

## Greek Catholics in Prague (1918–1950)\*

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Before the establishment of Czechoslovakia, a small community of Greek Catholics lived in Prague. Mostly they were soldiers, but after the First World War, Greek Catholic believers from the east of the republic began to move to the new metropolis and their numbers grew both in the city and in the Czech lands. Belonging to a religious denomination motivated them to associate and form a Greek Catholic parish as an official branch of the church. The small community added to the colourful mosaic of the religious and cultural life of the town. This study examines the efforts to formalize the parish and presents the involvement of local church members in religious, cultural and charitable areas. The positive development taking place between 1918 and 1938 was disrupted by political changes in the Central European area. The consequences of the rise of Nazism and Communism, which marked the lives of both priests and individual believers, are illustrated through the example of a small community. Their fates are intertwined with those of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Greek Catholic Church.

Keywords: Prague; Greek Catholic Church; Prešov eparchy; The Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Prague; Nazism; Communism.

Before the First World War, the capital of the Czechoslovak Republic was a classic provincial Central European city with a predominantly Czech population. A significant minority consisted of Germans and Jews who belonged to the most prosperous citizens of Prague. After the creation of Czechoslovakia, the initial euphoria was replaced by the reality of the post-war crisis, multiplied by the pandemic of the so-called Spanish flu. There was a lack of food and high prices and interest; unemployment, poverty and a lack of housing; and backward infrastructure – and these were just some of the many problems of the new metropolis. Their gradual solution and the systematic building of a new Prague identity as the centre of Czechoslovakia and the heart of Europe also led to an increase in the population from 676,657 people in 1921 to around one million in 1938.<sup>1</sup>

Before the creation of Czechoslovakia, a small community of Greek Catholics lived in Prague. They were mainly soldiers, but after the First World War, Greek Catholic believers from the east of the republic began to move to the new metropolis, and their number grew in the territory of the city as well as in the Czech lands more broadly. They mainly numbered workers and unpropertied peasants, coming to Prague in search

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1 SOUKUPOVÁ, *Transformace identit*, 93–98.

of work and livelihoods, but also included civil servants, university students, the already-mentioned soldiers, apprentices of various trades, domestic helpers and sick people spread out across various hospitals in the city. Their total number in the city itself had increased to 1,206 persons by 1921. They formed a marginal minority in the capital, but the support of the Roman Catholic Church (395,119 persons) opened up space for them to associate and build an active community.<sup>2</sup> The Church of St John of Nepomuk at Skalka became a place of meeting and religious life for them. Believers of Ukrainian nationality mostly came here. Military chaplain Michal Kuškivč performed the religious services. The Holy See established a mission for emigrants from Russia in Prague with the vision of contributing to the unification of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. The priests Gleb Verchovskii, then Trofim Semjacki and finally Teodor Strotmann worked in the service of the mission. Their services were mainly used by Ruthenian Greek Catholics<sup>3</sup> from the territory of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia. In 1923, the Prague Archbishopric gave them the Church of St Cross at Na Příkopě. Both places were officially administered by the Roman Catholic Church, and according to further developments, the two communities connected the Greek Catholics. Since they were not official parishes, register records had to be kept in the registers of existing Roman Catholic parishes. Baptisms of Ukrainian Greek Catholics from the Church of St Ján Nepomuk were registered in the register of the parish office at the Holy Trinity in Prague – Podskalí, and baptisms from the church of St Cross in the register of the parish office near St Jidřich in Prague II.<sup>4</sup>

The Greek Catholics formed a small community of two different traditions. The Ukrainian one was based on the Brest-Litovsk Union (1596) and belonging to the Ukrainian nationality played a key role in it. On the other hand, the second group consisted of ethnically mixed Greek Catholics, whose origin was based on the Union of Uzhgorod (1646). Ukrainians had been more present in the city for a longer time, and the community of Greek Catholics from the territory of the Prešov and Mukachevo eparchy began actively only after the situation in Czechoslovakia had stabilized and then the community became dominant. The fact that the two communities later merged into one did not mean that their different characteristics disappeared. They persisted, but nevertheless sought to establish an official parish with the right to keep registers and own a church, living quarters and an office for a priest. They were significantly helped by the Apostolate of St Cyril and Methodius represented by Prof. František Pěchuška. The need for and importance of establishing a parish grew with the increasing number of believers in Prague and in the Czech lands. In 1921, 9,264 people joined the Greek Catholic Church in this area, and in 1930, their number rose to 12,149 believers.<sup>5</sup> The low social status of Greek Catholics created a potential threat of their leaning towards the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the loss of Greek Catholic identity. This was one of the most serious motives for the bishops and the intellectual elite of the Greek Catholic Church trying to establish a parish. At the same time, the Apostolate of St Cyril and Methodius financially supported Greek Catholics thanks to voluntary

2 *Sčítání lidu v republice Československé ze dne 15. února 1921*, 86.

3 Rutheni – the term encompassing Greek Catholics of various nationalities (Ruthenians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles) from the territory of former Hungary.

4 Národní archiv (hereinafter NA) Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

5 *Sčítání lidu v republice Československé ze dne 15. února 1921*, 84; *Sčítání lidu v republice Československé ze dne 1. prosince 1930*, 51.

donors and covered the costs of operating the church and the living of the priest until the official establishment of the parish in 1933.<sup>6</sup>

The initiative to establish a Greek Catholic parish came from Greek Catholics in Prague and was directly supported by both Greek Catholic eparchies in Czechoslovakia as well as the Prague Archbishopric. Official requests were sent out in 1926. In March, Prešov administrator Dionýz Njarady submitted a request for the systematization of the parish in Prague to the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Prague. At the same time, the Archbishop of Prague submitted to the Holy See application no. 2355/8. III/1926 for the establishment of a Greek Catholic parish for Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia in Prague. Jurisdictionally, it should have belonged to the Bishopric of Prešov, as the nearest Greek Catholic bishopric in Czechoslovakia. The Congregation for the Eastern Churches agreed to this solution on 26 April 1926.<sup>7</sup>

However, the parish was not officially established due to problems with the Church of St Cross. The solution was found a few years later, thanks to the decision of the Archbishop of Prague, František Kordáč, who on 12 February 1931 donated the Church of St Kliment on Karlová Street for use in perpetuity. In its vicinity, through further negotiations, it was possible to obtain from the administration of state buildings premises for the accommodation of a priest and the parish office in Klementín. After that, nothing stood in the way of a parish for Greek Catholics being established in Prague. The Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment decided on 16 December 1933 under number 146.315/33-6/I to systematize the Greek Catholic parish in Prague. Based on this official act, all Greek Catholics in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia belonged to the Prague Greek Catholic parish not only before the Church, but also before the state. The parish received the right to keep registers in September 1934. Simultaneously, the ministry issued state approval to change the boundaries of the Prešov eparchy and extend it to the territory subject to the parish in Prague. This meant that in addition to most of the territory of Slovakia, Greek Catholics in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia also came under the administration of the Eparchy of Prešov.<sup>8</sup> The jurisdiction of the Eparchy of Prešov over this territory was officially confirmed by the Congregation for Eastern Churches and the parish was entrusted to the care of Bishop Pavel Gojdič. From September 1934, the Prague parish received the right to keep registers, which were valid even before the state. The first pastor of the newly created parish was Vasil Hopko, active in Prague since 1929; he was ceremonially inaugurated by Ján Kokinčák, Gojdič's delegated director of the bishop's office.<sup>9</sup>

### Religious and cultural life of the parish before 1938

The mission for Greek Catholics at both the churches of St John of Nepomuk and St Cross was later narrowed down to only one place in the Church of St Cross. However, its mentality and traditions were alien to the majority representation of believers from eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia. For this reason, they asked to send "their priest". Bishop Dionýz Njarady sent Emil Mydlík from Košice to Prague in 1926. Njarady entrusted him with continuing the organization of the Prague parish, but Mydlík had to

6 Archív Gréckokatolíckeho arcibiskupstva Prešov (hereinafter AGAP), fund Bežná agenda (hereinafter BA), 1928, sign. 2000.

7 AGAP, fund Prezidiálne spisy (hereinafter PS), 1931, sign. 13.

8 AGAP, fund BA, 1939, sign. 1226; NA Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

9 BORZA, *Blahoslavený Vasil Hopko*, 41–42.

struggle with unforeseen problems and trials right from the beginning. He persisted in the pastoral work until 1929, when he was succeeded by the new priest, Vasil' Hopko, who finally achieved the establishment of the parish.<sup>10</sup>

The spiritual and cultural life of the officially created parish developed on several levels. In addition to liturgical life in the temple of St Kliment, under the leadership of Hopko, associations whose activities focused on specific groups of the population successfully participated in the life of the parish. Hopko's approach to the faithful was innovative in several respects. This was probably due to the fact that he started his doctoral studies at the Faculty of Theology of Charles University. He especially dealt with moral and pastoral theology. During his studies, he became friends with his pastoral theology teacher Jozef Beran, later Archbishop of Prague. Jozef Beran used to come to the Greek Catholic parish for cultural events and religious services led by Hopko.<sup>11</sup>

He founded the Association of Greek Catholic Youth so that young people would not lose themselves morally and nationally. He reported on the work of the association to Bishop Gojdič on 24 December 1934 as follows:

What is our success so far? Although not great, but always such that it is a religious success. If possible, they participate in the Divine Liturgy. After all, it is difficult for many, because the masters do not allow them. More often, they come to evening prayers. When there were no youth, there was no one at the Sunday evening prayers, but now there are always up to 20–30 young people. At least around the Pascha holidays, the boys, living in terrible atheistic conditions, go to confession. Every Sunday they gather to listen to religious lessons from the undersigned priest (the current chairman). They minister in the church, and the priest always has a young force at hand, which he can use, here when carrying flags in the procession, there as assistant organizers at soirées. True, more religious spirit is needed, but in today's conditions this is difficult to achieve. On the other hand, it is also good that they hear God's word and that it remains in them somehow.<sup>12</sup>

He founded the Greek Catholic Youth Association in 1933 as part of the Catholic Youth Association, but entrusted its leadership to Štefan Rosoch. In 1934, it was personally led by Hopko, then from 1936 Ivan Bilák became the chairman, followed by Michal Varičín, and then Andrej Novák from 1938 until the ban on activity in 1940. The formal restoration took place after the end of the Second World War in 1946, but in reality the association did not operate due to a lack of members in the parish, until it was finally abolished by the communist regime in 1950.<sup>13</sup>

When observing the activities and organizing the association, Gojdič was interested in the involvement of lay people who could participate to a significant extent in the life of the parish. The association uniting the youth organized joint nature walks, rehearsals for theatre performances (2–3 theatre performances per year) and Christian dance entertainment, as well as lectures on law, medicine and the like, which were

10 *Zastavenie nad históriou*, 2–3; POTAŠ, *Dar lásky*, 103.

11 AGAP, fund PS, 1947, sign. 32.

12 AGAP, fund BA, 1934, sign. 5149.

13 Archív hlavného mesta (hereinafter AHM) Praha, fund MHMP II. – Spolkový kataster, sign. SK XXII/2062.

prepared by students in the respective fields. When it was founded, Hopko had in mind the spiritual well-being of young Greek Catholics and wanted to prevent their mass leaning towards communist organizations, which were trying to use the economic crisis to win over poor youth to their side.<sup>14</sup>

The oldest association operating in the territory of the parish was the Association of St Basil the Great to support the establishment and maintenance of the Greek Catholic parish in Prague, which was established in 1930 with Vasil' Hopko becoming its chairman. Members of the committee, who were prominent Greek Catholics living in Prague, participated in the management of the association. In addition to Hopko, the committee consisted of the architect Petr Fleňko, Vasil' Bora, MUC. Štefan Antalovský, Dr Ivan Párkányi, Dr Jaroslav Bojčuk, Ivan Holub, Pavel Koflanovič, Štefan Stankaninec, Štefan Roman and Ing. Roman Karatnický. They wanted to achieve the creation of the parish with the help of conversations with state and church authorities, member contributions, donations and state support. The statute of the company was confirmed by Bishop Gojdič on 24 April 1930 in Prešov and on 12 August 1930 by the Land Office in Prague.<sup>15</sup>

The activity of the association was mainly focused on achieving the establishment of a parish, but the members of the association helped in organizing various charitable events aimed at poor Greek Catholics, both during the tenures of Hopko and his successor Ján Čisárik, until the breakup of Czechoslovakia, when the activities of the associations were terminated in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1930s, Prague became a place where residents of the eastern part of Czechoslovakia stayed only temporarily on their way to work abroad. To support these emigrants, the Society of St Rafael was established, whose spiritual father was Hopko. Members of the association helped emigrants to arrange visas and other necessary things for their travels. The emigrants mostly went to Argentina, Canada and the USA for work, and some members of the association accompanied them to the destination of their journey, where they served as interpreters. In this way, new parishes were also created far from the native region. Hopko went to the emigration station in Libni every Saturday and administered the sacraments to them. Since Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenians were among the emigrants, he preached alternately in all three languages. Through the Society of St Rafael, he maintained contacts with believers even after their resettlement abroad.<sup>17</sup> As part of the association, he visited Czech and Slovak emigrants in France (Bordeaux) and had missions for Czechs in Volhynia (Luck, Dubno, Rovno, Zdolbunow, Sienskewiczewka, etc.) and also for Czechs and Slovaks in Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup>

He showed his charitable feelings by organizing charity evenings and lunches for the poor. Every year on 6 January, he prepared a Christmas dinner for approximately one hundred poor Greek Catholics of Ruthenian and Slovak nationality. At Easter, he organized a lunch for a similar number of poor people. Initially, Bishop Gojdič helped finance these activities, but later Hopko also applied for the support of state authorities.<sup>19</sup> When the Ministry of Social Welfare secured premises for beggars, he

14 AGAP, fund BA, 1934, sign. 5149.

15 AHM Praha, fund MHMP II. – Spolkový kataster, sign. I/90.

16 AHM Praha, fund MHMP I. – Presidium rady a magistrátu hlavního města Prahy, sign. 39/48.

17 *Preosviaščenj Vladyka*, 7.

18 AGAP, without sign., *Vlastný životopis napísaný biskupom Hopkom* 03. 4. 1945.

19 NA Praha, fund PP 1931–1940, box 783, sign. 42/H-55/5.

arranged access to them so that they could fulfil their Christian obligations. Thanks to his benevolence, many homeless people received free tickets for lunch and overnight stays. He helped a large number of the poor to find work in the city, and thus a livelihood. He also carefully attended to the spiritual needs of the faithful, whom he visited personally as needed and thus built mutual relations towards the faithful as well as between them, thus succeeding in creating a functioning parish community.<sup>20</sup>

In 1938, the Prague parish priest Ján Čisárik, also the chairman of the Association of St Basil the Great, in a request for financial assistance from the mayor of Prague, stated that in previous years, through financial donations, the parish had been able to organize a generous Christmas dinner for the poorest parishioners and distribute gifts to over three hundred people. This involved warm clothes and shoes. On a similar scale, the association organized an Easter lunch.<sup>21</sup>

Echoes of Hopko's work in Prague were also heard in Slovakia in the report of a police agent from Prague, who described the activities of the first parish priest:

He was known here as a great benefactor and in his generosity gave small sums of money to everyone who came to him for some kind of support. So it happened that he had many such beggar believers and gave them a lot of his salary, so that his mother, who takes a pension from her husband, also a Greek Catholic priest, sometimes had to support him from her own money. He enjoyed a very good reputation here, and nothing is known about any of his public political activities, nor was it found that he worked for the independence of Subcarpathian Rus and the territory of eastern Slovakia, namely that he promoted efforts in the local association of Greek Catholic youth.<sup>22</sup>

Hopko excelled in charity work and devoted himself to the youth, in whom the communists were intensely interested. He sought their national awareness, but not chauvinism, which he was an enemy of. It was precisely because of Ukrainian nationalism that in 1934 he asked for a chaplain of Ukrainian nationality and at the same time offered his position, if it would be for the benefit of the faithful.<sup>23</sup> On this topic, he had previously published an article named "The Faith and Nationality" in the magazine *Dušpastýr*, where he described chauvinism and nationalism as the main enemies of Christian love and mutual understanding between Greek Catholics.<sup>24</sup>

### **The crisis in 1938 and the Greek Catholics in the protectorate**

In 1936, Ján Čisárik became Vasil' Hopko's successor. Before being appointed to Prague, he worked in the village of Jarabina in eastern Slovakia. Acceptance of the decree meant that he and his family fundamentally changed their way of life. Farming and animal husbandry was also a source of security for the priest and his family in the village parish. Therefore, before leaving for Prague, he had to sell off livestock, crops and agricultural tools, thereby giving up the farm he had worked hard to build. It was certainly not easy, and the autumn crisis in Czechoslovakia hit Čisárik and his family

20 J. E. novovymenovaný pomocný biskup, 3.

21 AHM Praha, fund MHMP I. – Presidium rady a magistrátu hlavného mesta Prahy, sign. 39/48.

22 NA Praha, fund PP 1931–1940, box 783, sign. 42/H-55/96.

23 AGAP, fund BA, 1934, sign. 4830.

24 HOPKO, *Vyra i narodnost*, 187–191.



all the more seriously when, after two years of working in Prague, he had to deal with new conditions in the society.<sup>25</sup>

After his arrival in Prague, he continued the activities of his predecessor and supported associational and charitable activities. From 1937, he also had Chaplain Juraj Böör at his disposal. The situation changed in the fall of 1938, when the chaplain left Prague for Uzhgorodin Hungary on 12 November, shortly after the Vienna Arbitration.<sup>26</sup> Čisárik remained alone in the parish and saw the solution in the eventual arrival of the Czech Redemptorist, Greek Catholic František Nekula from Michalovce. However, the provincial of the Redemptorists did not agree with this. From November to Christmas, the beneficial Dominican Mikuláš Lexman was in the parish, but he too had to leave Prague and went to Hungary. In the course of the following months, many Greek Catholic believers from the territory of ceded Hungary had to leave Prague, and their number multiplied in March 1939. The personnel issue of the auxiliary priest remained unresolved, and in 1939, the parish priest of Prague, who was domiciled in Slovakia, found himself in a difficult situation. On 20 March, he informed the Bishop of Prešov about his position and the state of the parish. According to him, due to the breakup of the republic and the creation of the Slovak state, as well as the loss of Subcarpathian Rus, the view of the Czechs on the Greek Catholics changed. Ukrainian Greek Catholics, despite the difficult situation, still did not accept Čisárik as their clergyman. At the same time, in Prague, he perceived hatred towards everything that came from Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus. He served the Sunday service in an empty church. In view of that, he was worried about the existence of the parish and about his future. One of his requests to the bishop was that, after returning to Slovakia, he could join a parish in the city, since he had left the difficultly built agricultural background in Jarabina.<sup>27</sup>

The situation of the Prague parish worsened day by day. On 24 March, Čisárik wrote from Prague about the departure of other compatriots and young people and also about the difficult state of two grammar schools, namely the Ukrainian Grammar School and the Russian Grammar School, where the youth from Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia studied.<sup>28</sup> Bishop Gojdič tried to preserve the parish, so he maintained intensive contact with the Prague parish priest. He asked him to stay in place and wait for a new disposition for Slovakia. He immediately answered his letters and tried to find a solution with the Archbishop of Prague. In one of them, he expected the parish to be empty until the day when he would confer the sacrament of priesthood on Jakub Hradil, a fifth-year student of the Theological Academy in Prešov, who was born in Moravia and had a home affiliation in the protectorate. For the given time, Bishop Gojdič approached Alfonso Mitnacht, an Augustinian living in Prague, who knew the Eastern rite and was willing to take over the administration of the parish.<sup>29</sup>

After leaving Prague, Ján Čisárik was first supposed to administer the parish of Medzilaborce, where he helped for a short time during May and June, but since the situation there was extremely difficult, he accepted assignment to the parish of Dúrdoš.<sup>30</sup> Vasil' Lár, who emigrated from the occupied Subcarpathian Russia, where

25 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, 1939, sign. 500-1096.

26 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, 1939, sign. 1-499.

27 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, 1939, sign. 500-1096.

28 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, 1939, sign. 500-1096.

29 NA Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

30 BABJAK, *Zostali verní*, 51.

he worked as the director of the Greek Catholic teacher's institute in Sevl'uš, took over the administration of the parish in Prague from 1 June. Despite his lack of citizenship, the regional office only accepted his appointment on 28 November, with the condition that the issue of citizenship remained open. Finally, Vasil' Lár was granted citizenship of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 30 April 1942.<sup>31</sup> From 1 August 1939, the novice priest Jakub Hradil worked with him in Prague as a chaplain. Thus, the parish was staffed again.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to personnel changes in the place of parish priest and chaplain, the consequences of the crisis in 1938 and the breakup of Czechoslovakia were manifested in several areas of the religious, cultural and economic life of the parish. Already at Christmas, which the parish celebrated according to the Julian calendar in January 1939, the annual common charity dinner for the poor did not take place. The Society of St Basil the Great, who provided this charity event, addressed various donors, but the members of the association decided to buy warm shoes or necessary things for the poorest from the donations received. The main reason was the fear of a possible scandal that could be caused by nationalists, since the parish dinner was attended by believers of several nationalities. Therefore, it was more acceptable that one dinner was organized by the Ukrainian Assembly for Ukrainians and another by the Youth Association for Greek Catholics. According to his own words, the Prague parish priest preferred to attend two dinners rather than be responsible for any provocations at one, organized by the parish for all.<sup>33</sup>

Another consequence of the new state legal arrangement in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was the abolition of associations operating on parish land. Rich cultural and educational activities came to a complete halt. The life of the parish was reduced to only religious ceremonies and services in the Church of St Clement. The Society of St Basil the Great to support the parish ceased to exist on 30 June 1939, according to government decree no. 97 dated 31 March 1939.<sup>34</sup> The termination also affected the Association of Greek Catholic Youth. They tried to reactivate it in 1940, but were unsuccessful, and on 9 May 1940, the termination of its activity was confirmed by the Police Headquarters in Prague. The property of the associations was liquidated in accordance with the regulation in question, but in reality the associations owned only a minimum of funds, which at the same time testifies to the poverty of its members as well as to the usefulness of the associations for the life of the parish.<sup>35</sup> The Greek Catholic youth proved its viability when it renewed the activities of the association after the end of the war, but due to the lack of members, the renewal was only formal. The communist regime established in Czechoslovakia after 1948 put an ultimate end to the union work.<sup>36</sup>

The breakup of Czechoslovakia also disrupted the financing in motion of the parish. The intermediate link in the relationship between the parish and the state was the Bishopric of Prešov, but after the dissolution of the common state, the Archbishopric

31 *Schematismus venerabilis cleri graeci* (1944), p. 142; NA Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

32 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, year 1939, sign. 1-499.

33 AGAP, fund BA, no. 455, year 1939, sign. 1-499.

34 AHM Praha, fund MHMP II. – Spolkový kataster, sign. I/90.

35 AHM Praha, fund MHMP II. – Spolkový kataster, sign. XXII/2062.

36 AHM Praha, fund MHMP II. – Spolkový kataster, sign. XXII/2062.



of Prague took over this role. It was about congrual (salary) matters, but also regular financial support to maintain the parish. Support was sent annually by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in the amount of 8,000 crowns. The parish did not receive this financial subsidy in 1939, but thanks to the Prague Archbishopric, it was possible to resume the sending of support in the same amount from 1940. This improved the economic situation somewhat and the parish could develop its religious activities in a limited mode.<sup>37</sup>

The arrival of the new parish priest Vasil' Lár in Prague from occupied Subcarpathian Russia documents another consequence of the events after the breakup of the republic, which was the voluntary or involuntary transfer of the inhabitants of the former Czechoslovakia. The move affected the life of the Greek Catholic Church and also had an impact on the parish in Prague. Among the prominent refugees from the territory of Subcarpathian Russia was the Greek Catholic priest Augustín Vološin, the chairman of the autonomous government of Carpathian Ukraine and its president for several days. He came to Prague in 1939 along with others via Romania, and thanks to the favour of the Nazis he was able to settle in the protectorate. He lived in Prague as a private person and worked as a professor of pedagogy and psychology at the Ukrainian Free University financed by the resources of the Prague Gestapo. He was its last rector in 1944 and 1945.<sup>38</sup> Naturally, he was not indifferent to the Greek Catholic parish; on the contrary, he showed his priestly affiliation. He belonged to the personalities of political life who stood at its birth. In the 1920s, he was a member of the National Assembly and was personally involved in the establishment of parishes. Despite the political activity on the territory of Carpathian Ukraine, with which Bishop Alexander Stojka did not completely identify, Vološin remained loyal to the bishop. This is also evidenced by his request to the bishop. In it, he informed the bishop about his presence in Prague and asked for the possibility of setting up a chapel in his apartment. He justified it by the great distance from the temple, at the same time requesting the issue of a celebret.<sup>39</sup> The bishop agreed and they remained in written contact in the following period as well.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Vološin regularly financially supported the parish in Prague. In the income statement for the year 1941, we can see his financial contributions worth 500 crowns, which he donated to the parish in January, March and July. The financial donation provided by him significantly helped the parish in a difficult situation when its income decreased due to the departure of the faithful.<sup>40</sup> Despite the danger, Vološin remained in Prague until the arrival of the Red Army. On 15 May 1945, he was arrested by SMERŠ members and deported to Moscow. There he was brutally interrogated and imprisoned in the NKVD prison in Lefortovo. He died on 19 July 1945 as a result of ill treatment.<sup>41</sup>

During the period of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the Greek Catholic parish in Prague was focused on maintaining the basic elements of religious life. Based on the available archival sources and the literature published so far, the state authorities paid only the necessary attention to it and more or less did not interfere in the life of the parish, except for the already mentioned facts, which resulted from the observance of general regulations and laws issued in the protectorate. On the other

37 NA Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

38 POP, *Podkarpatská Rus*, 267–270.

39 Deržavnyj archiv Zakarpatskoj oblasti Užhorod, branch Berehovo, fund 151, o. 24.

40 NA Praha, fund Arcibiskupství Pražské IV Řeckokatolíci Praha, Brno.

41 POP, *Podkarpatská Rus*, 270.

hand, on the example of the fate of priests working in the parish, believers and financial affairs, we can observe the concrete consequences of geopolitical changes in Central Europe as well as the negative growth of nationalism. Observing these consequences in the micro-space of the parish provides valuable material on the behaviour of both individuals and society in times of crisis. The end of World War II and the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic brought new hope for the Greek Catholic parish in Prague. Jakub Hradil took over the administration of the parish in 1944 until 30 November 1945, when the Bishop of Prešov, Gojdič, entrusted the parish to the Order of St Basil the Great, while Pankratij Pavel Hučko OSBM became the administrator of the parish and Jakub Hradil became the first parish priest of the newly established parish in Brno.<sup>42</sup>

### In the restored Czechoslovakia

The Greek Catholic Church was in a difficult material and personnel situation in the restored Czechoslovakia. One hundred out of 241 parishes recorded the loss of believers' lives, destroyed, damaged or looted churches, parish buildings or residents' houses or the destruction of movable property. The murders of civilians took place in the Greek Catholic villages of Tokajík and Telgárt.<sup>43</sup> The aforementioned losses, but especially the open resistance of the bishop, priests and believers to the regime of the Slovak state, as well as the participation of believers in the anti-fascist resistance, brought the Greek Catholic Church a positive image among the population and the political representation of the restored Czechoslovakia. However, the picture soon changed from positive to negative, and an external factor played an important role in this, as relations between the Soviet Union and the Vatican became more strained.<sup>44</sup> In 1946, the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia was removed from the Serbian Patriarchate and subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate. In the following year, members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (hereinafter UPA) tried to move through the territory of Czechoslovakia, and since there were many Greek Catholics among them, the communists took advantage of this and identified the Greek Catholics with the people of Bandera. The accusation became part of a targeted discrediting campaign against the Church, and the disgraced Greek Catholic Church was not entitled to continue its activities. In a short time, its connection with the Orthodox Church was planned according to the model implemented in the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup>

Greek Catholics in Prague witnessed the first attack of the State Security (hereinafter ŠtB) against their church. On 13 March 1947, the ŠtB conducted a house search at the Greek Catholic parish in Prague. It confiscated suspicious correspondence and arrested the parish priest Basilian Pankratij Pavel Hučko, who allegedly, in cooperation with other people, had produced false personal documents for refugees, who had then remained to work in Czechoslovakia or participated in the transfer of refugees to the West. The investigation suddenly extended to Bishop Gojdič and the Superior of the Basilians, Štefan Sebastián Sabol, who unsuccessfully intervened in favour of the Prague priest. Warned by a judge of the Supreme Court in Prague, he emigrated to Rome and later worked in the USA. Abroad, he published a book about the tragedy of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, where he also described in detail the course of the search

42 *Schematismus venerabilis cleri dioecesis Fragopolitanaeseu* (1948), pp. 146–147; POTAŠ, *Dar lásky*, 104–105.

43 *Schematismus venerabilis cleri dioecesis Fragopolitanaeseu* (1948); BORZA, *Dejiny Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi*, 136.

44 HALAGIDA, *Między Moskwą, Warszawą i Watykanem*, 121–126

45 PEŠEK – BARNOVSKÝ, *Pod kuratelov moci*, 14, 20; MANDŽÁK – BORZA, *Obvinenie zo spolupráce s UPA*, 153–154.

of the rectory, sacristy and church. He drew attention to the planting of leaflets and a cyclostyle machine by the ŠtB, thus pointing out the manipulation with the aim of proving a fabricated accusation. He saw the activity of the Soviet authorities behind the whole action, since during the effort to release Hučko, he received a reply that the Soviet ambassador Valerián Alexandrovič Zorin insisted on his arrest.<sup>46</sup>

On 18 December 1948, Pankratij Pavol Hučko was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Newspapers reported on the Bandera trial and associated Bishop Gojdič with the Bandera people. The discrediting campaign was in full swing and despite the effort, the bishop's opinion was not published in the newspaper. In it, the bishop explained the situation, and from its content we can also see what was going on among the Greek Catholics in Prague after the Second World War. Similarly to in 1918, but now several times greater in number, many Greek Catholics from the east of the republic and from the territories of the former Galicia (Halíč) and Poland came to the city and to the territory of the Czech lands. The reason was the behaviour of the Red Army and the annexation of Subcarpathian Russia and western Ukraine with the city of Lviv to the Soviet Union. Greek Catholic clergy with their families, monks and nuns, and others among the faithful found themselves in Prague. After registering, several were placed as parish priests or worked in the health sector, but many continued their journey to the West after a stay of several months. For priests and monks, Bishop Gojdič secured permits for clerical service in his territory and granted powers to confess and administer other sacraments. For practical reasons, so that they would not have to travel across the whole republic from Prague to Prešov, he entrusted the Prague parish priest with issuing the relevant permits on official forms, which he signed and confirmed in advance. Authorized clergy could work among the faithful, who were in large numbers in Prague and its surroundings.<sup>47</sup>

According to church records, 68,400 Greek Catholics lived in the parishes of Prague and Brno in 1948,<sup>48</sup> covering the territory of Bohemia and Moravia, but as of 1 March 1950, 32,865 believers were officially registered in the population census.<sup>49</sup> The decrease could have been caused by emigration and also by the fear caused by the communist anti-church campaign. The arrest of the priest Pankratij Pavel Hučko did not paralyze the parish, but it certainly did disrupt the consolidation process after the restoration of Czechoslovakia. The situation was very difficult. Shortly after his arrest, Basilian Emanuel Michal Hlaváč took charge of the parish, who led it to the violent liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia and shortly after its restoration in 1968–1969, when Ivan Ljavinec took his place.

### Conclusion

After the creation of Czechoslovakia, Prague formed an environment where Greek Catholics from eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia came to improve their lives. From a small community consisting of believers of two traditions, a viable community supported by the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Prague was created. The Archbishop of Prague donated the Church of St Kliment in the centre of Prague, and in Klementín the parish could rent a parish apartment with an office from Charles University. Both

46 SABOL, *Holhota hrekokatolíčskej cirkvi*, 48, 87–95.

47 AGAP, fund PS, no. 82, year 1949, sign. 5.

48 *Schematismus venerabilis cleri dioecesis Fragopolitanaeseu* (1948), p. 148.

49 BORZA, *Na pomedzí Východu a Západu*, 51.

the church and the parish apartment became places of community building and this was reflected in the rich religious, social and cultural life. Theatre shows and lectures organized by students, as well as Christmas and Easter charity dinners for three hundred or more poor people, became well-known. The diverse ecclesiastical life of the Greek Catholics was disrupted by the political crisis of the fall of 1938. It affected their lives and significantly limited the activities of the parish community.

After the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the activity of the parish in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was initially characterized by the solving of personnel and economic problems. Similarly to in the founding, the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Prague played an important role, as it ensured the contact of the parish with state authorities. After the staffing of the parish priest and chaplain was resolved, the activity of the parish was considerably narrowed down compared to in the previous period. Association activity ceased and charitable work was reduced to a minimum. The life of the parish was concentrated only in the religious area. Despite the restrictive measures in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the spiritual administration of the Greek Catholics developed to such an extent that after the end of the Second World War and the increase in the number of immigrated believers, another parish was founded in Brno at the end of 1945.

The positive atmosphere of society towards the Greek Catholic Church changed sharply under the influence of the Soviet Union and the anti-church policy of the incoming communist regime. Greek Catholics in Prague witnessed the first attack against their church when the ŠtB searched the parish premises, arrested the priest and accused him of collaborating with the people of Bandera. In the coming period, the accusation was generalized to Greek Catholics and used in an anti-church campaign, which resulted in the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in 1950.

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