



President and Fellows of Harvard College

Review

Author(s): Serhii Plokhyy

Review by: Serhii Plokhyy

Source: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3/4 (December 1997), pp. 479-481

Published by: [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41036713>

Accessed: 24-11-2015 13:57 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



President and Fellows of Harvard College and Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

A LONG WALK TO CHURCH: A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY. By Nathaniel Davis. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1995. 381 pp. ISBN (cloth) 0-8133-2276-6; ISBN (paper) 0-8133-2277-4 \$32.00.

This book is the result of a project undertaken by Nathaniel Davis more than forty years ago. The project began in 1954 when he submitted a paper on "Religious Collaboration and Resistance in the Communist World" to Professor Philip E. Mosely of the Russian Institute at Columbia University. What followed was a dissertation on "Religion and Communist Government in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," completed at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1960, and a distinguished career as an American diplomat that lasted more than thirty years. The "delay" in completing the project certainly added to the value of the book, since it allowed Davis not only to enhance his understanding of the Soviet state apparatus and its policies as a result of his diplomatic missions in Moscow, but also to take advantage of the recently opened Soviet archives.

It is Davis' familiarity with the literature of the subject and his first-hand knowledge of the Soviet system that has enabled him to present a well-balanced history of Russian Orthodoxy since the end of World War II. But it is his access to the formerly closed Soviet archives that makes his contribution truly unique. Davis appears to be one of the first Western scholars to have gained access to the records of the USSR Council for Religious Affairs (now housed in GA RF, the State Archives of the Russian Federation). These documents shed new light not only on the history of Soviet policy toward Russian Orthodoxy during the last fifty years of the existence of the USSR, but also on the inner workings of the Russian Orthodox Church, including changes in its structure, finances, education, and parish life.

Although this documentary material comes from the archives of the highly centralized all-Union body, it has enabled Davis to depart from the traditional Moscow-centric point of view that prevailed for decades in the study of Russian Orthodoxy. As a result, his work is not limited to the analysis of events in Moscow, but also follows developments in those areas of the USSR where the majority of churches and Orthodox believers were located. Ukrainian Orthodoxy clearly emerges as one of the major beneficiaries of this approach. Davis notes that after World War II, "The Russian Orthodox Church had become a predominantly Ukrainian institution, as almost two-thirds of its parishes were in Ukraine" (p. 24).

It can be deduced from Davis' study that the predominance of Ukrainian parishes over Russian ones remained a salient feature of the Russian Orthodox Church throughout the post-war period. In 1958, for example, before the start of Nikita Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, the Kyiv eparchy had 582 active churches, compared with 212 in the Moscow eparchy, and the Lviv eparchy accounted for 2,071 churches, almost ten times as many as in the

Moscow eparchy. According to statistics compiled by Davis, even in 1994, after the Moscow Patriarchate had lost thousands of its former parishes to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches, it still had more parishes in Ukraine than in Russia (5,700 compared with 5,200).

Why did Russian Orthodoxy become an essentially Ukrainian phenomenon and remain so for many decades? Davis seeks the answers to this puzzle in the history of the Sovietization of the western borderlands of the USSR, acquired by Moscow in the course of World War II. He rightly states that it was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that “rescued the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church” (p. 16). As Davis shows in the book, Stalin used the church as an instrument of sovietization and russification of the Baltics, western Belarus, western Ukraine, and Bessarabia. In Ukraine, the Russian Orthodox Church was also an instrument to combat the Vatican and the Greek Catholic faithful, who were forcibly “converted” to Orthodoxy between 1946 and 1950.

Statistical data acquired by Davis from the Council for Religious Affairs support this conclusion, showing that the authorities in the western Ukrainian oblasts apparently kept in mind the main objectives of their anti-Vatican policy when they tried to spare Orthodox parishes from deregistration during the antireligion drives of the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, Galicia accounted for roughly 2 percent of the all-Union population and 25 percent of all the Orthodox churches in the USSR. Only half of those churches had an assigned Orthodox priest, but were kept open by the authorities, contrary to the usual practice in the rest of the country. It would appear that eastern Ukraine had to pay the price for the government’s religious “tolerance” in the regions of western Ukraine so that the all-Ukrainian number of deregistered churches would meet all-Union “standards.” In the late 1940s, Ukraine met that “standard” by closing approximately 7 percent of all active churches in the republic, but it was the oblasts of eastern Ukraine that suffered the most, with the closing of as many as 20 percent of the Orthodox churches in Poltava Oblast in eastern Ukraine.

In the 1950s, during the beginning of Khrushchev’s antireligion campaign, western Ukraine lost 3.5 percent of its parishes, while eastern Ukraine lost 14 percent. By the end of Khrushchev’s rule, the Lviv eparchy had lost 42 percent of its parishes—close to the USSR average of 40 percent, but the Dnipropetrovsk eparchy in eastern Ukraine lost 86 percent, the highest percentage in the USSR. The Mukachevo eparchy in Transcarpathia lost only 16 percent of its churches. Of 167 priests active in Dnipropetrovsk oblast at the start of the campaign, only 30 continued to serve their parishes at the end of the drive. In 1996, in neighboring Zaporizhzhia oblast, there remained only 9 of the 92 clerics who were registered there in 1958. As a result, by the mid-1980s there was a population of 170,000 for every Orthodox parish in the Dnipropetrovsk eparchy (including Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia oblasts) and 3,500 for every parish in Transcarpathia.

The closing of churches in individual oblasts often depended on the atheistic and bureaucratic zeal of local officials, the resistance of the population to

forceful closures, and especially on the general tendency of Party officials to “shelter” the Orthodox communities in the western regions of Ukraine, using them to combat the continuing loyalty of the local population to the suppressed Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. As Davis shows, that was the case not only with the closing of churches in the USSR, but also with the registration of new Orthodox communities. In 1988, after the dramatic change of religious policy under Mikhail Gorbachev, more than half of the 800 or so new Orthodox parishes registered in the Soviet Union were located in Ukraine, most of them in the former Greek Catholic eparchies in the western regions.

Davis is well acquainted not only with the sources and literature on the history of Russian and Ukrainian Orthodoxy, but also with recent developments in church politics in the former USSR. In fact, he offers one of the most accurate descriptions to date of the current confessional strife in Ukraine and of Ukrainian Orthodoxy’s struggle for autocephaly. At the same time, the book’s coverage of Ukrainian events is not completely free of occasional errors and omissions. Contrary to what Davis writes in the book, at the time of the Union of Brest (1596) it was not only western Ukraine (p. 132) but all of Ukraine that was under Polish rule. The leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, Stepan Bandera, was never a Greek Catholic priest (p. 28). There are also some other omissions in Davis’ account of Ukrainian topics, but they are not significant.

Davis adopts a “flexible” policy on transliteration, using Ukrainian forms of personal and geographic names when his sources are Ukrainian, and Russian forms when they are Russian. This creates some confusion. A case in point is the transliteration of the first name of Mariika Kazyn, a girl from Hrushiv who claimed to have witnessed the appearance of the Mother of God in April 1987: Davis identifies her as Marina Kazin (pp. 254–55). Nor does Davis make a clear distinction between the terms “Russia” and “Rus’,” identifying the Nestor Chronicle as the “Russian Primary Chronicle,” and Rus’ lands as “Russian” (p. 237). Sometimes he uses the term “Orthodox” as an antonym of “Autocephalists” (p. 84), even though the latter designation refers to Orthodox believers seeking independence for their church.

In general, it should be noted that Davis’ work is virtually free of errors concerning the history and current status of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, which gives him a rare distinction among scholars who specialize in the history of Russian Orthodoxy. For Davis, Ukraine is far from *terra incognita*, and that fact greatly enhances the quality of his book. Davis concludes with a number of reflections on the prospects for Russian Orthodoxy. According to his scenario, sooner or later the Russian Orthodox Church will be confined within the borders of the Russian Federation, and the Ukrainian and even the Belarusian Orthodox churches will follow their separate paths. Given the history of Orthodoxy in Eastern and Southern Europe, it is difficult not to agree with that prediction.

Serhii Plokhyy
University of Alberta