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Church in the Middle: Greek-Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe

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Greek-Catholicism is the particular expression of Christianity that practises Eastern Orthodox liturgy, spirituality, discipline and theology, in communion with the Roman Catholic Church.¹ In Europe the Greek-Catholic churches are mostly located along the geographic-religious 'fault line' that separates East from West.² The oldest continuous group of Greek-Catholics is found in Sicily and Calabria, the classic *Magna Graecia*, with a monastery at Grottaferrata, just outside Rome, that will celebrate its millennium in 2004.

The large majority of Greek-Catholics are in Eastern Europe, and have suddenly come to our attention because of their renaissance after the communist persecution, their inadvertent position as an ecumenical stumbling-block suddenly impeding the dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and their political role in Ukraine and Romania.

Historical Background: General

Ever since the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church lapsed from full communion, there have been efforts to restore that communion. Some of these efforts made matters worse – such as the infamous Fourth Crusade, seeking to impose a solution by military force. Other attempts tried to achieve progress through forms of dialogue, such as the Council of Florence, but proved unsuccessful. Over the centuries, many Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox lost sight of each other, and began to think of one another – if at all – as distant heretics and schismatics, rather than as an estranged part of the one Church.

With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the situation of Christians in the Muslim countries became precarious, and Christians naturally looked around for protection. Some of them found it in western powers; eventually the Sultan recognised that France had the 'right' to protect Catholics in the Ottoman Empire.

The Greeks were anxious to maintain their hellenic identity through the Orthodox Church – almost the only structured society remaining in Greek hands during the period of Turkish rule – and thus opposed the use of Arabic in the church in the Near East, and did everything to keep the hierarchy in the Patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem exclusively Greek. Even in Bulgaria the Greeks were reluctant to permit the celebration of divine services in Church Slavonic. A reaction was inevitable.

Outside the Empire, the great missionary impulse begun by Saints Cyril and

Methodius in the ninth century had converted the Slavs to Christianity; most of the Eastern Slavs became Eastern Orthodox. The Bulgarians also became Orthodox, and so did the Romanians, who are a Latin people by ethnic origin and language. Thus the Patriarch of Constantinople found himself responsible for an enormous flock, but he functioned in a humiliating dependence on the Sultan.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Roman Catholic Poland was at the height of its power and prestige. The 'Jagellonian Union' of Poland and Lithuania had brought millions of Orthodox Ukrainians and Belorussians into the Polish Commonwealth. The Orthodox Church of Kiev, a daughter church of Constantinople, had serious internal problems, and was at a civil disadvantage: Roman Catholic bishops in Poland held seats in the Polish Senate *ex officio*; the Roman Catholic clergy were exempt from serfdom; and so forth. The Orthodox had none of these privileges. Constantinople tried to intervene, but without positive results.

The Metropolitan of Kiev and his bishops were aware of the Union of Churches agreed at the Council of Florence in 1439; it had lasted for at least several decades in Kiev.³ They decided to attempt to renew that relationship with Rome, and eventually did so at the Council of Brest in 1596. The results, however, were not what the Metropolitan and bishops had hoped for. Poland and the Polish Roman Catholic Church viewed the new situation not as a stable communion between two sister churches, but as a provisional arrangement that should lead to a double goal: the conversion of these Orthodox Christians to *Roman* Catholicism, and the acceptance by these Ukrainians and Belorussians of a Polish ethnic identity.

While most Belorussians eventually received the Union of Brest, there was strong resistance in Ukraine, particularly from the Cossacks – who shared the Polish view that the Union was only a stepping-stone to Polonisation. In 1620 the Cossacks managed to obtain episcopal consecration for new Eastern Orthodox bishops, and the Church of Kiev in communion with Rome – which we may therefore call the Greek-Catholic Church of Kiev – found herself between two hostile churches, the Polish Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church of Kiev, neither of which regarded the Greek-Catholic Church as a stable, proper church. That situation, *mutatis mutandis*, has persisted ever since.

South of the Carpathian Mountains the same pattern was developing in the early medieval diocese of Mukachevo-Uzhhorod. Nobody really knows when this diocese was founded; local tradition claims that Saints Cyril and Methodius themselves began it. The people were and are Eastern Slavs, speaking a dialect of Ukrainian. But the territory belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom, divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and the Orthodox found themselves at a disadvantage. Following the example of Brest, the Diocese of Mukachevo-Uzhhorod accepted communion with Rome in 1646. The Hungarian Roman Catholic Church tried to aggrandise itself at the expense of these Greek-Catholics; it was not until 1771 that Rome finally recognised that the Greek-Catholic bishop had full jurisdiction over his own people; from 1646 until 1771 the Hungarian Roman Catholic bishop of Eger claimed that jurisdiction, and treated the Greek-Catholic bishop as nothing more than a ritual auxiliary.

The Romanian Orthodox of Transylvania embarked on the same course. In 1698 and 1700 Bishop Athanasius of Alba Iulia conducted synods that accepted communion with Rome – partly because of the Calvinist threat. When Bishop Athanasius died in 1713, the Roman Catholic bishop of Transylvania claimed jurisdiction over the Greek-Catholics. The succeeding Greek-Catholic bishops were forced out of Alba Iulia, to Făgăras and Blaj. In 1721 Pope Innocent XIII recognised the transfer of

residence, but gave the Greek-Catholic bishop in Făgăras full jurisdiction over his faithful. The movement for communion with Rome spread to Oradea Mare in 1748; in 1777 this became another diocese. In 1853 Pius IX restored the historic see of Alba Iulia, which became the seat of the Metropolitan, and more dioceses were created. There was a strong Orthodox resistance in Transylvania; only about half of the faithful remained in union with Rome. In the Old Kingdom, in Wallachia and Moldavia, the Orthodox Church continued to develop, gaining autonomy from Constantinople in 1865 and autocephaly in 1885, and finally becoming a patriarchate in 1925. The Romanian Orthodox Church considered the Greek-Catholics her own alienated children.

The Hungarians were anxious to magyarise Transylvania, in the interests of retaining the territory for the Hungarian Crown. Besides simple conversion to Roman Catholicism or Calvinism (the Hungarian Reformed Church), the 'Hungarian Greek-Catholic Church' was created.⁴ The eventual result was the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Hajdúdorog, whose clergy and faithful (nearly 500,000) insist that they are Hungarians. This is the largest eastern church in present-day Hungary; the only significant Orthodox presence is some colonies of Serbs. All this has increased Romanian Orthodox suspicions that the union with Rome is a 'bridge' to denationalisation. In the present atmosphere of Transylvania, that is a serious charge, and forms a part of the occasionally voiced accusation that Greek-Catholics are not truly Romanians.

In the Near East, rising Arab national consciousness combined with other factors early in the eighteenth century to cause some of the Orthodox hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Patriarchate of Antioch to accept communion with Rome. In 1724 this came to a head when the faction in favour of union with Rome succeeded in electing Cyril VI as Patriarch of Antioch; opponents of the move nominated another patriarch, who was supported by Constantinople. Since then, there have been two parallel Byzantine Churches of Antioch. In the eighteenth century, a bitter dispute over the calendar question led rather less than 50 per cent of the Greek-Catholics to return to the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate. Meanwhile, smaller groups of Greek-Catholics in the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Jerusalem affiliated themselves with the Greek-Catholic Patriarch of Antioch (who added Alexandria and Jerusalem to his titles). Constantinople eventually conceded Antioch to the Arabs – the Orthodox Patriarch is now an ethnic Arab – but Greeks still hold all episcopal positions in the Orthodox Patriarchates of Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Noone in the Uniate-Orthodox dialectic in the Near East has ever been in a position to suppress the other church by the use of state power, since the Turks eventually recognised the Greek-Catholics as civilly independent of the Greek Orthodox. Perhaps as a result, relations between Greek-Catholics and Greek Orthodox in the Near East are relatively good and have been so throughout the twentieth century. In Eastern Europe, however, the situation was very different.

Historical Background: Eastern Europe

The partitions of Poland placed most of Belorussia and Ukraine inside the borders of the Russian Empire. The Empress Catherine the Great was herself an atheist and an admirer of Voltaire, but she still wanted absolute control of the state church, the Russian Orthodox Church, and did not hesitate to move against the Greek-Catholics. In 1796 she suppressed the dioceses of Vladimir, Lutsk and Pinsk-Turov, subordinating all the remaining Greek-Catholics to the Archdiocese of Polotsk. The process

continued through four decades; on 12 March 1839 all the Greek-Catholics of the Russian Empire were aggregated to the state church. In the nominal 'Kingdom of Poland', of which the Tsar was King, the Eparchy of Kholm was suppressed and aggregated to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1875.

In theory that was the end of the Belorussian Greek-Catholics, since there were no Belorussians outside the Russian Empire. However, the Greek-Catholic embers never died in Belorussia; the memory of Greek-Catholicism remained, and several times in the century and a half that followed there were attempts to revive the Greek-Catholic Church among Belorussians.

A substantial group of Ukrainian Greek-Catholics remained outside Tsarist territory because the partitions of Poland gave Galicia to Austria. This small territory, with a Ukrainian population of about five million, developed during the nineteenth century into a Ukrainian Piedmont, and the Greek-Catholic Church eventually became an important aspect of the Ukrainian national identity that emerged in Galicia.

This did not suit the Poles, the Hungarians or the Russians. The Poles wanted all of Galicia (which they call *Mało Polska*) as part of the territory of a resurrected Polish state. The Hungarians were anxious to insulate the Greek-Catholics of Transcarpathia from the growing Ukrainian national consciousness; it was during this period that Budapest was most actively promoting the 'Hungarian Greek-Catholic' scheme. The Russians were anxious to claim the Greek-Catholics of Galicia as fellow-Russians, unfortunately languishing outside the Russian Empire but awaiting the day of their 'liberation' when they too would become part of that empire and its state church.

The First World War provided opportunities to promote these ambitions. First the Austro-Hungarian government arrested many Greek-Catholic clergy and imprisoned them in a concentration camp at Talerhof, on the grounds that they were actual or potential collaborators with the Russians. Then the Russians took L'viv and deported Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'ky — although they never charged him, they kept him under house arrest until the abdication of the Tsar. The Metropolitan finally got out of Russia via Stockholm and attempted to visit the Vatican. He reached Switzerland, but discovered that another arrest awaited him in Italy, so he preferred to go home to L'viv via Vienna.

The Habsburg Empire collapsed, and the Polish-Ukrainian civil war broke out in Galicia. The Poles were particularly irate at Metropolitan Andrei (they viewed him as a traitor, because his immediate ancestors were polonised descendants of an old Ukrainian noble family); they held him under house arrest, and even interned him for a period. The revived Polish state restricted the Greek-Catholic Church severely, setting up the so-called 'neo-Unia' in most of Eastern Poland—under this arrangement it was possible to have some 'Eastern-Rite' chapels, under the authority of the local Polish Roman Catholic bishop, dean and parish priest, but definitely *not* to have a Greek-Catholic diocesan bishop, or to have any formal relationship with Metropolitan Andrei and the historic structure of the Greek-Catholic Church.

In the first half of the twentieth century, and especially during the interwar period, the Greek-Catholic Church in Galicia under Metropolitan Andrei's leadership was very active in ecumenism, with a natural emphasis on relations with the other eastern churches, but also with a remarkable attention to the Anglican Communion. Metropolitan Andrei was a close friend of Cardinal Mercier, the sponsor of the 'Malines Conversations', and knew Lord Halifax. The Metropolitan was a strong patron of Dom Lambert Beauduin, who founded the Benedictine Monastery at Amay, later

moved to Chèvetogne, which has promoted ecumenism assiduously. Metropolitan Andrei received the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan Eulogius and another Russian Orthodox bishop into his own palace in L'viv when the two arrived as refugees, and remained on close terms with Eulogius when he became the head of the Russian Orthodox Exarchate in Western Europe – Metropolitan Andrei had Russian Orthodox liturgical books printed for Eulogius at the Greek-Catholic publishing house in L'viv.

In Eastern Europe, the Metropolitan sponsored Unionistic Congresses at Velehrad, at L'viv itself and at Pinsk, to promote a greater understanding of Eastern Orthodoxy among Roman Catholics. The Studite monks, revived by Metropolitan Andrei, had (and still have) rapprochement with the Eastern Orthodox Church as one of their principal aims. The Metropolitan tried never to lose any opportunity to encourage reconciliation between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Interestingly, the Poles did not follow the Hungarian example and create a 'Polish Greek-Catholic Church'. One might speculate that the situations were not entirely parallel – Hungary is a country with religious pluralism, since both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are traditional there, so another Hungarian church could be contemplated. Poland is so overwhelming Roman Catholic that deliberately creating any other sort of 'Polish' church might have seemed impossible, as well as undesirable (even today the Old Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants in Poland complain of serious discrimination – to say nothing of the Jews).

The Poles used the most strenuous methods to 'convert' Greek-Catholics to Roman Catholicism. It was understood that in the course of this process one ceased to be a Ukrainian and became Polish. Similar and worse measures were applied to Orthodox Christians in Eastern Poland; numerous villages were 'converted' to Roman Catholicism literally at gunpoint. Metropolitan Andrei issued a pastoral letter with the strongest protest against such unbearable behaviour.⁵

Against this background, the Second World War broke out. The Hitler–Stalin pact partitioned Poland again, and most of Galicia found itself in the Soviet Union. The Stalin government began a persecution, but hesitated because of Metropolitan Andrei's prestige and the necessity of incorporating Galicia into Soviet Ukraine. Recent discoveries in Western Ukraine, however, reveal that the Soviet regime there in 1939–41 was worse than historians had previously believed. At least a quarter of a million people were killed during this first occupation.

In 1941, Hitler turned on Stalin and invaded the USSR; in early July, the Germans occupied Galicia. However, the Nazis had no intention of favouring the Greek-Catholic Church. In other parts of Western Ukraine there was much demand for Greek-Catholic priests, but the Germans would not permit the priests to go to these places, and arrested the few who slipped through. Some Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia deluded themselves into believing that the Germans would somehow advance the cause of an independent Ukraine. It was a pathetic illusion, and the Nazis did nothing to encourage it.

In 1944, the Soviet Army returned to Galicia, and most of the territory was incorporated again into Soviet Ukraine.

After the First World War Hungary lost Transcarpathia. The peace conference at Versailles assigned the territory to Czechoslovak administration. An Orthodox movement arose, partly in response to Hungarian abuses in the early years of the century, partly in response to the Orthodox movement among Transcarpathian emigrants in the United States, and partly through the influence of some Orthodox who arrived as refugees from the communists. By the 1930s the situation stabilised,

and the large majority of the Greek-Catholics remained with their traditional church, which enjoyed a modest cultural revival.

Hitler's advance on Czechoslovakia changed the situation again. Transcarpathia proper reverted to Hungary, while the Prešov region of Eastern Slovakia, with a large Greek-Catholic population, became part of the Nazi Slovak state, which was out to 'slovakise' the Greek-Catholics on the model of the Hungarian Greek-Catholics. This ambition survived the war and the communists; today the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Prešov has a Slovak bishop and has become a strong supporter of a Slovak national identity, favours liturgical latinisation and nurtures a deep antipathy for anything Orthodox. This community was suppressed completely in 1950 and then allowed a partial revival in 1968 when Alexander Dubček was in power, but was kept thoroughly isolated from 1969 by a communist government that was much harsher in Czechoslovakia than in Hungary, Poland or even (towards the end) Ukraine.

The end of the Second World War and the Yalta Agreements brought the communist allies of the USSR to power in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania – Western Ukraine was actually incorporated into the USSR. Policies were then implemented to destroy the Greek-Catholic Churches in those countries.

In Ukraine the Metropolitan, the bishops and many leading clergy and laity were arrested in 1945; in 1946 the Greek-Catholic Church was declared 'reunited with the Moscow Patriarchate' and deprived of all its property. Transcarpathia was incorporated into Ukraine while this was going on; in 1947 the Greek-Catholic bishop of Uzhhorod was murdered and in 1949 the Greek-Catholic Church in Transcarpathia was declared abolished, aggregated to the Moscow Patriarchate.

In 1946, Poland expelled the Greek-Catholic Bishop of Peremyshl' and his auxiliary bishop to the Soviet Union, where they soon died in prison. In 1947, the Polish government deprived the Greek-Catholic Church of its legal existence, and deported all the Greek-Catholics from south-eastern Poland, either to the Soviet Union or to the 'western lands' newly acquired from Germany – where the Roman Catholic authorities refused to allow any Greek-Catholic pastoral service. In the regions from which the Greek-Catholics had been expelled, the Polish Roman Catholics appropriated the Greek-Catholic church buildings, rectories, monasteries, convents, seminary and cathedrals.

In 1948 the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan and bishops of Romania were arrested, and the Greek-Catholic Church was suppressed. The properties, clergy and faithful were 'assigned' to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Both in the USSR and in Romania, communist control of the Orthodox Churches became notorious, and new information is now emerging to confirm what was already suspected.

In 1950, the two Greek-Catholic bishops in Czechoslovakia were arrested, the Greek-Catholic Church was 'abolished' by the communist government, and its properties were given to the Russian Orthodox Church. A year later, the Moscow Patriarchate granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia.

By this series of suppressions, the great majority of Greek-Catholics found themselves cut off from the rest of the Christian world. It was virtually impossible, especially in the early years of the persecution, to have even minimal contact with Rome. Participation in the ecumenical movement was obviously out of the question. These churches had and have communities in the emigration, and eventually dioceses developed in the Americas, in Australia and in Western Europe. But these émigré dioceses were small minorities in a foreign sea, and preoccupied with serving their own faithful; they lacked even the resources for ecumenical involvement.

The one Greek-Catholic church retaining at least relative freedom to act was the

Melkite Patriarchate, located in the Middle East. Political events have also shaken this church: the Arab–Israeli wars and the civil war in Lebanon have turned tens of thousands of Melkite Greek-Catholics into refugees, and tens of thousands more have emigrated, so that the very survival of the Greek-Catholic Church in the Middle East is at risk. Nevertheless, this small church has given important witness to ecumenism, promoting rapprochement between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy long before it became generally fashionable. During the Second Vatican Council, Patriarch Maximos IV of Antioch and the Melkite Greek-Catholic hierarchy played a key role in some of the most important issues, and many Eastern Orthodox hierarchs and theologians recognised this activity. The observers at Vatican II from the Moscow Patriarchate stood up and removed their headgear when Patriarch Maximos IV addressed the Council, and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople publicly told Maximos IV: ‘You spoke for Orthodoxy at Vatican II – you were the voice of our common hope!’⁶

One might, then, have expected a strong involvement of the Greek-Catholics in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Just the opposite happened. The Melkite Patriarchate, for example, has never once been invited to send a representative to a session of the Theological Dialogue. As if that were not enough, representatives of the Holy See have publicly deplored the very existence of the Greek-Catholic churches, and have even appeared to accept, if not applaud, the suppression of these churches in Eastern Europe.⁷ Roman ecumenists seemed to join integrist Roman Catholics in depriving the Greek-Catholics of many of the gains that appeared to have been achieved at the Second Vatican Council. As a leading Greek-Catholic canon lawyer put it:

Quite a few observers have suggested that any measures adopted by Rome that lead to the liquidation of the Uniates will ultimately benefit the ecumenical endeavours in the distant future... As for... the Uniate churches in Eastern Europe and in the Near East, communism and pressure from the Islamic world will take care of them.⁸

This perception caused many Greek-Catholics to become cynical about ecumenism, particularly with Eastern Orthodoxy.

The Reemergence of the Greek-Catholics

Then the miracle happened. The Greek-Catholic churches emerged from the catacombs in the USSR, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland. To understand the magnitude of the shock this produced, one must realise that almost nobody in the West had believed that there were any Greek-Catholics left in the USSR and Romania; the few stragglers remaining in Poland seemed well on the way to total assimilation into the Polish Roman Catholic Church; and Czechoslovakia was so isolated that nothing was known of the situation there. No one was prepared for the sudden reappearance of millions of Greek-Catholics.

There had been warning signs, but they had not been noticed. In 1963, Metropolitan Iosyf Slipy (who had been arrested in 1945 and held in prison ever since) was released by the Soviet government and sent to Rome. For the next 21 years he used every forum to try to remind the Holy See that there were still millions of Greek-Catholics in Ukraine, with an underground hierarchy of bishops, with priests, monks and nuns, and so on. The Cardinal was ignored, when he was not actually mocked.

In 1968 there was a substantial renewal of the Greek-Catholic Church in Czecho-

slovakia during the few months of Dubček's government; the Greek-Catholics regained almost all the parishes lost in 1950. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia prevented the enthronement of a Bishop of Prešov, and the Greek-Catholic Church survived at the price of strenuous slovakisation of the faithful; the Orthodox complained of their losses but on a ecumenical scale it seemed a relatively small matter. Within a year or so, it was forgotten.⁹

In 1970 in Canterbury a subcommittee of the World Council of Churches held a study session to condemn the Uniates as constituting a form of proselytism. This was at the request of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Bucharest, the two Eastern Orthodox churches which had acquired most at the expense of the Greek-Catholics. No Greek-Catholic representatives were invited to participate in this discussion. The meeting was little noticed at the time, and has been almost forgotten since then. My own efforts to gain further information about it have not met with great success.

The Melkite Greek-Catholic Patriarchate sought to develop a relationship with the World Council of Churches, but was rebuffed, on the grounds that since the Melkite Greek-Catholic Church was an integral part of another church, it could not deal directly with the WCC.¹⁰ In this period the WCC became notorious among those concerned for Christians in the communist countries; it was either unwilling or unable to do anything about the persecutions. As a result, others besides the Greek-Catholics grew increasingly cynical about the 'official' ecumenical movement.

In a way, all these developments are perhaps a microcosm of a larger phenomenon within Roman Catholicism – the rise and fall of interest in the eastern churches. For the first 60 years or so of the twentieth century, Roman Catholics paid unprecedented attention to the Christian East. There were periodicals, congresses, numerous books, Papal encyclicals, ikon guilds and so on. In the countries of the emigration, Greek-Catholic and other Eastern Catholic parishes often found themselves called upon to welcome Roman Catholic visitors, or to put on 'Oriental Days' in Roman Catholic parishes, seminaries, religious houses and schools. It seemed as if the hour for Eastern Catholicism had struck, particularly given the importance of the Eastern Catholics during the Second Vatican Council.

After Vatican II, however, it rapidly became clear that all this apparent interest in the Christian East was nothing more than a search for some particular *desiderata* that seemed temporarily unavailable in Roman Catholicism. Once the Roman liturgy was put into vernacular tongues and communion in both kinds became acceptable, Roman Catholic interest in Eastern liturgies dwindled almost to nothing. A new form of 'uniatism' developed: pressure to 'adapt' the Eastern liturgies on the example of the Roman *Novus ordo*. It was a rude awakening for people who had taken the previous interest seriously.¹¹

In 1979 the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church announced the formal opening of the Theological Dialogue. Of the 29 Catholic representatives, there were three Greek-Catholics, and only one of the three in any sense represented one of the local churches: Metropolitan Habib (Bacha) of Beirut and Byblos. The other two were Mgr Miroslav Marusyn, listed as 'Vice-President of the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Oriental Code of Canon Law', and Fr Demetrios Salachas, listed as 'Professor in Canon Law at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas'. Meanwhile, except for the Church of Czechoslovakia, each of the Orthodox local churches recognised by Constantinople was represented by two persons, one of whom was a hierarch (Czechoslovakia sent only a priest, perhaps because of government restrictions).

The Theological Dialogue proceeded calmly, issuing some important statements and appearing to make solid if unspectacular progress. Sometimes individuals in the Orthodox world raised the matter of the Uniates – usually as a means of attacking the whole process of dialogue – but in general the question did not seem to be distracting the work of the Joint Commission.

At the same time the Roman Catholic Church was engaged in direct dialogue with the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Bucharest, despite protests from Ukrainian and Romanian Greek-Catholics in the emigration. The Ukrainian protests were quite vociferous. The Romanian Greek-Catholic diaspora is very small and poorly organised, so almost no one noticed their distress at the dialogue of Rome with Bucharest. Neither protest had much effect until the reign of John Paul II.

In 1980, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Synod of Bishops in the emigration issued a pastoral letter noting the invalidity of the mock-synod of 1946 at which the Soviet government had ‘abolished’ the Greek-Catholic Church. This put the Moscow Patriarchate into a panic; after a few months Patriarch Pimen wrote directly to John Paul II, stating that the Ukrainian letter was aimed at overthrowing the Russian Orthodox Church and that it could destroy the whole process of dialogue. The Pope’s response was equivocal, and apparently many observers failed to realise the real importance of the protest: inadvertently Moscow had confirmed the presence of Greek-Catholics in Ukraine.¹² Like other episodes, this one died down after a while and the dialogue continued.

The Greek-Catholic ‘Problem’ on the Agenda

In 1988 the existence of an organised Greek-Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine became public knowledge, when two Greek-Catholic bishops from Ukraine managed to go to Moscow and meet Cardinals Casaroli and Willebrands, who were in Russia for the Moscow Patriarchate observances of the Millennium of the baptism of St Vladimir. This meeting finally put the issue of the Greek-Catholics on the agenda of the Theological Dialogue, where it speedily moved to the very top: the Eastern Orthodox delegates took the position that nothing else could be discussed until this matter was resolved. So far, however, the Dialogue has been trying to resolve the question of the Greek-Catholic churches in the absence of the Greek-Catholics.

In 1988 and 1989, the issue of the Greek-Catholics in the Soviet Union gathered momentum, and it became clear that the Soviet government had no practical alternative but to restore legal rights to the Greek-Catholics, who were emerging from the persecution with several million faithful. By the end of 1989, when Gorbachev met Pope John Paul II in Rome and the Soviet government officially conceded legal recognition to the Greek-Catholics in Western Ukraine, the Moscow Patriarchate was losing several hundred parishes and clergy. (The Communist Party, incidentally, was also losing important people: even some prominent officials returned to the open practice of Greek-Catholicism.)

The collapse of the communist regimes in the rest of Eastern Europe accelerated the pace of events. In late December 1989 the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania suddenly rose from the catacombs. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Bucharest initially promised to restore all Greek-Catholic church properties, but swiftly retracted that commitment. In Czechoslovakia, the Greek-Catholics successfully petitioned the new government of Václav Havel for restitution of their church properties in 1990.

In January 1990 a delegation from the Council for Promoting Christian Unity (the department of the Holy See responsible for ecumenism) visited the Moscow Patri-

archate, and attempted to reach a working agreement on procedures for settling the disputes arising from the reappearance of the Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine. As a result of that meeting, a 'Quadripartite Commission' met in March. The Roman delegates tried to suppress the voice of the representatives of the Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine, who eventually withdrew from the meeting in protest. The Commission collapsed, and an effort in September to resurrect it did not succeed. I shall discuss the reason for this failure in a moment.

In June 1990 the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church met at Freising, yet again in the absence of the Greek-Catholics, to discuss the Greek-Catholics. The statement issued by the plenary includes the following points:

The problem of the origin and existence of the Catholic Churches of Byzantine Rite has accompanied the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches since well before the commencement of their dialogue and has been constantly present from the beginning of this dialogue. The way in which they will be able to search out a solution of it together will be a test of the solidity of the theological foundation which has already been laid and which it will be necessary to develop. . .

'Uniatism' is an urgent problem to be treated with priority over all other subjects to be discussed in the dialogue.

We reject 'Uniatism' as a method of unity opposed to the common Tradition of our Churches.

When a bilateral agreement has been reached and approved by the respective authorities, it is absolutely necessary that it be implemented.

The presence of the Orthodox Churches which could not attend this meeting would be useful for the successful result of this study.

Greek-Catholics were critical of this statement, obviously. For the Greek-Catholic churches, 'Uniatism' is not a problem; 'Uniatism' is a symptom of the basic problem of the breach in ecclesiastical communion between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy – and when that full communion is restored, 'Uniatism' (that is, the anomalous existence of churches of the Eastern Orthodox tradition which are nevertheless attached to the western church) will disappear of itself, as the Greek-Catholic churches reestablish a normal relationship with the rest of Eastern Orthodoxy. Hence the 'Freising priority' is inappropriate. The problem of 'Uniatism' cannot really be solved without solving the deeper problem, without restoring full communion between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

The attempt to decide the policy, and even the destiny, of the Greek-Catholic churches in their absence is obviously doomed to failure. It is based on the theory that these churches are appendages of Rome, and that Rome is therefore able to make binding commitments on their behalf. That theory is attractive, but the events of the whole process have demonstrated its lack of realism. This lack of realism is also the root of the complaint in the Freising statement about the failure to implement bilateral agreements – the reference is apparently to the collapse of the 'Quadripartite Commission' agreed between Rome and the Moscow Patriarchate in January and March 1990. In spite of some window-dressing, this 'bilateral agreement' was reached over the heads of the Greek-Catholics and therefore could not succeed. The greatest irony in the Freising statement is the call for 'presence of the Orthodox

Churches which could not attend this meeting' but the lack of any hint at an invitation for the Greek-Catholic churches to take part in the study.

On 31 May 1991, Pope John Paul II addressed a public letter to the Catholic Bishops of Europe reflecting on tensions between the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church arising from the emergence of the Greek-Catholic churches, and stressing the need to continue the Theological Dialogue. The Pope reiterated the need for the Eastern Catholic churches 'to play their part in the search for full unity between Catholics and Orthodox...[to] facilitate the theological dialogue directed to overcoming whatever still divides Catholics and Orthodox.'¹³

Despite these encouraging words, when the next formal session of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church met at Ariccia (near Rome) in mid-June to discuss 'the problem of Uniatism', it did so yet again in the absence of the Greek-Catholic churches. That meeting produced a *Working Paper*¹⁴ which was kept secret until some Greek-Catholics managed to obtain it through Orthodox contacts. Such secrecy serves no useful purpose. In the nature of things, it does not work; and it encourages fanatics to believe that a betrayal is taking place.

The Ariccia *Working Paper* states that 'Uniatism can no longer be accepted either as a method or as a model, since Catholics and Orthodox now consider themselves in a new way in their relationship to the mystery of the Church.' This has been said before, quite authoritatively: for example, the letter of Cardinal Willebrands to Metropolitan Yuvenali states very plainly that 'the Pope had by no means any intention of presenting [the Union of Brest] as a model for our relations with the Orthodox today or for a future union. The Catholic Uniate churches arose under circumstances different from ours, and were inspired by a theology that is no longer current.'¹⁵ Greek-Catholics are inclined to pose a very obvious question: if their present status represents an inappropriate model and arises from a theology which is no longer current, why does the Vatican continue to require the Greek-Catholics themselves to live according to this inappropriate model and outdated theology?

Nevertheless, the Ariccia *Working Paper* recognises that 'progress can be made only in the context of a dialogue of charity, which has to be carried out at both the local and the universal level and must include the churches which were still illegal at the time the dialogue began' – in other words, the Greek-Catholic churches.

Ariccia puts forth some specific suggestions to promote a fraternal relationship between the churches, including the following.

- 1 Mutual forgiveness. In principle, this goes without saying. In practice, it is very difficult to engage in mutual forgiveness with an organisation whose very existence one finds offensive.
- 2 Positive action by the Vatican 'to help the Oriental Catholic churches and their communities to contribute on their part to that which is demanded by the full communion of sister churches.' So far, these are nothing but fine words; while the Vatican speaks of ecumenism, she continues to encourage those elements within the Greek-Catholic churches which are most opposed to ecumenism.
- 3 Dispassionate historiography. Although there are about twelve million Greek-Catholics altogether, this particular religious phenomenon is a rather neglected byway of church history. A joint study of what actually happened – both in the course of centuries and during recent communist persecution – would be a useful service to the whole church.

- 4 A condemnation of 'violence'. Under this simple word is a vast gulf of mistrust, pain and mutual incomprehension. Since 1989 the Moscow Patriarchate in particular has been hurling accusations of 'violence' at the Greek-Catholics. The constant repetition of these accusations has created an atmosphere in the ecumenical movement, and even among Roman Catholics, leading to a general impression that there is truth in these charges – although Moscow has never produced any evidence to substantiate the allegations. Thus the Greek-Catholics have suffered a serious injury to their good name and reputation, and are still further inclined to ignore the ecumenical movement and to feel that everyone is against them. 'Violence' in this context has become such an emotionally biased term that its use is best avoided.
- 5 Coordinated practical assistance. The Orthodox in Czechoslovakia complain that they are at an ecumenical disadvantage because the sudden withdrawal of government subsidies and the loss of numerous ecclesiastical properties which they have been compelled to return to the Greek-Catholics, combined with the large-scale help sent by Catholics in Western Europe to the Greek-Catholics in Czechoslovakia, make the Orthodox Church seem less attractive, for improper reasons. This complaint is exaggerated, and it may even seem churlish; but there is some substance to it, and it should be taken seriously. Some of the programmes of material assistance to the Catholics in Eastern Europe are strongly marked with denominational triumphalism and a lack of ecumenical sensitivity. There is no reason in principle why social assistance and other forms of philanthropic activity cannot be organised by Catholics and Orthodox in common, even inviting other Christians to participate as well. This would also advance ecumenical awareness in the western countries.
- 6 Sharing church buildings. Such sharing goes on occasionally in the emigration. But in Eastern Europe the demand seems one-sided, in that the Orthodox insist on sharing Greek-Catholic church buildings, but are most unwilling to allow Greek-Catholics any access to Orthodox buildings. To take only one instance: at the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord (the Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem, there is a Roman Catholic Mass and an Orthodox Divine Liturgy every day. But celebration of the Greek-Catholic Divine Liturgy is never allowed.
- 7 Vigilance in the education of future clergy, who should be informed of the ecumenical situation and inspired to work for Christian unity. This has also been promised repeatedly, and implemented but rarely.
- 8 Common veneration of the martyrs. This could be a creative, positive step. In England and Ireland, the churches have set the martyrs against each other, contributing to a generally negative ecumenical situation which, particularly in Ireland, is still almost frozen. However, the persecutions of the communist era were such that nothing prevents each church from venerating the martyrs of all the churches; and arranging for this to take place regularly could do much to advance a more complete reconciliation – bearing in mind the prophetic teaching that peace is the fruit of justice.

The Ariccia *Working Paper* was to have been presented to a plenary of the Joint International Theological Dialogue in June 1992, but this has now been postponed to 1993. Meanwhile, some other events have had an effect on the situation.

The Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios of Constantinople died in October 1991. He had welcomed a conciliatory approach from some Greek-Catholic bishops during his 1990 visit to the United States, but that contact had not been maintained. His successor, Patriarch Batholomaios, is a school-friend of the Greek-Catholic Exarch

in Athens, Bishop Anargyros of Gratianopolis. First contacts with the new Ecumenical Patriarch at his enthronement indicate that he is open to further attempts at working dialogue with the Greek-Catholics.

Pope John Paul II invited the Orthodox churches of the European continent to send 'fraternal delegates' to the European Synod that met in Rome late in 1991. Patriarch Aleksii II of Moscow replied with an angry refusal, citing the 'Uniates' in Ukraine and alleged Roman Catholic proselytism in Russia itself as his reasons. The response from Rome seems to indicate that someone at the Vatican has become tired of this barrage of accusations from Moscow; the Roman statement says bluntly that it is unjust to blame the Greek-Catholic Church for the estrangement and that a well-timed gesture of reconciliation from Moscow would have done a good deal. This, of course, is true. However, it is also true that no one can be compelled to repent against his own will, and simply reminding Moscow of its complicity in the persecution is not a sufficient response.

I observed earlier that one finds the Greek-Catholics along the East-West fault line that runs through Europe. This includes what was Yugoslavia, where there has been a Greek-Catholic bishop since 1611. Inevitably, the Orthodox Serbs consider the Greek-Catholics traitors, while for the Roman Catholic Croats the Greek-Catholics are 'not Catholic enough', and therefore at least potential traitors. There are Greek-Catholic parishes all along the battle lines: Transfiguration Church at Sid has more than 500 families, Holy Cross Church at Vinkovci has 100 families, and Christ the King Church at Vukovar – destroyed in the fighting late in 1991 – had 1000 families, with an attached women's monastery. Several Greek-Catholic priests have been killed.

Since the Theological Dialogue is still very much in process, there can be no 'conclusion' about it yet – except to suggest, once again, that the Greek-Catholics must be welcomed as active participants in that dialogue, and that in the broader ecumenical context it would be appropriate for all the churches to recognise that the Greek-Catholics have their own contributions to offer.

Notes and References

- ¹ See the Vatican II document on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, 13, 14, 15 and especially 17: 'This sacred council thanks God that many Eastern children of the Catholic Church preserve this heritage and wish to express it more faithfully and completely in their lives, and are already living in full communion with their brethren who follow the tradition of the West. But it declares that the entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in the various traditions, belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church.'
- ² Jaroslav Pelikan offers an interesting discussion of this 'fault line' in his *Confessor Between East and West* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990), pp. 54–5.
- ³ Oscar Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*.
- ⁴ Cyril Korolevsky, *Living Languages in Catholic Worship*, recounts at length the story of the magyarisation of the Rusyn and Romanian Greek-Catholics.
- ⁵ Text of this letter in Cyrille Korolevskij, *Metropolitte Andre Szeptyckyj* (Rome, 1964), pp. 412–14.
- ⁶ Patriarch Athenagoras addressing Patriarch Maximos IV, 5 January 1964 in Jerusalem and 2 June 1964 in Constantinople. Emilius Inglessis, *Maximos IV: l'Orient conteste l'Occident* (Cerf, Paris, 1969), pp. 72 ff.
- ⁷ For example, Emmanuel Lanne, 'Églises unies ou églises soeurs', *Irenikon* (1975), pp. 322–42.
- ⁸ Archim. Victor J. Pospishil, 'Compulsory celibacy for Eastern Catholics in the Americas', *Diakonia*, no. 3 (1976).

- ⁹ To his credit, Bishop Kallistos (Timothy Ware) took Czechoslovakia in 1968 into account; in subsequent editions of his book *The Orthodox Church* he noted the revival of Greek-Catholicism as an indication that the 'reunions' of the Greek-Catholics with the Orthodox Church elsewhere in Eastern Europe had not been voluntary.
- ¹⁰ This reasoning has not prevented the Romanian Orthodox Church in the USA and the Orthodox Church in America from becoming full, equal members of the World Council of Churches, even though the Romanian Church is simply one diocese of the OCA.
- ¹¹ In England, the *Eastern Churches Quarterly* had been published for about 30 years, with good success. No sooner was Vatican II over than *Eastern Churches Quarterly* transformed itself into *One in Christ*, and changed its orientation to the point of publishing an English translation of Emmanuel Lanne's above-mentioned article advocating the abolition of the Eastern Catholic Churches: 'United churches or sister churches', *One in Christ*, no. 12 (1976), pp. 106–23.
- ¹² English translations of these letters can be found in Russel P. Moroziuk, *Politics of a Church Union* (Church Herald, Chicago, 1983), pp. 110–13.
- ¹³ Section 6. The full text of the Papal letter can be found in the English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* (17 June 1991), pp. 1–2.
- ¹⁴ The complete text of the Ariccia *Working Paper* in English translation, followed by a commentary by the present writer, appears in *Sobornost*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1992), pp. 49–64.
- ¹⁵ The English text of Cardinal Willebrands' letter was published in Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican 1917–1979* (Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 1981), p. 382.