

¹⁶ AAN, UdSW, sign. 131/391, Letter from Metropolitan Makary to UdSW, 22 March 1953.

1953–1956 such activities were undertaken by Fr. Chryzant Jaworski (Konikowo) and Fr. Włodzimierz Meżerycki (Kwasowo in the district of Sławno and Drzonowo, and Rzeczenica in the district of Człuchów). Other Orthodox clergy, including Mikołaj Poleszczuk (Ługi–Brzoza), Mikołaj Leszczyński (Głodowo) and Michał Kočański (Trzebiatów), received similar missions. Missionary activities were also undertaken in Ołużna (Kołobrzeg district), where only Greek Catholics lived. Of course, this type of activity was also to be carried out by other priests who had Greek Catholics in their territories. The methods used to attract Greek Catholics temporarily brought results. Father Jan Ignatowicz described the situation in Bytów in 1954 in this way: “I noticed a completely normal religious life in the local parish. Former Greek Catholics attend the temple, where all services are held in their rite and the parish will ruthlessly develop. [...] It seems to me that not all the faithful of the parish in Bytów are aware that it is an Orthodox parish yet.”¹⁷ It can be assumed that the situation was similar in other newly created pastoral institutions.

It is difficult to unequivocally evaluate the activities undertaken by the Orthodox clergy in the first half of the 1950s. The created network of pastoral points was intended to satisfy the religious needs of the Orthodox population. At the same time, they took the opportunity to establish parishes, because until 1952, in many cases, they encountered difficulties in creating their own places of worship (this occurred, among others, in Przemków, Lubin, and Zimna Woda).¹⁸ In addition, the emerging Orthodox parishes were often spiritually closer to Greek Catholics than to Catholics. In many cases, however, the Greek Catholic population remained faithful to their religion, nurtured their own traditions and decisively rejected, despite numerous pressures from the administrative authorities, the possibility of returning to Orthodoxy. A situation of this type occurred, for example in 1948 in Grębobice (Głogów district), where Greek Catholics hostile to the Orthodox Church did not wish for Orthodox services.¹⁹ At the same time, the Greek Catholic clergy, as well as the faithful, made numerous demands for the legal recognition of the activities of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland, and, consequently, for the possibility of holding services.

In 1952–1956, the Orthodox missionary action led to the creation of many Orthodox parishes located in areas inhabited by the Greek Catholic population (part of it returned to Orthodoxy, constituting in some institutions the majority of the faithful, for example in the parish of Leszno Górne–Szprotawa district). With the establishment of Orthodox institutions, some Greek Catholics stopped attending services in Roman Catholic temples. As Eugeniusz Czubiński recalled, “the Orthodox Church was closer to us thanks to the Rus tradition than the church.”²⁰ In addition, until 1956 the authorities recognized only the Orthodox Church as a gathering place for displaced people in which the language of the faithful could be used. The spiritual

¹⁷ Archive of the Orthodox Diocese of Wrocław–Szczecin (APDWSz), Letter from the Dean of the Szczecin District, Father J. Ignatowicz, to the Bishop of Wrocław and the Bishop of Szczecin of 25 October 1954.

¹⁸ See more: S. Dudra, *Cerkiew w diasporze. Z dziejów prawosławnej diecezji wrocławsko-szczecińskiej*, Poznań 2009.

¹⁹ AWMP, sign. RV-4C579, Letter Fr. W. Masik to the Metropolitan Office of 19 April 1953.

²⁰ 1947. *Propanijatna knyha*, B. Huk (ed.), Варшава 1997, p. 169.

and cultural life of the faithful was concentrated around the church and it played an important integrative role.²¹ However, the effectiveness of the missionary action was low and there were no mass conversions to Orthodoxy, only individual cases. This process was further slowed down after 1956, when the possibility of establishing Greek Catholic parishes appeared. An additional factor hindering the whole action in the Regained Territories was the partial return of the population to their former places of residence.

In 1952–1956, 26 new Orthodox parishes were established in the Recovered Territories. Their creation should not be associated only with the missionary action among Greek Catholics. They were intended to satisfy the religious needs of the local Orthodox population. The creation of a parish was also a form of defense and preservation of the state of possession before the Roman Catholic Church. It is difficult to state clearly how many Greek Catholics used Orthodox services before 1956. As Igor Hałagida states, the situation was fluid and constantly changing. Much depended on the individual attitudes of individuals or families. Also, the position of local Roman Catholic parishioners (taking negative or positive attitudes towards Greek Catholics) often prevailed.²²

After 1956, the missionary action of the Orthodox Church was partly carried out under changed social and political conditions. Political changes led to the activation of the clergy and the Greek Catholic population. Efforts were made to restore Greek Catholic pastoral care and obtain permission to hold services and establish new parishes. These demands were also raised by the newly established Ukrainian Socio-Cultural Society (UTSK).²³ The state authorities opposed the restitution of the Church, only agreeing to the opening of a small number of Greek Catholic institutions in the Recovered Territories.²⁴ At the same time, the solution to the Greek-Catholic question was seen in the weakening of its state of possession through the creation of new Orthodox parishes. The Office for Religious Affairs paid attention to the appropriate mobilization of the staff of the Orthodox clergy by, inter alia, allocating the most prominent institutions to the former Greek Catholic priests, short-term training of Ukrainian priests from Volyn in the Greek Catholic rite, and organization of long-term education of Ukrainians from the Rzeszów region in the Spiritual Seminary in Warsaw (with the introduction of teaching the Ukrainian language and the creation of a separate classes with Ukrainian as the language of instruction).²⁵ It was also assumed that Greek-Catholic clergy would be recruited for the Orthodox

²¹ S. Dudra, *Integracyjna i kulturotwórcza rola Cerkwi w życiu prawosławnych Łemków*, [in:] *Łemkowie*, B. Machul-Telus (ed.), Warszawa 2013, pp. 61–77.

²² See: I. Hałagida, *op. cit.*, pp. 261–264.

²³ Among other things, it was postulated that the rights and freedom to exercise religious practices in the Greek Catholic rite should be restored in accordance with Article 70 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland. On the activities of the UTSK in the case of the Greek Catholic Church see: J. Syrnyk, *Ukraińskie Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne (1956–1990)*, Wrocław 2008.

²⁴ In 1957, 17 pastoral centres were established, in 1958 – 15, in 1959 – only 5, in 1960 – 2, and in 1961 – only 1. See: A. Korzeniewska-Lasota, *Władze państwowe wobec Kościoła greckokatolickiego na Warmii i Mazurach w latach 1956–1970*, “*Studia Warmińskie*” 2009, vol. 46, pp. 215–217.

²⁵ APZG, PWRN, sign. 640, Greek-Catholic Issue in People's Poland of 1956.

Church on the basis of securing their material existence and preserving the entire Greek-Catholic rite. A project developed by Bishop Stefan (Rudyk) in August 1956 went in a similar direction. It assumed the selection and appropriate training of Orthodox priests of Ukrainian origin from all dioceses, who would then be sent to new pastoral institutions, as well as the acquisition of Greek-Catholic clergy for the whole action and appropriate educational preparation. The project was to be supported by a publishing campaign in Ukrainian. The hierarch also suggested closing the existing Greek Catholic pastoral institutions and discouraging “the Roman Catholic clergy from singing Greek Catholic songs in churches.” Finally, Bishop Stefan’s proposal accepted the methods related to the preservation of the existing external forms of liturgical cult and the deletion from the liturgical books only those elements that were contrary to Orthodox dogma, and pastoral activity was to take place in the language of the faithful. Greek-Catholic clergy who would convert to Orthodoxy were to be supported financially from the Church Fund.²⁶ In the political conditions of the time (the efforts of the new governmental team of Wladyslaw Gomulka to obtain the favor or at least neutrality of the Roman Catholic Church) resulted in the rejection of most of the demands of the Orthodox side (some of them were used instrumentally to weaken Greek or Roman Catholics).²⁷

The state authorities, supporting the Orthodox Church in its missionary action, counted primarily on winning over Greek Catholics and distracting them from the Roman Catholic Church. However, they did not intend to further strengthen the Orthodox Church. The letter of the administrative authorities in Koszalin to the Office for Religious Affairs was characteristic in this aspect:

The population of the Greek-Catholic faith from those centers, where there is no institution of the Orthodox Church, in principle does not ask for the organization of their religious life, knowing that it is impossible to open Greek-Catholic institutions. However, it must be stated that the activity of the Orthodox Church has some achievements in the field of distracting the population of the Greek Catholic faith from the Roman Catholic Church. The point is to improve this activity [...] it is right to take steps towards the development of the institutions of the Orthodox Church in this case, when they will distract the Ukrainian population of the Greek-Catholic faith from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. In the centers, where there is no such influence and no organized religious life, we will not activate the institutions of the Orthodox Church.²⁸

This was a characteristic element of the religious policy implemented in relation to churches and religious associations during the period of the People’s Republic of Poland.

After 1956, the missionary action of the Orthodox Church, despite the support of the authorities, did not bring about the expected results. The Departments for Religious Affairs prepared a special analysis of the Ukrainian population and the impact

²⁶ AAN, UdSW, sign. 25/730, Project of planned missionary action among Greek Catholics prepared by the Orthodox hierarchy Bishop Stefan for UdSW on 18 August 1956.

²⁷ I. Hałagida, *op. cit.*, pp. 344–345.

²⁸ State Archive in Koszalin (APK), Voivodship Office (UW), sign. 2/19, Letter from PWRN in Koszalin to UdSW of 20 February 1956; S. Dudra, *Polski Autokefaliczny...*, *op. cit.*, p. 592.

of the Catholic clergy. However, the Orthodox Church, when trying to create parishes, often used the Greek-Catholic question as an argument (which made it easier to obtain temples and establish parishes). At the same time, the possibility of establishing Greek Catholic parishes contributed in many cases to a significant reduction in the number of believers in Orthodox institutions (e.g., in Trzebiatów for this reason, in 1962, the idea of creating one Trzebiatów–Ołuźna parish appeared) or (after some Greek Catholics had left) Orthodox parishes were also closed due to the depletion of their personal status. This occurred, for example, in the parish in Bytów (the Szczecin deanery), whose activity in the second half of the 1950s almost completely disappeared. Similar circumstances took place in Rzeczenica (Człuchów district), where in November 1960 the church building was handed over to the state authorities due to the return of a large part of the faithful to their homeland (Lublin voivodship) and the Greek-Catholic services held in Biały Bór. This process was particularly evident in the Koszalin, Olsztyn and Szczecin deaneries, leading to many parish conflicts (including the dispute over the chapel in Bajory in the Olsztyn deanery).²⁹

The actions of Greek Catholic priests were another element often antagonizing the faithful, which gave rise to contradictions among the Orthodox and Greek Catholic communities. Cases of this type were noted, among others, in the second half of the 1960s in Krukłanki (preaching hostile sermons against the Orthodox Church, as well as intruding on the local Orthodox population and exerting pressure to transition to the Roman Catholic Church).³⁰ The Orthodox community in many parishes felt threatened by the activity of Greek Catholics. This was evident, among others, in Giżycko, where, according to an Orthodox parishioner, all Orthodox Ukrainians were removed from the local Ukrainian Social and Cultural Society, a typical Greek Catholic organization.³¹

The missionary action faced the counteraction of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Church. The effectiveness of the activities of the Orthodox Church was limited by material and staffing difficulties, which in the opinion of state authorities was exploited by both Greek and Roman Catholic priests.³² Activities aimed at attracting the Orthodox population were facilitated by the poorly developed parish network. It was not uncommon for many believers to attend Roman Catholic churches out of necessity, as there were no Orthodox churches in their places of residence (nor in the immediate vicinity). At the same time, the state authorities drew attention to the need to increase the activity of Orthodox clergy. Both the opinions of the Department for

²⁹ AAN, UdSW, sign. 69/2, Letter from Metropolitan Stefan to UdSW of 12 October 1965.

³⁰ According to the information provided by the Department of Religious Affairs, a Greek Catholic priest from Przemyśl “announced that he would break up the Orthodox parish, assuring that he had experience in this matter, since several Orthodox parishes in his area had already been liquidated,” State Archive in Olsztyn (APO), PWRN, sign. 120, Letter from the PWRN in Olsztyn to the PWRN in Rzeszów of 30 May 1969.

³¹ AWMP, Giżycko Parish, sign. 50/p, Letter from the pastor of the Orthodox parish in Giżycko, Fr. J. Senejko to the Chancellery of the Orthodox Archbishop of the Diocese of Białystok–Gdańsk in Białystok, 21 April 1993.

³² AIPN BU 01283/1657, p. 201, Information about the situation in PAKP in the Szczecin voivodship of 24 January 1965.

Religious Affairs in Zielona Góra and Olsztyn stressed the need to combat “illegal Greek Catholic activity.” The binding decree on organizing and filling church posts was intended to be a favorable element. At the same time, the Orthodox clergy was accused of low activity amongst the Greek-Catholic population. Characterizing the activity of the Orthodox Church in the Szczecin Voivodship, it was emphasized:

Orthodoxy is a church of little life. One can even say that in our conditions the church is dying out. There are not many young people in the churches, and new believers do not come. The possibilities of recruiting the faithful from among the Ukrainian population belonging to the Greek-Catholic rite are small, because this population identifies belonging to this rite with national affiliation. They prefer to go to the Roman Catholic Church than to the Orthodox Church, which they identify with Russianness.³³

In fact, the whole process was hampered by the activities of authorities not interested in strengthening the possession of the Orthodox Church too much. Only attempts were made to create a certain counterbalance to the existing Roman Catholic parishes. At the same time, the process of discrediting functioning Greek Catholic parishes and their clergy took place (an element of Ukrainian nationalism connected with the OUN-UPA was used).

The issue of winning over the Greek-Catholic population was also discussed later. According to the authorities, missionary activity “could be of great political importance. The aim is to neutralize the existing nationalist groups, to be able to control them and to inspire them in a spirit of legitimacy towards the state.”³⁴ In the assumptions of the religious policy for 1971, it was recommended to support and facilitate as much as possible the Orthodox Church in its efforts to strengthen and expand its influence among Greek Catholics. The intended result was to limit the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the Ukrainian population.³⁵ The situations in Orthodox parishes, which were created by Greek Catholics, were monitored. In the 1970s, Bishop Aleksy (Jaroszuk), a bishop of the diocese of Wrocław and Szczecin, tried to initiate missionary activity without success. The whole project should also be considered in the context of a specific game played by the security authorities with regard to the Ukrainian question and the Greek Catholic Church. In dealing with the Ukrainian problem (the Greek-Catholic rite), it was recommended that “the Greek-Catholic mission should be limited, the most active priests should be compromised or relocated to another territory, and they should be at odds with the Roman-Catholic hierarchy, using all available means of operational work.”³⁶ That policy was pursued until the end of the People’s Republic of Poland.

³³ State Archive in Szczecin (APS), PWRN, reference number 14797, p. 293, Evaluation of the activity of the Orthodox Church in the Szczecin voivodship of 15 July 1969.

³⁴ AIPN BU 01283/1659, c. 236, Note of 11 February 1971.

³⁵ A. Kopiczko, *Kościół warmiński a polityka wyznaniowa po II wojnie światowej*, Olsztyn 1996, p. 193.

³⁶ In addition, it was suggested that an active “study of Fr. Martiniuk in terms of obtaining or compromising him due to the plans of the Greek Catholic hierarchy abroad,” AIPN BU 01283/1658, c. 115, Report on his official stay in Department IV KWMO Zielona Góra and KPMO Międzyrzecz,

Conclusions

The missionary action proved to be ineffective. Most Greek Catholics remained faithful to their religion, and the attempts of the Orthodox clergy only deepened their mutual animosities and prejudices. The state authorities in their analysis of the activities of the Orthodox Church noticed that it did not become a significant opponent of the Roman Catholic Church, as expected, nor was it successful in defusing the nationalistic mood of the Greek Catholic population. They accused the Orthodox clergy of lack of initiative “in the Greek Catholic direction,” at the same time complicating their pastoral activity. This was mainly due to the difficult conditions of priestly work (a lack of presbytery and housing for the clergy), and a lack of wider cooperation with voivodship and district authorities (problems with establishing new parishes). Not unjustifiably, the hierarchy and the Orthodox clergy summarizing the action emphasized that it did not receive adequate support from the state authorities. This resulted from the specific religious policy implemented by the communist state apparatus. The aim was to weaken the Greek Catholic Church significantly, while preventing any excessive strengthening of the Orthodox Church.

From a historical perspective, the missionary action of the Orthodox Church among Greek Catholics should be considered a mistake. Attempts were made to take advantage of the extremely difficult situation of the Greek Catholic Church and its believers (including the anti-Ukrainian policy of the state authorities, identifying the clergy and the faithful with Ukrainian nationalism, and pressure from the Roman Catholic Church). It was a negation of the principles of ecumenism and a manifestation of proselytism. The Orthodox Church was to be an ally of the state authorities in the process of limiting the significance and development of the Greek Catholic rite. However, when fully evaluating it, one should also take into account a wide range of historical conditions. It had a negative impact both on the relations between these Churches and on the mutual relations between the faithful. Many of the institutions established to attract Greek Catholics have ceased to exist (e.g., in the Koszalin and Szczecin deaneries). Apart from gaining a number of believers that was difficult to estimate, it did not bring positive results. However, it resulted in moral losses. Its consequences are still felt today.

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