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A R T Y K U Ł Y

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**GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ITS CLERGY
IN THE WESTERN AND NORTHERN TERRITORIES OF POLAND
BETWEEN 1947 AND 1957 – AN OUTLINE OF A COLLECTIVE
PORTRAIT***

Key words: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Ukrainian minority in Poland, western and northern Polish lands

Słowa kluczowe: ukraiński Kościół greckokatolicki, mniejszość ukraińska w Polsce, zachodnie i północne ziemie Polski

Introductory Remarks

Biography is not a very popular field when it comes to the historiography of the Greek Catholic Church after 1945. There are only a few studies regarding the clergy of the Eastern Catholic Rite in post-war Poland. The most extensive study seems to be done on Basil Hrynyk – commonly regarded as one of the most

* The time frame adopted for this text finds its justification in the history of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland. The starting point is related to the “Vistula” action – the resettlement of about 140 thousand people of Ukrainian nationality from the south-eastern areas to the west and north of Poland (it is estimated that 2/3 of the displaced people were Greek Catholics). The “Vistula” action therefore liquidated the existing parish structure of the Greek Catholic Church within the postwar Polish borders. The closing date is justified by the fact that it was in 1957 that the communist authorities agreed to establish (only in its residual form!) a Greek Catholic pastoral ministry in the western and northern territories of the country.

important figures among the Greek Catholic priests who lived during the communist period.¹ However, other prominent priests of that time as Mirosław Ripecki,² Mikołaj Deńko,³ Stefan Dziubina, or Basilian Fathers Paweł (Piotr) Puszkarski, and Josafat (Józef) Romanyk do not have their published biographies. Only a few separate publications mention them – whether in the form of small brochures⁴ or articles published in collective works or academic journals.⁵ Biographies available in biographical-encyclopaedic publications can be considered as compensation. Chronologically, as first can be mention here a three-volume lexicon of the repressed Catholic clergy edited by Fr Jerzy Myszor, in which, among others, 40 biographies of individual of the Greek Catholic Rite (2 bishops, 28 diocesan priests, 3 monks and 17 nuns)⁶ were listed. Examples of local biographical dictionaries include a two-volume work by Fr Andrzej Kopiczko covering the Diocese of Warmia,⁷ a study by Fr Józef Marecki covering the Province of Cracow,⁸ and

¹ Igor Hałagida, „Szpieg Watykanu”. *Kapłan greckokatolicki ks. Bazyli Hrynyk (1896–1977)* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008).

² It is worth yet to mention some extended biographical texts about this priest. See Ivan Pavlyk, “Khshaniivska Lehenda”, *Kalendar “Blahovista”* (1996), 111–117; Ivan Polanskyi, “Otec mitrat Myroslav Ripetskyi, Bohoslovnia 38 (1974), 227–234; “Otec mitrat Myroslav Ripetskyi”, in: *Nadbuzhanshchyna, Sokalshchyna, Belzhchyna, Radekhyvshchyna, Kamianechchyna, Kholmshchyna i Pidlashia*, vol. 1, ed. Mykola Martyniuk et al., (New York–Sydney–Toronto: Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1986): 768–790. See also Krzysztof Sychowicz, „Ks. Mirosław Ripecki – kolejny niepokorny wobec systemu komunistycznego. Głos w dyskusji”, in: *Śladami unii brzeskiej*, ed. Radosław Dobrowolski, Mariusz Zemło (Lublin–Supraśl: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010), 481–492. At least one MA thesis was also written about the priest.

³ For basic information about him, see Oleksandr Bobak, *Sluha Bozhyi Mykola Denko. Dokumentalnyi narys* (Sambir, 2003); Roman Lubiniecki, „Ksiądz kanonik Mikołaj Deńko”, in: *Problemy Ukraińców w Polsce po wysiedleńczej akcji „Wisła” 1947 r.*, ed. Włodzimierz Mokry, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo „Szwajpolt Fiol”, 1997): 386–387.

⁴ See: Oksana Hajdukevych, *Spomyny pro zhyttia ta dushpastyrsku pratsiu ottsia shambel-na Volodymyra Haidukevycha ta ioho rodynu* (Horlytsi: Chyn Sester Vasylia Velykoho, 2005); Mykhailo Kozak, *Nevtomnyi dushpastyr o. kan. Volodymyr Borovets* (Peremyszl–Szczecin–Lwiv, 2007).

⁵ Igor Hałagida, „Greckokatolicki kapłan ks. Włodzimierz Boziuk (1913–1969) i jego skomplikowane losy w PRL, *Komunikaty Warmińsko-Mazurskie* 3 (2009): 325–350; Igor Hałagida, Jarosław Wąsowicz, „Ukraiński greckokatolicki zakonnik o. Arseniusz (Antoni) Kulibaba OSBM i jego posługa w parafiach rzymskokatolickich w Pile oraz Wałczu”, *Studia i materiały do dziejów Ziemi Wałeckiej* 3 (2013): 109–119.

⁶ *Leksykon duchowieństwa represjonowanego w czasach PRL*, vol. 1–3, ed. Jerzy Myszor, Jacek Żurek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Verbinum”, 2002–2006).

⁷ Andrzej Kopiczko, *Duchowieństwo katolickie diecezji warmińskiej w latach 1945–1992*, vol. 1–2 (Olsztyn: Kuria Metropolitalna Archidiecezji Warmińskiej, 2002–2007).

⁸ Józef Marecki, *Represje wobec osób duchownych i zakonnych na terenie woj. krakowskiego 1944–1975. Leksykon biograficzny*, vol. 1–2 (Kraków: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2014–2016).

publications by Fr Robert R. Kufel.⁹ The fundamental publication of such a character for the Greek Catholic Diocese of Przemyśl and the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land is a two-volume study by Rev. Bohdan Prach, containing a huge amount of information about the clergy and their families.¹⁰ The main drawback of these studies, however, was the fact that they did not “build” an overall picture of the clergy, despite containing enormously valuable and unique detailed biographical information. And yet – as an author studying one of a Roman Catholic nuns’ order said thirty years ago – “prosopography is much more than trying to compile a catalogue of many thousands of entries in the hope that some of them might interest someone. It is possible to write a history of a monastery knowing only the names of the superiors and not dealing with the individual nuns; but only by knowing as much as possible about individual people, one can write the history of not an institution but a group, team, or congregation. This kind of historiography is still in its infant stage, but it should be considered for many reasons. It is a healthy antidote to history understood only as a mechanical process of economic change and is a logical consequence of recognizing the primacy of the human person among created values.”¹¹ To a certain extent, these words can be considered universal and can also be applied to the Greek Catholic clergy during the communist period, who, so far, were not the subject for such reflection. This publication is, therefore, an attempt to fill this research gap.

To study the history of the Greek Catholic Church in communist Poland is no easy task. The main obstacle, which appears at the very beginning of any attempt made, is access to sources. During communist times, the Greek Catholic Church was not recognized *de jure* in Poland, most of the clergy served in the Roman Rite, and the formal guardians of Greek Catholics were the successive primates of Poland.¹² Therefore, most of the archival materials – including personal documents – are in the Roman Catholic Church archives. An important, but complementary, role is played by the documents generated by the central and regional units of the Office for Religious Affairs, as well as party and security apparatus structures.

⁹ Robert Romuald Kufel, *Słownik biograficzny księży pracujących w Kościele gorzowskim 1945–1956*, vol. 1–4 (Zielona Góra: Agencja Wydawnicza „PDN”, 2016–2019).

¹⁰ Bohdan Prach, *Dukhovenstvo peremyskoi ieparkhii ta apostolskoi administrastii Lemkivshchyny*, vol. 1–2 (Lviv: Ukrainskyi Katolytskyi Universytet, 2014).

¹¹ S. Borkowska, „Prozopografia polskich zakonów żeńskich”, *Nasza Przyszłość* 73 (1990): 316–317.

¹² More on this subject later in the text.

The arduous search and study of these archives made it possible to create a database of Greek Catholic clergy in the People's Republic of Poland, which contains both basic biographical data and – perhaps most importantly – information about their life after consecration.¹³

According to the information I have collected so far, 238 clerics and consecrated persons of the Greek Catholic Church remained within the borders of the Polish state permanently or temporarily after 1947. The number includes 105 diocesan priests (44.12%), 21 monks (8.82%), and 112 nuns (47.06%). Although this figure seems to be complete, the fact that minor adjustments may occur in the future cannot be ruled out.¹⁴

In the case of the diocesan clergymen, the largest number of priests came from the Diocese of Przemyśl – 61 priests (58.1% of all diocesan priests) and 31 priests (29.52% of all diocesan priests) from the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land. The remaining priests came from the Archdiocese of Lviv (11 priests or 10.48%), the Diocese of Stanislaviv (1 priest or 0.95%), and the General Vicariate for the Greek Catholics in Bukovina (1 priest or 0.95%). These proportions should not come as a surprise. The priests from the first two groups reside in parishes, which – after new post-war borders had been established – remained in Poland. The thirteen other priests found themselves here most often as a result of the war turmoil.

The most numerous men's order was the Order of St. Basil.¹⁵ In the years 1947–1957 there were 17 Basilian monks in Poland (80.95% of all Greek Catholic monks in Poland). Among them were 14 fathers and 3 brothers. The presence of friars from other congregations – Studite Fathers (3 monks or 14.29%) and Redemptorist Fathers (1 monk or 4.76%) – was rather symbolic, although visible in percentage terms.

¹³ Regrettably, the lack of access to some archives makes it impossible to collect all the information, but it seems that the data already collected is sufficient to present some generalisations and hypotheses.

¹⁴ All figures given in this text are the result of the author's calculations based on the church archives (Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic) and the available literature on the subject. Their exact specification would exceed the framework of this text.

¹⁵ The post-war history of the Basilian Order in Poland has not yet been thoroughly researched, thus the MA thesis by Igor (Jan) Harasim still remains the most serious attempt so far. See his *Bazylianie w Polsce w latach 1945–1985* (Warszawa, 1988) (typescript in the archives of the Basilian monastery in Warsaw).

The situation was slightly different in the case of women's orders and congregations, where the most numerous group of nuns were the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate.¹⁶ In the period, there were 74 sisters in the congregation (over 67% of all sisters). Much less numerous was the congregation of the Josephine Sisters (28 nuns or more than 25% of all the sisters), while a small number of the Sisters of Saint Basil stayed in various monasteries.

The picture outlined above does not fully reflect reality. The situation was dynamic. Some of the clergy died during the period discussed, some were imprisoned, others did not perform – for various reasons – their pastoral duties.¹⁷

Out of the 238 people mentioned above, only 142 (i.e. less than 61%) can be described as those who stayed – permanently or temporarily – during the period discussed in the broadly understood western and northern parts of Poland where they have been deported during Operation “Vistula”.¹⁸ Their fate will be analysed in this text later.

Table 1. Greek Catholic clergy in the western and northern parts of Poland between 1947 and 1957 according to church structures.

	Church unit / Order / Congregation	Number of people
1.	Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land	31
2.	Lviv Archdiocese	11
3.	Diocese of Przemyśl	61
4.	Diocese of Stanislaviv	1
5.	General Vicariate for Greek Catholics in Bukovina	1
6.	Basilian monks	17
7.	Studite monks	3
8.	Redemptorist monks	1
9.	Basilian nuns	8
10.	Josephine nuns	27
11.	Servants nuns	77
Total		238

Source: Author's calculations.

¹⁶ More about the Polish province of Servants nuns, see Vasyliia Chykalo, Sofiia Lebedovych, *Narys istorii provintsii Materi Bozhoi Neustannoi Pomochi* (Warszawa, 1988) (typescript in the archives of the Basilian monastery in Warsaw). At present an extensive new study is being conducted; this effort has been undertaken by sister Anna (Irena) Drozd.

¹⁷ More on this subject later in the text.

¹⁸ In the case of 11 people, it was not possible to collect data in an indisputable way to find if they were present in the area of interest at that time.

From the History of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland in 1944/1947–1957

The history of the Greek Catholic Church in post-war Poland was largely the result of actions taken against the clergy and the faithful of this community predominantly in the USSR, but also in other countries of the so-called Eastern bloc, particularly in Romania and Czechoslovakia.¹⁹ However, the situation in Poland was slightly different, because the policy towards Greek Catholics was not only a result of the general religion policy of the communist regime but also of its attempt to remove some of the national minorities (first and foremost Ukrainians) out of newly created national boundaries.²⁰ Although in the beginning, the expulsion of Ukrainians to the USSR was voluntary, it transitioned into forced deportation. In total, between 450 and 483,000 Ukrainians (both Orthodox and Greek Catholics) left Poland between 1944–1946.²¹ Most Greek Catholic diocesan clergy followed, abandoning their parishes.

Josaphat Kotsylovski, Bishop of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Przemyśl, was urged by the authorities to support the resettlement by issuing, for an instant, a pastoral letter. However, these efforts did not bring any results. Therefore, on June 26, 1946, he was arrested together with his Suffragan Bishop Hryhoriy Lakota and most of the other members of Greek Catholic Diocese of Przemyśl and exiled to the USSR. Both bishops died later in prison. In October 1945, the authorities liquidated the Greek Catholic Seminary in Przemyśl and banned two diocesan charitable societies – “Eparchalna Pomich” (Eparchial Help) and “Institute of Widows and Orphans of Greek Catholic Priests”. In the spring of 1946, the Mayor of Przemyśl to the USSR issued an order to resettle both the orphanage and nursery, which were being run in Przemyśl by the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

¹⁹ There is extensive literature on this subject. Its discussion would require a separate text.

²⁰ On the policy of Polish communists towards Ukrainians at that time, see Roman Drozd, *Polityka władz wobec ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944–1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Tyrsa”, 2001), 28–36; Eugeniusz Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa* (Białystok: Belarussian Historical Society, 2000), 51–60; Leszek Olejnik, *Polityka narodowa Polski w latach 1944–1960* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2003), 266–291.

²¹ About the resettlement, see Roman Kabaczij, *Wygynani na stepy. Przesiedlenia ludności ukraińskiej z Polski na południe Ukrainy w latach 1944–1946* (Warszawa: Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, 2012); Jan Pisuliński, *Przesiedlenie ludności ukraińskiej z Polski do USRR w latach 1944–1947* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2009). See also Dariusz Iwaneczko, „Przysięgi wierności dochowam. Wsysiedlenia Ukraińców a Kościół greckokatolicki w Polsce 1944–1947”, *Więź* 6 (2002): 91–105.

However, the deportation of bishops from Przemyśl and members of the canonry (*kapituła*) to the USSR did not mean the automatic liquidation of Greek Catholic structures in post-war Poland. This fact was not sanctioned by any legal act, neither was it recognized by the Holy See. Moreover, the official Vatican yearbook “*Annuario Pontificio*” still mentioned their existence in Poland.²² As a result, on October 25, 1946, Pope Pius XII granted the Primate August Hlond and Cardinal Adam Sapieha special powers concerning the Greek Catholic Rite.²³ On December 10, 1946, he appointed the primate (during his stay in the Vatican) as his special delegate for Eastern rites – Greek Catholic, Byzantine-Slavonic and Armenian. On April 2, 1947, the primate also approved three priests as vicar generals of the Diocese of Przemyśl and the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land. In practice, however, due to the resettlement of the Ukrainian population to the western and northern territories of Poland, which began a few weeks later, the assignment of these posts was purely symbolic.

After the deportation of much of the Ukrainian population to the USSR, about 140,000 people of Ukrainian nationality still remained within the Polish state. The Soviet side did not agree to extend the action. In such a situation, the idea of resettlement of the Ukrainian population to the western and northern territories began to take shape in military circles. On April 28, 1947 – after several months of planning – the operation of resettlement of the remaining in Poland Ukrainians began under the code name Operation “Vistula” (*Akcja Wisła*). As a result, within a few months, more than 140,000 Ukrainians were resettled to the western and northern parts of Poland. In line with the authorities’ guidelines, they were to be dispersed in small quantities all over the territory of a few northern and western provinces of Poland.²⁴ The clergy were deported along with the faithful; thus, the

²² In the yearbook for 1947, it was stated that the bishop and his suffragan were deported – “deportatio” (*Annuario Pontificio* 1947: 288). In the following years, the Diocese of Przemyśl was reported as unstaffed. The same was the case with the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land.

²³ Ievhen Misylo, „Hreko-katołytska Cerkva u Polshchi (1944–1947)”, *Varshavski ukrainiznavchi zapysky* 1 (1989): 63; Stanisław Stępień, „Sapiehowie a obrządkie wschodnie kościoła katolickiego”, in: *Kardynał Adam Sapieha – środowisko rodzinne, życie i dzieło*, ed. Stanisław Stępień (Przemyśl: Południowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy, 1995), 77; Jan Pietrzak, *Pelnia prymasostwa. Ostatnie lata prymasa Polski kardynała Augusta Hlonda 1945–1948*, vol. 2 (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2009), 574–577.

²⁴ Despite the passage of years, the progress in academic research and a considerable number of publications, Operation “Vistula” has been a source of much controversy among historians to this day. For an overview of the research to date, see Andrzej Leon Sowa, „Akcja ‘Wisła’ w polskiej historiografii – aktualne problemy badawcze”, in: *Akcja „Wisła”*, ed. Jan Pisuliński

centuries-old Greek-Catholic parish network was destroyed. In the opinion of the communist authorities, after 1947 the problem of the Greek Catholic Church had been resolved in Poland, although it was not through legal means. Therefore, with the end of Operation "Vistula", attempts were made to prevent contact between the displaced people and their native church by all means.²⁵ "The local [Provincial – I.H.] Office, hoping to prevent the renewal of the Ukrainian movement, banned the creation of Greek Catholic parishes, and placed the clergy under the control of the Provincial Public Security Office. The problem of Greek Catholics was solved by the Roman Catholic Church; it accepted [their] priests into its circle and entrusting them, after some training, with the function of vicars" – as stated in a report from the Olsztyn Voivodeship.²⁶

In fact, after Operation "Vistula", almost all Greek Catholic priests and monks were faced with the decision of remaining with the native rite, thus exposing themselves to possible harassment and depriving themselves of any means of existence, or – as suggested and recommended by Primate Hlond – accepting the indult of biritualism. After passing the Western liturgy exam (and living unaccompanied, which concerned married priests), they would then take on the functions of vicars in Latin parishes. The vast majority of priests chose the latter option. The only priest who did not follow this path was Mirosław Ripecki, who, from 1947, consistently celebrated services in the Eastern Rite in the chapel in Chrzanowo, Elk County. He created the chapel despite risking conflict with the Roman Catholic diocesan curia in Olsztyn or even the Primate Wyszyński.

(Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej: 2003), 12–25; Ihor Iliuszyn, „Akcja ‘Wisła’ w historiografii ukraińskiej”, in: *ibidem*, 26–35; Krzysztof Bortnik, „Akcja ‘Wisła’ w polskiej historiografii krajowej”, *Historica* 1 (2007), 101–123; Ihor Tsependa, „Operatsiia ‘Visla’ v polskii istoriografii”, *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 3 (2002): 84–93.

²⁵ For more information on the situation of displaced Greek Catholic Ukrainians in the Polish People's Republic see, among others, Igor Hałagida, „Sytuacja wyznaniowa Ukraińców na zachodnich i północnych ziemiach Polski”, in: *Ukraińcy w najnowszych dziejach Polski (1918–1989)*, ed. Roman Drozd (Słupsk–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Tyrsa”, 2000), 159–184; Roman Drozd, „Życie religijne ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944–1956”, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 1 (2004): 77–93; Piotr Gerent, „Prawosławni i grekokatolicy na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1956”, *Sobótka* 4 (2002): 433–454; Andrzej Kopiczko, „Duchowieństwo grekokatolickie w diecezji warmińskiej 1947–1960 – między akomodacją a odrębnością”, in: *Kościół grekokatolicki na Warmii i Mazurach. Wobec doświadczeń przeszłości i przemian społeczno-politycznych w Polsce*, ed. Marek Melnyk (Olsztyn, 2006), 53–62; Anna Korzeniewska, „Kościół grekokatolicki na Warmii i Mazurach po II wojnie światowej”, *Studia Warmińskie* 43 (2006): 69–89; Jarosław Syrnyk, „Kwestia wyznaniowa wśród ludności ukraińskiej na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1989”, *Ridna mowa* 4 (2004): 52–69.

²⁶ Quote from: Hałagida, „Sytuacja”, 162.

However, even in such a tragic situation, some priests tried to break the existing bans and administer the sacraments „behind closed doors”. There were also secret services, sometimes held in private houses.

Despite dispersion over western and northern parts of Poland, as well as restrictions, in the first years after Operation “Vistula”, the Ukrainian population did not give in to significant assimilation processes. One can even say that the administrative restrictions imposed, and the pressure of the largely unfriendly Polish milieu, caused the strengthening of intra-group ties among the Ukrainian displaced peoples, creating of a kind of national “ghetto”. This phenomenon was manifested by the concealment of one’s nationality or the preference for marriages within one’s national group. To preserve a separate culture and native tradition, old customs were secretly cultivated inside homes, their mother tongue was maintained, and holidays were celebrated according to the Julian calendar. This “cultural underground” appeared suspicious to the authorities, leading to accusations of “Ukrainian nationalism”. As a result, in the early 1950s, the communist authorities were forced to correct their policy towards Ukrainians. On December 31, 1951, a special commission was established in Warsaw with Deputy Prime Minister Aleksander Zawadzki at the head, which was instructed to “collect material and determine the places of concentration of Ukrainian nationality, explain their moods, cultural needs and their demands”.²⁷ The result of the commission’s activity, which collected relevant data from the area, was a note from March 13, 1952. The document stated, among other things, that about 125,000 Ukrainians were living in the western and northern parts of Poland, and that there are strong feelings of impermanence and tendencies to return to the former lands. The reasons for this were seen – as it was described – in the influence of “nationalist circles” in the country and abroad, and the secret activities of the Greek Catholic clergy. The current economic policy towards Ukrainians was criticised (e.g. the level of taxation), discriminatory practices in cultural and religious life were noted, the problem of illegal returns and the related possibilities of conflicts between the returnees and the Polish population settled in the post-Ukrainian areas were analysed. Changing official policies towards the Ukrainian population was proposed, including free communication in Ukrainian, as well as school instruction. The effect of this note was the resolution of the Political Bureau of

²⁷ Quoting from: Leszek Olejnik, „Problem ukraiński w polityce narodowej państwa polskiego w latach 1944–1957”, in: *Polska i Ukraina po II wojnie światowej*, ed. Włodzimierz Bonusiak, (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1998), 117.

the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), adopted on April 4, 1952, titled, "On measures aimed at improving the economic situation of the Ukrainian population in Poland and intensifying political work among them." The "April Resolution", as the quoted document is commonly referred to, also contained recommendations on religious issues, which were also criticised as one of the reasons delaying the assimilation processes. "[The Ukrainian] population is partly Orthodox, partly Greek Catholic, and rarely attend the masses in neighbourhood Roman Catholic churches. There are Orthodox parishes, where priests generally respond loyally to the state and influence the population in this spirit. However, to a large extent, especially among Greek Catholics, secret services are held, and holidays are celebrated secretly according to the Eastern Rite." It was explicitly stated and therefore recommended that "while respecting the principles of freedom of conscience and religion [...], the underground Greek Catholic nationalist agenda should be vigorously fought."²⁸ Similar phrases were also found in the resolutions adopted on the level of the provincial administration and other documents developed at that time.

Contrary to popular opinion, the political and social situation in Poland did not ease after Stalin's death in 1953. This statement also applies to religious issues, and there is much to suggest that the policy on these issues had even been somewhat tightened. It could be justified to say that the death of the Soviet leader indirectly gave [the President] Bierut a free hand in trying to finally crackdown on the Roman Catholic Church. For example, it was manifested by an attempt to interfere in the personnel policy of the Church authorities (what was protested in the famed letter "Non possumus"); the trial of Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek from Kielce, or the arrest and internment of Primate Wyszyński. In the end, Stalin's death did not change much in the situation of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland. One could go as far as to say that, in this case, repressions intensified (e.g. in April 1954, priest Hrynyk was arrested, and later sentenced to six years in prison for alleged spying for the Vatican).

The situation changed only in the second half of the 1950s – as part of the wave of change following the workers' revolt in Poznań and the political crisis

²⁸ Roman Drozd, Igor Hałagida, *Ukraińcy w Polsce 1944–1989. W walce o tożsamość (dokumenty)* (Warszawa: Burchard Edition, 1999), 68, dok. nr 19: Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (KC PZPR) on measures to improve the economic situation of the Ukrainian population in Poland and to intensify political work among them, [April 1952].

that brought Władysław Gomułka to power. One of the elements of the activities legitimizing the new team in the public perception was – although passingly – nevertheless a revaluation of the existing anti-religious policy, especially towards the Roman Catholic Church. This was manifested, among other things, by the release of Primate Wyszyński from his internment and the withdrawal by the authorities of the February decree on the staffing of church posts. Although this new religious policy lasted for a relatively short time (until 1958), this period of “breathing” was capitalized on by the most active and brave Greek Catholic priesthood, who began efforts with both the Church (Primate Wyszyński) and the state authorities to re-establish the Greek Catholic pastoral ministry in Poland. They were largely successful in the spring of 1957 when the communist authorities agreed to create the first unofficial pastoral points in the western and northern parts of Poland.²⁹ Although this did not mean recognition of the Church by the state *de jure* – this had to wait until 1989 – in practice, it was the first step in this direction. This change also marked the end of the most difficult and tragic period for priests of the Greek Catholic Church, who remained in Poland after 1947.

Greek Catholic Clerics and Consecrated Persons in the Western and Northern Lands – an Attempt to Draw a Collective Portrait

Out of the total number of Greek Catholic priests and consecrated persons, who remained in Poland after 1944, only 142 (less than 61%) can be defined as those who stayed – permanently or temporarily – during the discussed period in the western and northern parts of Poland.³⁰ Among them were 65 diocesan clergy (33 from the Diocese of Przemyśl, 23 from the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land, 9 from the Archdiocese of Lviv, and 1 from the Vicariate for the Greek Catholics in Bukovina), 8 monks (6 Basilians, 1 Redemptorist, and 1 Studite) and 69 nuns (48 Servants, 17 Josephines, and 4 Basilians).

In terms of nationality, this was a fairly homogenous group with the majority declaring themselves Ukrainian. Only two out of 23 priests from the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land – Józef Chylak and Jan Polanski – were in favour of the Lemko (Ruthenian) nationality. Although what could have influenced the

²⁹ On this subject see more: *Odnowienie duszpasterstwa greckokatolickiego w Polsce 1956–1957 (dokumenty)*, ed. Igor Hałagida (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Bazyliada”, 2011) („Bazylikańskie Studia Historyczne”, vol. 1).

³⁰ In the case of 11 people, it was not possible to collect data in an indisputable way to find if they were present in the area at that time.

process of their national self-identification remains an open question, we should not exclude the strategy chosen by many other individuals, in which concealment of nationality and the option for Polishness may have played an important role.³¹

In general, it can also be stated that in the discussed decade, a significant part of the analysed group was already at a very advanced age, with the difference between the youngest (two nuns from the Congregation of Sister Servants – Teresa (Helena) Łukowicz and Emilia (Stefania) Paszkowiak) and the oldest (Michał Jurczakiewicz, a priest in the Diocese of Przemyśl,) was 62 years old. The above-mentioned nuns were born in 1931, and the priest – in 1869. In total, as many as 45 people (31.49%) were born before 1900, and another 65 (45.77%) in the years 1900–1919.³²

Table 2. Greek-Catholic clergy and monks in the western and northern parts of Poland between 1947 and 1957, broken down by year of birth

Decade of birth							
Before 1870	1870–1879	1880–1889	1890–1899	1900–1909	1910–1919	1920–1929	After 1930
1	3	14	27	37	28	30	2

Source: Author's calculations.

This general description does not reflect the complexity of the issue; it is better illustrated by “splitting” groups into different categories: diocesan clergy, monks, and nuns. It shows that all priests – that is, 65 people – were born before 1920, and more than half of them (35 priests) was born before 1900. The three monks who were born in the 90s of the 19 century only make this age statistic worse. The situation is slightly different for the nuns, of whom only 7 were born before 1900, while 31 were born in 1920 or later (the youngest ones, by the way, tied their fate with the consecrated life after 1947).³³ The age structure not only

³¹ This can be proven by the fact that not all priests returned to their native ritual when it became possible.

³² See Table 2.

³³ More on this subject later in the text. The entry of several young girls into the congregation of ss. Servants is the only Greek Catholic vocation in the period under discussion. The first Basilian monks appeared only in 1959 (and the next ones only in the seventies).

explains a variety of attitudes or decisions made by the Greek Catholic clergy but also shows that it was not easy for them – despite their generally sound education – to master the Latin liturgy in bid to serve in Roman Catholic parishes.

Of the above mentioned 142 people, at least 19 died in the decade discussed (9 priests from the Diocese of Przemyśl, 6 – from the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land, 3 – from the Archdiocese of Lviv, and 1 nun (Servant). It was not possible to determine the year of death for 3 of them. While in the case of orders and congregations, one could hope for new vocations to fulfil the gap, then in the case of diocesan priests such shortage, which also was created by the unavailability of newly ordained priests, soon – i.e. after the renewal of the Greek Catholic pastoral ministry – became an extremely urgent problem.

Table 3. Greek Catholic clergy in the western and northern parts of Poland between 1947 and 1957, broken down by year of birth (divided into diocesan clergy, monks, and nuns)

Decade of birth							
Before 1870	1870–1879	1880–1889	1890–1899	1900–1909	1910–1919	1920–1929	After 1930
Diocesan clergy							
1	3	12	19	22	8	–	–
Monks							
–	–	–	3	1	3	1	–
Nuns							
–	–	2	5	14	17	29	2

Source: Author's calculations.

The date of ordination corresponds with age. In the case of diocesan clergy, as many as 39 (60% of diocesan priests in the western lands) were ordained in the years 1920–1939 (21 in the decade 1920–1929 and 18 in the period 1930–1939), 9 (13.85%) before 1910 (3 in the years 1890–1899, 7 in the period 1900–1909), 11 (16.92%) in the years 1910–1919, and the last 6 (9.23%) in the period of World War II – the last one in 1944. The overwhelming majority of them – as many as 46 – ordained presbyterate in Przemyśl, which is also quite obvious because they were students of the Greek Catholic Seminary existing in that city. In the meantime, some of these clerics studied in Lviv, either in the local seminary or at the Faculty of Theology of the Jan Kazimierz University, but – according to

the current practice – they returned to Przemyśl to be ordained by their bishop. To this group, we could also add 2 other priests who were ordained in Stary Sambir. 10 other priests were ordained in Lviv, although 2 of them later served in the Diocese of Przemyśl, and 4 in the Apostolic Administration of the Lemko Land. Three more were ordained in Stanislaviv (including 1 for the Diocese of Przemyśl), 1 – in Vienna (also from the Diocese of Przemyśl). In the case of the last 3 clergymen it was not possible to find such information.

The young clerics were ordained, most often, by local diocesan ordinaries or their suffragans. In the case of Przemyśl (and Stary Sambir), the most were ordained by the following Bishops of Przemyśl: Bishop Julian Pelesh – one, Bishop Konstantyn Chekhovich – 10, and Bishop Jozafat Kotsylovski – 26. Auxiliary Bishop of Przemyśl Hryhoriy Lakota ordained 6 new priests. In some cases, the visiting bishops from other dioceses ordained the clerics. Out of the group of priests ordained in Przemyśl, 4 were ordained by Bishop Hryhoriy Khomyshyn from Stanislaviv, and 1 was ordained by Suffragan Bishop Yosyf Bocian of Lviv. Regarding the priests ordained in Lviv, one of them was ordained by Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytski, 1 – by his successor Metropolitan Yosyf Slipyi, 3 were ordained by the Suffragans of Lviv (2 – by Ivan Buchko and 1 – by Mykyta Budka), and 2 more were ordained by Bishop Mykola Czarnetskyi. In 3 other cases, such information could not be established. This picture is completed by 3 more priests ordained in Stanislaviv by Bishop Khomyshyn.

An issue that cannot be overlooked is the problem of celibacy, which is (generally speaking) voluntary in the Eastern Churches. For the Greek Catholic Church in the first three decades of the twentieth century, however, the question was in sharp dispute and of high importance, known later in historiography as “the war for wives”. Of the 65 priests, just over half – 36 – got married before ordination. The data on this subject is scarce, but it is known that in the decade discussed at least four were already widowers, and the marriage of one priest (from the Archdiocese of Lviv) fell apart after he was arrested by the Soviets and deported to the gulag. The remaining 27 priests were celibate and in 2 cases the relevant information could not be found.

The family situation of Greek Catholic clergy in the western and northern parts of Poland was important because most of them, taking up pastoral work in the Roman Rite, had to live separately from their families as not to “make it worse” for their Roman Catholic faithful, who were not accustomed to Catholic

priests with wives and children. In the early days, almost everyone seems to have complied with this requirement.

The question of celibacy did not, of course, concern members of congregations. Of the 6 Basilians, 3 were ordained in Przemyśl, 2 in Lviv and 1 in Lavriv. Four of them were consecrated by Bishop Kotsylovski and the other two by Bishop Budka. Father Stetsura of the Studite was ordained by the Metropolitan Shaptytski. At this moment, it is not possible to determine who consecrated the Redemptorist Fr Porodko.

While it is relatively easy to trace the beginnings of the clerical ministry of priests and monks based on either printed schematism or personal files kept in diocesan archives, access to the personal data of the nuns is difficult. This is partly related to regulations in the monasteries and houses where the sisters live, and partly related to the condition of the archives. Therefore, the information collected on this subject is unavoidably fragmented; nevertheless, it gives us a general picture.

As mentioned above, the most numerous Greek Catholic female congregation was the Servant Sisters. In total, 48 nuns stayed here during the discussed period. As many as 38 of them joined the congregation in Krystynopol in Sokal County, where the General House of the sisters was located. Eight more nuns joined the congregation after the end of the Second World War (1 in Adampol where the General House was moved from Krystynopol), 1 – in Chelm, 4 – in Warsaw. For 3 others I did not manage to establish such data. A separate case is Sister Eugenia (Maria) Łukowicz, who joined the congregation in 1945 in Stanislaviv and probably made it to Poland in the early 1950s.

It is interesting to analyse the dates of the vocation. Perhaps it is not surprising that 28 of them decided to take this step in the 1930s or 1940s (12 and 16 persons respectively). After all, this corresponds to the above-mentioned average age of nuns. However, it may be interesting that out of the last 16 nuns, as many as 10 entered the Congregations in 1943, 2 – a year earlier, and 1 a year later. Could this be proof of the otherwise normal phenomenon of an increase in religiousness during the war? Perhaps it is confirmed by similar information concerning the Josephine Sisters. Out of the 17 analysed, 1 entered the congregation in 1942, and 6 more in 1943. All of them in Tsebliv in Sokal County, where the General House of this congregation was located. It is also known that two other nuns, for whom no year of entry was established, also chose the novitiate in Tsebliv. On the other

hand, 4 Basilian Sisters had joined the Order earlier, in the 1920s (2 in Slovita in Zolochiv County, 1 in Lviv, and in 1 case such information could not be found).

Table 4. Dates of accession to the congregation/congregation of Greek Catholic sisters from western and northern Poland

Years							
Before 1899	1900–1909	1910–1919	1920–1929	1930–1939	1940–1949	After 1950	NN
Servant Sisters							
–	1	5	7	12	16	7	–
Josephine Sisters							
–	–	–	–	–	7	–	10
Basilian Sisters							
–	–	–	4	–	–	–	–

Source: Author's calculations.

As mentioned above, after the deportation of the bishops of the Przemyśl, the Greek Catholic priests received permission (and even a recommendation) for biritualism from the Vatican, (i.e. the possibility to celebrate in the Latin Rite and becoming usually vicars in Roman Catholic parishes). Out of the 65 the diocesan clergymen, a vast majority, because of as many as 51 priests (78.46%), decided to take such a step. In fact, the only priest who did not follow this path was Mirosław Ripecki from Chrzanowo. A possibility of biritualism was not available to priests Włodzimierz Borowiec and Rev. Konrad Jacków, who, after being arrested, spent most of this period in exile in the USSR and came to Poland in the first half of 1957. Three other priests – Emilian Kotys, Teodor Sereżyński, and Andrzej Złupko – were too old or ill to perform any pastoral ministry, and their activity was limited to occasional services. They all died before 1957.

Approximately 6 Greek Catholic priests did not undertake pastoral work during this period, hiding their origins and their clerical status. Out of these 6, only Jan Różycki did not return to the priesthood and his further fate is unknown. The remaining 5 in the 1960s served the Greek Catholic faithful in more or less regular ways in the so-called pastoral points already existing at that time. There is no news about the fate of the two other priests.

The fifty-one priests who took up work in Latin parishes, most often became vicars; with time, they sometimes took on the functions of administrators

or pastors (*proboszczy*). As many as 12 (23.53%) did not return to their native rite. It is difficult to establish their motives. We can only suppose that the fear – both in common sense and of their well-being – played a decisive role. After all, a permanent job in a single parish provided much greater stability than the journeys – sometimes tens of kilometres long – to the scattered Greek Catholic faithful, who were unable to provide the clergyman with a permanent living situation.

Twenty-three priests decided to return to pastoral work among Greek Catholics, but not all of them did so as soon as it became possible (i.e. in 1957). Some priests returned to their native rite only after they reached an appropriate age to retire from their Roman Catholic parishes. In the case of as many as 16 priests (31.37%) serving in the Western Rite, the question of returning to the Greek Catholic Rite did not arise at all, since these priests died before 1957.³⁴ Of the Basilians, all six served in Latin parishes and all of them returned to the Eastern Rite after 1957, although two of them did this while living abroad – Fr Soter (Stefan) Junyk in the USA and Fr Pasyv (Petro) Shevaha in Brazil. The situation was slightly different for the nuns as most of them served in Latin parishes.

The vast majority of the Greek Catholic priests and religious persons were kept under the close watch of the administrative authorities and the security apparatus.³⁵ Some were also affected by direct repression. From 1947–1949, fifteen priests from the western and northern lands were prisoners of the “Ukrainian sub-camp” in the concentration camp, officially known as the Central Jaworzno Labour Camp. In total, 22 Greek Catholic and 5 Orthodox priests were imprisoned at Jaworzno.³⁶ Four other priests were imprisoned during the period – most often on false charges of cooperation with the Ukrainian underground.

On the other hand, at least 9 priests were involved in the activities of the so-called “patriotic priests” or the state-controlled “Caritas”.³⁷ It seems, however, that most of them were rather passive members. The most active should be considered Jan Polanski, mentioned earlier, who was not only an active “patriotic priest”

³⁴ This sheds additional light on the issue of the age of the Greek Catholic clergy in the western and northern parts of Poland in the 1950s and 1960s.

³⁵ On this subject, see, among others, Igor Hałagida, „Ukraińskie duchowieństwo greckokatolickie przed stalinowskimi sądami w Polsce w latach 1944–1956 (podsumowanie dotychczasowych badań)”, *Peremyški Archijeparchalni Widomosti* 11 (2011): 257–294. Also further topic related literature there.

³⁶ This issue is presented in my book *Duchowni greckokatolicy i prawosławni w Centralnym Obozie Pracy w Jaworznie (1947–1949). Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. Igor Hałagida (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, 2012).

³⁷ “Patriotic priests” – a term referring to priests supporting the government and the changes taking place in communist-run Poland after 1944.

but also the secretary of the regional office of the politically charged “Committee for Peace Defenders”. In the 1950s, this priest publicly spoke at various meetings supporting the party and authority line, which was reported by the local press. The Roman Church authorities apparently were unhappy with his activities and he was asked to explain himself at the Curia of the Wrocław diocese. In 1964, he was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit by the state authorities.

Summary and Research Proposals

Carried out in 1947, Operation “Vistula” was intended by its organizers to speed up the assimilation processes among the Ukrainians dispersed over the western and northern areas of Poland. This was to be facilitated by draconian limitations and restrictions to which the displaced people were subjected. One of such constraints was also an actual ban on the functioning of the Greek Catholic pastoral ministry, despite the presence of 142 Greek Catholic clergy and consecrated persons (diocesan priests, monks, and nuns) in that area in the first years after the resettlement.

The analysis of these people’s biographies allows us to draw some general conclusions. First of all, it should be stated that this group of people was homogeneous in terms of nationality, with a firmly established Ukrainian self-identification. As it seems, this could have been the key element determining the fact that, despite all obstacles, most priests and monks returned to pastoral service among the faithful of their native rite. This should not be surprising and should not be reduced to pastoral issues alone. The Greek Catholic clergy have always played an important role in the extra-religious sphere of the life of the Ukrainians because a significant part of the emerging intelligentsia originated from its ranks. That is why priests not only cared about the spiritual life of their parishioners but were also often animators of local social and cultural life, setting up educational societies like “Society Prosvita”, organising various courses, or supporting the cooperative movement. We can probably risk a statement that they were “from the people” and “with the people” to a greater extent than the Latin clergy.

The situation of Greek Catholic clergy at that time was complicated by the fact that most priests were already in quite advanced age. As it seems, this could explain their decision to take up ministry in the Latin Rite. Theoretically, this should not have been too much of a problem – in the Greek Catholic seminaries the clergy had a good education, including thorough knowledge of Latin – but in

practice, some of them had considerable problems with adaptation to the new rite. Although most of the priests found placements in Roman Catholic parishes, in practice, they had to deal with difficult material conditions, most often acting as vicars at first. Their material status was of even greater importance since many of them had families – wives and children – who most often had to live separately. The issue of the functioning of married Greek Catholic clergy in the realities of the predominately Latin environment of the Polish People's Republic in the terms of clergy and believers, and where a married priest was associated with Orthodoxy and Protestantism rather than Catholicism, is an issue that awaits historical analysis. It should be emphasized, however, that – unlike the Ukrainian SSR or other countries of the Eastern Bloc – no Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest joined the Orthodox Church in Poland.

The nuns were also in a very difficult situation. They had to earn their living not only by serving in Latin parishes, but also by working in state hospitals, sanatoriums, or children's shelters. All this took place under strict regulations and the control of the security apparatus, who do not hesitate to create difficulties. The fate of the Ukrainian congregations in communist Poland should also be studied in more detail in the future. The ideal would be to study the history of the Basilian, Josephine and Servants Sisters in the form of thorough studies, although taking into consideration the specificity of these communities and the difficult access to the archives for outsiders, it appears that this can only be done by individuals from these congregations.

The information collected about Greek Catholic priests and other religious persons also gives them positive testimony in the context of submissiveness to the authorities or participation in "licensed" organizations.³⁸ Their firm stance against the authorities is another argument in support of the thesis that I already voiced on many occasions, that the Greek Catholic community in the People's Republic of Poland was a specific phenomenon, particularly against the background of the history of the Greek Catholic Church in other Eastern bloc countries. Taking into consideration the age of the clergy and consecrated persons and the situation in which they found themselves in the western and northern territories, there

³⁸ They coincide with the findings regarding the number of people broken and forced to cooperate with the repressive apparatus in various ways. This thread I analysed in another publication. See Igor Hałagida, *Działania komunistycznych organów bezpieczeństwa przeciwko duchowieństwu greckokatolickiemu w Polsce (1944–1956) (dokumenty)*, ed. Igor Hałagida (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Bazyliada”, 2012) („Bazylikańskie Studia Historyczne”, vol. 2).

existed a belief in the circles of authorities responsible for religious policy that in the near future the Greek Catholic Church will cease to exist as a separate entity. In the official correspondence, they often stated that discussion of this subject after the resettlements at the end of the 1940s was pointless and out of date. The fact that the events took a different course is largely due to the small group of priests and monks who made efforts to renew the Catholic Eastern Rite in Poland. Such priests as Hrynyk, Ripecki, Deńko, Dziubina, or Fr Puzzkarski distinguished themselves with their courage, ingenuity, and determination. Others discussed in this text also contributed to the revival of the Greek Catholic Church in Poland. It is to their credit that the Greek Catholic communities (and speaking in the national dimension – the Ukrainian minority) survived the after-deportation period in the western and northern parts of Poland until the end of communism.

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ABSTRACT

The text is an attempt to show a group portrait of Greek-Catholic clergy and consecrated persons who, after 1947, (after the “Vistula” action) found themselves in the western and northern parts of Poland. The analysis was carried out based on 142 people (diocesan priests, monks and nuns), who had to function in extremely unfavourable conditions, which in practice resulted in an actual ban on the functioning of the Greek Catholic pastoral ministry and on any religious performance by consecrated persons of the ministry among – also resettled – believers.

On the basis of archival materials from state and – above all – ecclesiastical (Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic) archives, as well as the literature on the subject, the aforementioned group was analysed in terms of age, date of ordination, entry into the monastery or congregation, or the exercise of ministry – in the absence of an alternative – in the Latin rite. The question of a return to the native spiritual habit (when it was possible) and of the involvement in structures loyal to the authorities (the state “Caritas” or “Patriotic Priests”) was also examined.

This publication is the first attempt to address the issue on such a nationwide scale.

**GRECKOKATOLICCY DUCHOWNI ORAZ OSOBY KONSEKROWANE
NA ZACHODNICH I PÓŁNOCNYCH ZIEMIACH POLSKI W LATACH 1947–1957 –
SZKIC DO PORTRETU ZBIOROWEGO**

ABSTRAKT

Tekst jest próbą ukazania zbiorowego portretu greckokatolickich osób duchownych i konsekrowanych, które po 1947 r. (tj. po akcji „Wisła”) znalazły się na zachodnich i północnych ziemiach Polski. Analizie poddano 142 postacie (kapłani diecezjalni, zakonnicy i zakonnice), którym przyszło funkcjonować w skrajnie niesprzyjających warunkach, sprowadzających się w praktyce do faktycznego zakazu funkcjonowania duszpasterstwa greckokatolickiego oraz pełnienia przez osoby konsekrowane jakiegokolwiek posługi w tym rycie wśród – także przesiedlonych – wiernych.

Na podstawie materiałów archiwalnych z archiwów państwowych oraz – przede wszystkim – kościelnych (greckokatolickich i rzymskokatolickich), a także literatury przedmiotu, przeanalizowano wspomnianą grupę m.in. pod kątem wieku, daty święceń, wstąpienia do zakonu lub zgromadzenia czy też pełnienia posługi – w warunkach braku alternatywy – w obrządku łacińskim. Nie pominięto także kwestii powrotu do rodzimego rytu duchownych (gdy już to było możliwe) oraz zaangażowania w strukturach lojalnych wobec władz (państwowy „Caritas” czy „księża patrioci”).

Publikacja jest pierwszą próbą podjęcia tytułowego zagadnienia w takiej skali.