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LIKwidACJA KOŚCIOŁA KATOLICKIEGO OBRZĄDKU WSCHODNIEGO W POŁUDNIOWO-ZACHODNICH GUBERNIACH CESARSTWA ROSYJSKIEGO ZA PANOWANIA CESARZA MIKOŁAJA I (LATA 30. XIX WIEKU)

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF THE EASTERN RITE IN THE SOUTH-WESTERN GOVERNORATES OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE DURING THE REIGN OF EMPEROR NICHOLAS I (1830s)¹

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia politykę władz rosyjskich zmierzającą do ograniczenia pola działania Kościoła katolickiego obrządku wschodniego (dawniej greckounickiego czy unickiego) i jego stopniowej likwidacji w latach 30. XIX wieku, a także pokazuje przygotowanie „aktu ponownego zjednoczenia” w 1839 roku. Jak wiadomo, w latach 1794–1796 trwał intensywny proces „przyłączania” unitów do Cerkwi prawosławnej. Okres od 1797 roku do połowy lat 20. XIX wieku charakteryzuje się osłabieniem presji władz na Kościół katolickiego obrządku wschodniego. W drugiej połowie lat 20. XIX wieku władze rosyjskie zaostrzyły swoją politykę wobec Kościoła katolickiego obrządku wschodniego i zaczęły przygotowywać grunt pod jego ostateczne zjednoczenie z Cerkwią prawosławną. W proces likwidacji Kościoła katolickiego obrządku wschodniego zaangażowani byli także hierarchowie unicy. Szczególną rolę odegrał biskup litewski Józef Siemaszko. Z pomocą biskupa białoruskiego Wasilija Łużyńskiego i biskupa brzeskiego, wikariusza diecezji litewskiej Antoniego Zubko zwołał on w 1839 roku w Połocku synod biskupów i kleru unickiego, na którym podjęto decyzję „ponownie zjednoczyć” Kościół katolickiego obrządku wschodniego z Cerkwią prawosławną.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościół katolickiego obrządku wschodniego (greckounicki), Cerkiew prawosławna, biskup, duchowieństwo, „akt ponownego zjednoczenia”, synod

¹ The original article: *Ликвидация Греко-униатской церкви в юго-западных губерниях Российской империи во времена правления императора Николая I (30-е гг. XIX в.).*

Abstract

The article outlines the Russian government's policy of limiting the field of action of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church (formerly Greek Orthodox or Uniate) and its gradual liquidation in the 1830s, and shows the preparation of the "act of reunification" in 1839. As is well known, in 1794–1796 there was an intensive process of "joining" the Uniates to the Orthodox Church. The period from 1797 to the mid-1920s is characterized by a weakening of government pressure on the Eastern Rite Catholic Church. In the second half of the 1820s, the Russian authorities tightened their policy toward the Eastern Rite Catholic Church and began to prepare the ground for its eventual unification with the Orthodox Church. The Uniate hierarchs were also involved in the process of liquidating the Eastern Rite Catholic Church. A special role was played by Lithuanian Bishop Józef Siemaszko. With the help of Belarusian Bishop Wasilij Łużyński and the Bishop of Brest, Vicar of the Diocese of Lithuania Antoni Zubko convened a synod of Uniate bishops and clergy in Polotsk (Połock) in 1839, at which it was decided to "reunite" the Eastern Rite Catholic Church with the Orthodox Church.

Keywords: Eastern Rite Catholic Church (Greek Orthodox), Orthodox Church, bishop, clergy, "act of reunion", synod

Introduction

The Council of Brest in 1596 marked a significant milestone in the history of the Church, as its outcome led to the establishment of a new Greek Uniate rite within the Catholic Church. In the Ukrainian lands, the union survived for over two centuries. The process of joining the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite (formerly Uniate or Greek Uniate) to the Orthodox Church on the right-bank Ukraine began at the end of the 18th century, when these lands, as part of other lands, became part of the Russian Empire as part of the Third Partition of the Republic of Poland and lasted until the end of the 18th century. 1830s.

After the massive attack of Catherine II on the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite, changes in the religious policy of the Russian authorities were outlined. The ecclesiastical policy of the emperors Paul I and Alexander I was characterized by liberalism. The attitude of the official secular and clerical authorities of the Russian Empire towards the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite changed in the second half of the 1820s, during the reign of Emperor Nicholas I, when preparations for the final liquidation of the union began. Contradictions and conflicts between the white Uniate clergy and the Basilian order were used for this purpose. An important role in the final phase of the liquidation of the union was played by the Greek Uniate clergy, especially its superiors.

1. The Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite in the 1820s

To convey the idea that the effort to convert the Uniates to Orthodoxy originated from within the Uniate clergy, it was crucial to secure the endorsement of the hierarchs of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite. The government found such support in the person of a member of the Greek Uniate department of the Roman Catholic Theological College, the cathedral archpriest Józef Siemaszko, who leaned towards Russian Orthodoxy.

Józef Siemaszko was born on December 25, 1798 in Stary Pawłówek (Lipovetsky district) in a noble family of the Syrokomla coat of arms, he was the son of Józef (1776–1856), first engaged in agriculture and trade, and from 1811 a Uniate priest, and Tekla née Iwanowski (1778 –1858). He received his basic education from a local official, then in the years 1809-1816 he continued his education at the Hajsyn-Braclaw School in Niemirów and at the Latin-Uniate Main Seminary in Vilnius, which he graduated on June 23, 1820 with the degree of Master of Theology².

After returning to the seat of bishop Jakub Martusewicz in Żydaczów near Lutsk (Łuck), J. Siemaszko was appointed prefect of seminarians and ordained a priest as a celeb on December 28, 1821 (with the metropolitan dispensation needed due to his too young age). Almost immediately, he became an assessor, from January 7, 1822, a proto-presbyter in the Lutsk Consistory, and from June 20, 1822, a delegate to the 2nd Department (Uniate) in the St. Petersburg Theological College. The nomination was ensured by his good knowledge of the Russian language, which was uncommon among the Uniate clergy at that time. In St. Petersburg, Siemaszko quickly gained considerable influence over the affairs of the Eastern Catholic Church; he participated in the canonical trial of Archbishop Jan Krasowski, successfully defending him against accusations made mainly by Basilian circles, and resumed the postponed cases for illegal changes of the Uniate rite to Latin. On March 23, 1823, he became a canon, and on October 8, 1825, a prelate-scholastic of the Luck Chapter³. It is immediately worth noting that such a rapid career development is simply amazing, because Józef Siemaszko was only 24 years old when he was among the church hierarchs. It follows that he had great support not only among the highest Uniate clergy, but also among the highest circles of Russian power.

² Andrzej A. Zięba, „Siemaszko Józef (1798–1869)”, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* vol. 36 issue 4 [general part] 151: *Sidor Kazimierz – Siemiatycki Chaim*, red. Henryk Markiewicz (Warszawa–Kraków: Polska Akademia Nauk, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1995–1996), 606; Andrzej A. Zięba, „Józef Siemaszko (1798-12-25–1869-11-27), arcybiskup prawosławny, biskup unicki, archimandryta klasztoru św. Ducha w Wilnie”, in: *Internetowy Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, access 1.02.2023, <https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/jozef-siemaszko>.

³ Григорий Киприанович, *Жизнь Иосифа Семашки: митрополита Литовского и Виленского и воссоединение западнорусских униатов с православной церковью в 1839 г.* (Вильно, 1893), 65–68; Zięba, „Siemaszko Józef (1798–1869)”, 606–607.

The connection with the highest secular authority is also evidenced by the fact that a few years later, in November 1827, the director of the department of foreign denominations, Grigorij Kartaszewski, suggested J. Siemaszko to write down his thoughts on the future of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite. Thus, on November 5, 1827, the famous note by Józef Siemaszko appeared *On the Situation of the Catholic Church of the Eastern (Uniate) Rite in Russia and the Ways of its Return to the Bosom of the Orthodox Church*⁴.

It should be noted that history does not know many transformation plans in which the planned actions would be thought out to the smallest detail and then fully implemented. But that's exactly what happened with J. Siemaszko's plan to abolish the union. The note not only contained a description of the situation of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite in the southwestern provinces of the empire, but also indicated the reasons for its long existence, as well as the ways of its liquidation. J. Siemaszko saw the greatest obstacle in the accession of the Uniates to Orthodoxy in the close relationship between the Uniate clergy and parishioners and the Roman Catholics. In his opinion, this connection was manifested in the fact that "the placeless"⁵ Uniate priests often served in Roman Catholic churches, which gained the support of the Roman Catholic clergy. In addition, the education of Greek Uniate priests at the Vilnius Main Seminary, together with the Latin clergy, contributed to the "Catholicization" of the Uniates. Józef Siemaszko also negatively assessed the fact of staying in the lands where the Greek Uniate churches were "reconsecrated to Orthodoxy", many "placeless" Uniate priests who still gave parishioners the opportunity to order services "according to the Greek Uniate rite", which "harassed" people⁶.

Then, J. Siemaszko presented his plan of further liquidation of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite. First of all, he found it necessary to immediately separate the Greek-Uniate department from the Roman Catholic one and to create a Greek-Uniate College; reducing the number of dioceses: instead of Brest, Lutsk, Polotsk and Vilnius, only two should be created - Belarusian and Lithuanian; streamlining the management and increasing the powers of the Uniate consistories; in order to gain the support of Uniate priests, granting their sons the right to go to military and civil service after leaving the clerical state. Józef Siemaszko also proposed to increase funds for the maintenance of Greek Uniate seminaries in Polotsk and

⁴ *Уния в документах*, Сост. В.А.Теплова, З. Józef Зуева (Минск: Лучи Софии, 1997), 430–434.

⁵ "Placeless" – officially, in the Russian imperial legislation, the Greek Catholic priests who, after the forced incorporation of their parishes into the Orthodox Church, refused to change their faith were referred to as "tak." Left without a place of service and means of support, they often provided assistance at Roman Catholic churches.

⁶ *Уния в документах*, 431.

Żyrowice, to open lower-level schools at monasteries, to stop sending Uniate students to the Vilnius Main Seminary, and to establish a Greek Uniate Academy in Polotsk⁷.

J. Siemaszko explained his proposals for educational reforms as follows: “It is enough to separate them [Uniates] from the Romans a little, it is enough to direct the clergy through education, (...) and the people will easily follow the path indicated by their shepherds (...). And let the government hurry to introduce the only effective measure - opening schools for the Uniate clergy. For these spiritual schools to be useful, all Uniate clergy must be obliged to educate their children only in these schools. And because nothing brings people closer than communicating in the same language, all schools should introduce teaching in Russian instead of Polish⁸.

The assistant to the Minister of Education, Count Dmitry Błudow, and the director of the Department of Foreign Religions, G. Kartaszewski, highly appreciated and approved J. Siemaszko's proposals. Emperor Nicholas I was also pleased⁹. It can be said that J. Siemaszko became one of the main implementers of the plan to liquidate the union in the south-western territory of the Russian Empire. This worked to the advantage of the state authorities, as it gave the impression that the idea of joining the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite to Orthodoxy did not come from St. Petersburg, but from the Uniate clergy itself. This meant that the liquidation of the union should be seen as a manifestation of the will of the Uniates themselves.

The implementation of J. Siemaszko's proposal was to take place in several stages, which is why the complete exclusion of the Uniate Church from public life lasted twelve years (1827–1839). The first step in this direction was the imperial edict of April 22, 1828 *On Changing the Name of the Second Department of the Roman Catholic Theological College to the Greek Uniate Theological College*¹⁰. By virtue of this ukase, the Greek-Uniate Department was separated from the Roman Catholic Theological College. A separate Greek Uniate College was established, headed by Metropolitan Josaphat Bulhak, who only initially tried to oppose the actions of the central government and J. Siemaszko himself, but later, apparently due to his advanced age and poor health, he was no longer active. The College

⁷ Унія в документах, 432.

⁸ Унія в документах, 433.

⁹ Надія Стоколос, *Конфесійно-етнічні трансформації в Україні (XIX – перша половина XX ст.)* (Рівне: РІС КСУ – ППФ „Ліста-М”, 2003), 30–31.

¹⁰ *Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Собрание Второе. 12 декабря 1825 – 28 февраля 1881 г. (в 55 т.)*, vol. 3: 1828 г. (ЗОСПб: Типография II Отделения Собственной Его Императорского Величества Канцелярии, 1830), no. 2 086.

included one bishop and one archimandrite appointed by the government, and one archpriest from four dioceses, determined by local bishops and consistories¹¹.

A few months after the creation of the Greek Uniate Theological College, the number of Uniate dioceses was reduced by half. Instead of four – Polotsk, Vilnius, Lutsk and Brest – at the end of 1828 there were two: Belarusian and Lithuanian. The Belarusian (or Polotsk) province included the parishes of the Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Minsk governorates, as well as the Owruck county, the Zhytomyr county of the Volhynian governorate, and the Radomyski county of the Kiev governorate. It was headed by Bishop J. Martusewicz, whose residence was in Polotsk¹². The Lithuanian diocese united the parishes of the Grodno, Vilnius, Podolia, Volyn and Kiev provinces. It was headed by Metropolitan J. Bułhak¹³. As the chairman of the Greek Uniate College, he was constantly in St. Petersburg, his function was performed by the official Antoni Tupalski, a trusted person of the imperial authority. The activities of Metropolitan J. Bułhak and Bishop J. Martusewicz were controlled by J. Siemaszko. His tasks were facilitated by the fact that on August 8, 1829, he was ordained an auxiliary bishop¹⁴. The emperor appointed J. Siemaszko a Belarusian suffragan bishop, and the ordination ceremony was performed by Metropolitan J. Bułhak and Bishop J. Martusewicz. Until 1831, all the supporters of the liquidation of the union were suffragans to Metropolitan J. Bułhak: Anton Zubko, Wasilij Łużyński and Jozafat Żarski. From the leadership of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite, the staunch supporters of the union were removed: bishops Lev Jaworski and Andrei Golovnia, who were made auxiliary bishops¹⁵.

In the years 1831–1833, the central authorities used a number of measures aimed at bringing the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite and the Orthodox Church closer together. From 1831, no one could be employed for any position in the church administration without the consent of the local authorities for a given candidacy. Unity services with Latin Catholics were not allowed¹⁶. The Greek Uniate clergy was forbidden to go beyond the borders of the governorate without the knowledge of the local authorities¹⁷.

¹¹ Edward Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2 (Warszawa: Skład główny w Księgarni Gebethnera i Wolffa Druk. Piotra Laskauera i S-ki, 1906), 60.

¹² Атанасій Великий, *З Літопису християнської України: церковно-історичні радіолекції з Ватикану*, vol. 7: XVIII–XIX ст. (Рим: Вид-во ОО Василян, 1979), 210.

¹³ Сергей Мельгунов, *Из истории воссоединения униатов в России* (Голос минувшего, 1925), 14, no. 10.

¹⁴ Російський державний історический архів (Rosyjskie Państwowe Archiwum Historyczne), ф. 797, оп. 6, ч. 2, д. 22 708, 1.

¹⁵ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2, 66.

¹⁶ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, cz. 2, 82.

¹⁷ Иван Стрельбицкий, *Униатские церковные соборы с конца XVI века до воссоединения униатовъ съ православной церковью* (Вильно, 1888), 244.

Established in 1828, the "Secret Committee", which included Prince Dymitr Golitsyn, Metropolitan Filaret, the synod's oberprosecutor, Prince Włodzimierz Meszcharski, in order to spread Orthodoxy among the Uniates, was in 1834 reorganized into the "Secret Commission for Union Affairs". It was composed of Metropolitan Filaret, Greek Uniate Metropolitan J. Bułhak, Bishop J. Siemaszko, Synod Oberprosecutor D. Bludov, Count Dmitry Tolstoy, Prince D. Golitsyn and secretary A. Taneyev. This commission was to ensure the execution of all the monarch's orders aimed at bringing the Uniates closer to the Orthodox¹⁸. With the support of the commission, the Greek Uniate hierarchs convened a council in St. Petersburg in the same year, during which they decided to introduce Russian Orthodox rites to the Uniate Church and renew the Eastern Catholic Churches in accordance with Orthodox traditions.

Uniate Greek servants were immediately taken from the Uniate churches and replaced by servants printed in Moscow. Such actions of the authorities caused dissatisfaction of the Uniate clergy and parishioners¹⁹.

2. The Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite in the 1830s

On June 3, 1834, record books in Russian began to be sent to Eastern Catholic churches. All records in them had to be kept in Russian. On December 19 of the following year, the Holy Synod issued a decree on the establishment of iconostases and altars in Uniate churches according to the rules of the Orthodox Church. This change was to be made at the expense of the owners of the estates where the churches were located. If this was not possible, 300 rubles were allocated from the treasury for the installation of one iconostasis. The Uniates did not consider the replacement of the iconostasis essential and hardly resisted it²⁰.

In 1836, all Eastern Catholic churches banned the use of organ music and bells during liturgy and other services. Pulpits for reading sermons and side altars were also liquidated, and monstrances (to carry the Blessed Sacrament during processions) were also banned²¹.

In the second half of the 1830s, the implementation of the recommendations of Bishop J. Siemaszko regarding the rapprochement of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite with the Orthodox Church was continued. In January 1837, the Greek Uniate Theological College was taken over by a synod. Thus the leadership of the Eastern Catholic Church and the Orthodox

¹⁸ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2, 91–92.

¹⁹ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 797, оп. 6, ч. 2, д. 22 984, 1–15.

²⁰ Сергій Жилюк, *Російська православна церква на Волині (1793–1917 рр.)* (Житомир: Журфонд, 1996), 98.

²¹ Дмитрий Толстой, *Римский католицизм в России* (СПб: Тип Демакова, 1876), 328.

Church was concentrated in the same hands²². In the same year, Count Nikolai Protasov became the synod's oberprosecutor instead of D. Bludov²³. He immediately ordered that Orthodox priests be able to celebrate the liturgy in Uniate churches for the Orthodox population living in the area. This was the last step which was intended to bring the Eastern Rite Catholic Church finally closer to Orthodoxy²⁴.

In 1838, there was a breakthrough in the process of converting the Uniates to Orthodoxy. The supporters of the liquidation of the union took active action. Uniate bishops: J. Siemaszko, W. Łużyński and A. Zubko came to Polotsk to sign the "act of reunification" with the Orthodox Church²⁵. Józef Siemaszko also tried to obtain the signature of Metropolitan J. Bułhak, but he flatly refused. However, on February 23, 1838, Metropolitan J. Bułhak died in St. Petersburg. The emperor ordered him to be buried according to the Orthodox rite in the Orthodox monastery of St. Sergius near Petersburg. This fact was to confirm that the metropolitan was also the initiator of the "reunification" of the Orthodox and Uniate Churches²⁶. The place of J. Bułhak was given to J. Siemaszko, although without the title of metropolitan. The final liquidation of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite began.

To finish the case, J. Siemaszko, who had previously stayed in St. Petersburg, left for Polotsk again. Here, together with his collaborators and supporters, bishops A. Zubko and W. Łużyński, he wrote a petition to the emperor²⁷. It emphasized the permanent spiritual relationship of the Uniates with the Orthodox Church, but also noted that the union was imposed by the Polish authorities. Then, the negative effects it brought were underlined. The second part of the petition contains two requests of the Greek Uniate clergy addressed to the emperor: "1. Recognize the unity of our Church with the Eastern Orthodox Church and our desire to be united with our parishioners to the most holy Orthodox Patriarchs and to be obedient to the Most Holy Synod. 2. Ask the Pious Sovereign Emperor to take over our intention with his Augustan patronage, and we will worship the Triune God in accordance

²² Центральний державний історичний архів України (Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine), м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, Арк. 27.

²³ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2, 93.

²⁴ Илларион Чистович, *Пятидесятилетие (1839–1889) воссоединения с православною церковью западно-русских униатов. Обзор событий воссоединения в царствование императора Николая I* (СПб: Синодальная тип., 1889), 47.

²⁵ Witold Kłobuk, *Kościół wschodnie na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej 1772–1914* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1992), 24.

²⁶ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2, 96.

²⁷ Державний архів Житомирської області, ф. 1, оп. 8, д. 161, 49.

with the canons of the holy ecumenical councils and in accordance with the resolutions of the great saints and teachers of the Orthodox Church²⁸.

The authors of the petition launched an agitation campaign among the Uniate clergy to sign this declaration. At the beginning of 1839, the petition was signed by 938 priests in the Lithuanian diocese and 367 priests in the Belarusian diocese²⁹. In both dioceses, 593 priests refused to become Orthodox³⁰.

In order to give the liquidation of the union the form of a spiritual act, on February 12, 1839, a synod of bishops and the Uniate clergy was convened in Polotsk³¹. On it, the bishop of the Lithuanian diocese, J. Siemaszko, the bishop of the Belarusian diocese, W. Łużyński, the bishop of Brest, the vicar of the Lithuanian diocese, A. Zubko, together with about twenty other Uniate priests, signed the act of reunification of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite with the Orthodox Church³². On the same day, J. Siemaszko celebrated the liturgy in the Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom in Polotsk and gave Holy Communion to the parishioners, teachers and seminarians of the local seminary³³. The solemn service ended with a feast during which chalices were raised for the prosperity of the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church³⁴. After all the ceremonies, the text of the Conciliar Act of Bishops and Higher Clergy, the list of priests who agreed to convert to Orthodoxy, as well as all personal statements of the clergy about joining the Orthodox Church, were sent to St. Petersburg, combined in several notebooks³⁵.

Józef Siemaszko also sent a cover letter to the synod's oberprosecutor, Count N. Protasov, in which he asked for the "act of reunification" to be accepted and approved by the emperor³⁶. The letter also contained a request to express understanding for the attachment of the former Uniates to local customs and to allow the converted priests for some time not to

²⁸ Чистович, *Пятидесятилетие (1839–1889) воссоединения с православной церковью западнорусских униатов*, 5–6.

²⁹ Marian Radwan, „Bazylianie w zaborze rosyjskim w latach 1795–1839”, *Nasza Przyszłość* 93 (2000): 220.

³⁰ Семен Гаюк, *Полоцький «Акт возз'єднання» уніатів з православною церквою. Збірник на пошану проф. Доктора Ол Оглоблина* (Нью-Йорк, 1977), 211.

³¹ Михаил Коялович, *История воссоединения западно-русских униатов старых времен* (СПб: Синодальная тип., 1873), 439.

³² Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, спр. 1, Арк. 49.

³³ Стрельбицкий, *Униатские церковные соборы с конца XVI века до воссоединения униатовъ съ православной церковью*, 189.

³⁴ Чистович, *Пятидесятилетие (1839–1889) воссоединения с православной церковью западнорусских униатов*, 7.

³⁵ Державний архів Житомирської області (Państwowe Archiwum Obwodu Żytomierskiego), ф. 1, оп. 8, д. 1616, Арк. 16 зв.

³⁶ Likowski, *Dzieje Kościoła unickiego na Litwie i Rusi w XVIII i XIX wieku*, part 2, 107.

change their appearance in accordance with the requirements of the Orthodox Church, as this would have a negative impact on the parishioners³⁷.

On March 1, 1839, Emperor Nicholas I instructed the synod to consider the request of the Greek Uniate clergy and make the appropriate decision in accordance with the norms of the Orthodox Church³⁸. On March 6–13, a synod meeting was held at which the decision was made, communicated to the emperor in the March 23 report of the synod's oberprosecutor Count Nikolai Protasov³⁹. The synod decided to accept into the bosom of the Orthodox Church bishops, clergy and parishioners of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite. Nor was it forbidden to observe customs that did not concern the dogmas and rites of the Orthodox Church and were not in conflict with them.

The Greek Uniate Theological College was renamed the Belarusian-Lithuanian Theological College. Its chairman was J. Siemaszko, who was given the dignity of an archbishop⁴⁰.

On March 25, 1839, Nicholas I approved the synod's decision with the words: "I thank God and accept." A commemorative medal was made: on the obverse, the face of the Savior with the inscription at the top: "We have such a high priest", and at the bottom - "Detached by force (1596) united by love (1839)"; on the reverse - an octagonal cross in rays with the inscription at the top: "Triumph of Orthodoxy", and at the bottom – "March 25, 1839"⁴¹.

The decree approved by the emperor was announced by J. Siemaszko in the presence of all members of the synod on June 29, 1839⁴². He also received a medal and a letter of appeal to the bishops and clergy. On the same day, a liturgy was celebrated during which J. Siemaszko was ordained as an archbishop. He also swore an oath of allegiance and service to the Orthodox Church⁴³.

All central and local authorities in the empire were informed of the "act of reunification"⁴⁴. All these actions of state officials and the higher Uniate hierarchy did not go unanswered by the parishioners of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite. However, such specific prohibitions as changes in the liturgy and the furnishing of churches on the Orthodox

³⁷ Гаюк, *Полоцький „Акт возз'єднання” уніатів з православною церквою. Збірник на пошану проф. Доктора Ол Оглоблина*, 214.

³⁸ Державний архів Житомирської області, ф. 1, оп. 8, д. 1616, Арк. 6 зв.

³⁹ Чистович, *Пятидесятилетие (1839–1889) воссоединения с православной церковью западнорусских униатов*, 11.

⁴⁰ Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, спр. 1, Арк. 49 зв.

⁴¹ Чистович, *Пятидесятилетие (1839–1889) воссоединения с православной церковью западнорусских униатов*, 52.

⁴² Державний архів Хмельницької області, ф. 315, оп. 1, спр. 1214, Арк. 6 зв.

⁴³ Державний архів Житомирської області, ф. 1, оп. 8, д. 1616, Арк. 8 зв.

⁴⁴ Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, спр. 1, Арк. 50.

model caused much more dissatisfaction than the mere fact of signing the "act of reunification" in 1839.

Resistance movements began to spread from the mid-1830s. In particular, the case of the rebellion of the parishioners of the town of Ratno in the Kovel poviat received wide coverage at that time⁴⁵. In accordance with the ordinance of the diocesan authorities on the arrangement of Uniate churches on the model of the Orthodox, the parish priest of the parish of St. Mother of God (Preczistenska) in the town of Ratno, Maksymilian Dmochowski arranged an altar in the temple at his own expense. On August 1, 1834, while in Ratno, Bishop J. Siemaszko was satisfied with the interior design of the church and celebrated a solemn liturgy. Everything was calm until August 23, until the local inhabitants together with the peasants from the neighboring Wydranica (a total of 30 people) changed the furnishings of the temple on the Greek Uniate model, while threatening the priest with reprisals if he dared to restore the Orthodox order in the church. On the same day in Ratno, parishioners of two more churches – the Resurrection Church (Woskresenski) and St. Elijah (Iłjiński) – they did not allow the priests to perform services and took the keys to the churches⁴⁶.

As the news of the revolt in Ratno reached the emperor himself, on September 20, 1834, a special military-investigative commission was established in Kowel. The commission ordered the most active rebels to be punished by running the gauntlet (*prashcheta*)⁴⁷, and the rest sent to prison. However, the emperor made his own correction of the sentence: he was against corporal punishment, instead he ordered the perpetrators to be sent to Kiev for six months to build a fortress. Januszewski, the leader of the nobility of Kovel County, who leased part of Ratno, and Wolski, a landowner suspected of organizing the rebellion, were placed under the surveillance of the secret police⁴⁸.

A similar rebellion took place on October 8, 1838 in the village of Chodaki, Owrucki county. Having learned from the wife of a Uniate priest, Augustyn Kondratowicz Pałagia, that the Orthodox parish priest Daniło Butkiewicz from the village of Wańkiewiczze, together with the police chief of Ovrut, were to come to change the furnishings of the church according to the Orthodox model, the parishioners, mainly minor nobility, called a meeting. A mob (over 500 people) stormed the rectory, the rebels broke down the door, kidnapped both priests and

⁴⁵ Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 141, спр. 468, Арк. 2.

⁴⁶ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 797, оп. 6, ч. 2, д. 22 953, 1–15.

⁴⁷ Corporal punishment used in the Russian army until the 19th century, involving driving the punished individual (sometimes repeatedly) between two lines of comrades armed with rifle butts, whips, sticks, or rods. The description of the application of this punishment can be found in the book: Wiktoria Śliwowska, *Ucieczki z Sybiru* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2005).

⁴⁸ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 797, оп. 6, ч. 2, д. 22 953, 72 – 88 об.

walked with them around the village. In the evening, the priests managed to escape to an Orthodox priest in the neighboring village of Niemierówka⁴⁹.

Dissatisfaction was also expressed by the inhabitants of the village of Kaleńskie in the Owrucki powiat, when the Orthodox priest D. Butkiewicz from the village of Wańkiewiczze came there to change the equipment of the local church. The inhabitants of the villages of Bołsuny and Niedaszki, in the same powiat, also opposed changing the decor of parish churches to the Orthodox model. Residents of the villages of Boremel and Smordwa in the Dubien county protested in a similar way⁵⁰.

Despite the official announcement in February 1839 of the "reunification" of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite with the Orthodox Church, the parishioners were in no hurry to convert to Orthodoxy.

Conclusion

In 1841, almost three years after the official announcement of the "act of reunification", in the Glinka farm in the Zhytomyr district, the Greek Uniate priest Maksym Szyszkowski and his brother Ivan, not wanting to convert to Orthodoxy, hid with their relatives⁵¹. Sometimes the Uniates adopted the Latin rite. For example, in Dąbrowica in the Lutsk county, 38 people converted from the union to Latin Catholicism in 1839. At the same time, 175 Uniates became Latin Catholics in the parish of Grochów, in Włodzimierz-Wolyn County⁵².

Thus, from the second half of the 1820s, the Russian authorities increased the pressure on the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite and began the process of its gradual liquidation, in which the Greek Uniate hierarchy also participated. Largely thanks to the great efforts of Bishop J. Siemaszko and his supporters, on February 12, 1839, at the council of the Greek Uniate clergy in Polotsk, a decision was made to "reunify" the Churches, which meant the end of the existence of the Catholic Church of the Eastern rite in the western governorates of the Russian Empire. The last wave of conversions to Orthodoxy began, but Eastern Catholics were in no hurry to renounce their faith. There were riots and protests from opponents of this union everywhere.

The behavior of the parish clergy and the faithful of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite, their attitude to the signing of the "reunification act" and the liquidation of this Church

⁴⁹ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 797, оп. 7, д. 23 438, 1–50.

⁵⁰ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 797, оп. 6, ч. 2, д. 22 985, 2–130.

⁵¹ Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, спр. 118, Арк. 10–12.

⁵² Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ, ф. 442, оп. 413, спр. 19, Арк. 11.

should be the subject of a separate study, because, as evidenced by archival documents, even at the end of the 1840s one could meet people who secretly continued to profess Eastern Catholicism, although the local authorities denied such facts.

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