

# **The Autocephalous Church of Poland during World War II: An Anecdotal Memorandum-Report of the Archbishop Grodno Savva (Sowietow) to the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin**

**Autokefaliczny Kościół Polski podczas II wojny światowej:  
Notatka-raport arcybiskupa grodzieńskiego Sawy (Sowietowa) do patriarchy ekumenicznego Beniamina**

**Key Words:** Memorandum-Report, Archbishop Grodno Savva (Sowietow), Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland, World War II, Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin, Seraphim Lade, General Governorate, Metropolitan Dionysius, Nazi German forces, Soviet forces.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Notatka-raport, arcybiskup Grodna Sawa (Sowietow), Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny w Polsce, II wojna światowa, patriarcha ekumeniczny Beniamin, Serafin Lade, Generalne Gubernatorstwo, metropolita Dionizy, nazistowskie wojska niemieckie, wojska radzieckie.

## **Abstract**

This article presents and analyses an unpublished Report by Bishop Grodno Savva to the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin on the situation in which the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland found itself after the occupation of Poland by Nazi and Soviet troops (1939-1940). The aim of the Report was, on the one hand, to raise the awareness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in favor of the Polish Orthodox Church, in support of its autocephalous status and, on the other hand, to condemn Seraphim Lade's anticanonical actions in Poland. The presentation includes various archival documents

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and a contemporary bibliography. The original French text of Bishop Savva's letter and report is found at the end of the article.

### **Streszczenie**

Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia i analizuje niepublikowany raport biskupa grodzieńskiego Sawy do patriarchy ekumenicznego Beniamina na temat sytuacji, w jakiej znalazł się Autokefaliczny Kościół Prawosławny w Polsce po zajęciu Polski przez wojska nazistowskie i sowieckie (1939-1940). Celem Raportu było, z jednej strony, podniesienie świadomości Patriarchatu Ekumenicznego na korzyść Polskiego Kościoła Prawosławnego, w celu wsparcia jego autokefalicznego statusu, a z drugiej strony, potępienie antykanonicznych działań Serafina Lade w Polsce. Prezentacja zawiera różne dokumenty archiwalne i współczesną bibliografię. Oryginalny francuski tekst listu i raportu biskupa Sawy zamieszczono na końcu artykułu.

## **1. Introduction to the history of the Polish Orthodox Church (1924-1940)**

The history of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland begins with the reconstitution and formation of the state of Poland after the end of World War I. Specifically, Poland, whose territories had been divided between Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary was re-established with the Treaty of Versailles (28.6.1919) after the end of the First World War, which saw the forces that had occupied Poland defeated. In the west Poland extended to the Poznan region and shared Upper Silesia with Germany. In the east the borders were formed after fierce battles against the Bolshevik army. Finally, after the defeat of the Bolsheviks (1921) with the Treaty of Riga (18-3-1921) Poland acquired the territories of W. Ukraine, W. Belarus and the region of Vilna, which was decreed, in 1923, by the Council of Ambassadors and essentially returned to the borders before the dismemberment of 1772<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> On the question of the reconstitution of Poland see Halecki 1993, 275 ff.; Davies 2001, 100-101; Davies 2005, 279 ff.; Lukowski, Zawadzki 2019, 280 ff. Also see Borzęcki 2008.

Significant Orthodox populations, about four million<sup>3</sup>, now found themselves within this new state of Poland. They were organized as an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the name of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland, in one Archdiocese (Metropolis) and five dioceses (Mironowicz 2006, 533ff.; Borkowski 2015, 134ff.; Wynot 2014, 21ff.; Tzoumerkas 2005, 301ff)<sup>4</sup> with the publication of the Patriarchal and Synodal Tome of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (13-11-1924) in 1924. From its foundation, this new Autocephalous Church was forced into a titanic struggle for survival since it found itself in a predominantly Roman Catholic country. It had to face, on the one hand, plots against it by the Roman Catholics and on the other, the ambition of the Russian Church, which wanted to use the Orthodox Church of Poland as an instrument of political expediency or as an ecclesiastical instrument that would resonate its own views within the nexus of Orthodox relations (Barella 1994, 91).

Despite all these pressures and problems, the Polish Orthodox Church made enormous efforts to organize its internal and external life, on the basis of the autocephaly, which had been granted to it by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and by 1939 it managed to resolve the biggest of her problems, such as the question of her relations with the state and the organization of her inner life, and from this point she headed towards the future with optimism.

Unfortunately for the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland, this optimistic course was interrupted at its onset due to the outbreak of World War II and Poland's involvement in it. Specifically, after the

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<sup>3</sup> During the census of 1931, the Christian Orthodox population of Poland was 3,762,484. See related *Statystyka Polska 1938*, tab. 10, 13, 15, 16. See also Wynot 1985, 210-211 and note 3; Mironowicz 2007, 18; Wynot 2002, 323, 336 note 2; Bendza 2006, 87-88; Papierzyńska-Turek 1989, 235-236.

<sup>4</sup> Although the autocephalous life of this Church begins only in 1924, the presence of Orthodoxy in the territory of the Polish state has a long and varied history. For further information see Mironowicz 2002, 219-252; Mironowicz 2003; Tzoumerkas 2005, 281ff.

agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), Poland was divided between the two powers who had invaded the country (Davies 2001, 56-57 and 65; Kochanski 2012, 96)<sup>5</sup>. The Soviet Union occupied the eastern provinces of the state up to the area of the Narew and Bug rivers, and Germany occupied the Warsaw area and west<sup>6</sup>. This dismemberment had a crucial impact on the organization and life of the Polish Orthodox Church. Four of its six provinces, namely Vilna, Volhynia, Grodno and Polesia, came under Soviet administration and were effectively completely cut off from the Polish Orthodox Church and all communication ceased until the outbreak of the German-Soviet war (Mironowicz 2006, 656-657; Maximos 1998, 152). Metropolitan Dionysius and his assistant Bishop Timotheus remained in the German-occupied areas. The Soviet occupation included Vilna's Theodosius, Polesia's Alexander, Volynia's Alexius and two auxiliary bishops, Lutsk Polycarp and Ostrog Simon (Svitič 1997, 262-263). The Bishop of Grodno, Savva, and Matthew, assistant of the Archbishop of Vilna, fled to Lithuania and from there to the West (Pelica 2007, 381-382).

The German and Soviet authorities confiscated the property of the Orthodox institutions, imprisoned the priests and in many cases exterminated them (Fougias 1957, 115; Bendza 2006, 102-103)<sup>7</sup>. In the areas occupied by the Soviet Union, systematic Sovietization began along with a methodical atheistic, completely anti-religious campaign (Halecki 1993, 311 ff.; Bogdan 1989, 237-238; Bendza 2006, 103). At the same time, the ecclesiastical absorption of these territories by the Moscow Patriarchate began with the integration of these ecclesiastical jurisdictions into the Church of Russia and with the creation of the Exarchate of Western Ukraine and Belarus with Metropolitan Nikolaos

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<sup>5</sup> About this agreement see Moorhouse 1988; Paczkowski 2005, 57-58.

<sup>6</sup> For the facts of the invasion see Davies 2005, 322 ff.

<sup>7</sup> For the actions of the Germans and the Soviets see Williamson 2009, 151ff. and 155ff.

as its Exarch (Fletcher 1965, 97-98; Fireside 1971, 149; Pospelovsky 1984b, 227ff).

The extremely unfavorable situation in which Poland found itself due to the double occupation of the country and contradictory information being spread about its Church led the Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos and the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece to address the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19.10.1939 with the pleading request to investigate and inform the Holy Synod about the fate of the Metropolitan of Warsaw and the hierarchs of the Polish Orthodox Church. In particular, she stated in the relevant request: "Bearing in mind the events of the war in Europe, and the recent anomalies and disturbances in Poland, by the decision of the Synod, we urge you to kindly, please, examine (the situation) using the means you possess, and inform us of the fate of His Beatitude Archbishop of Warsaw and all Poland Mr. Dionysius, President of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Church of Poland, as well as its other Bishops"<sup>8</sup>. The Ecumenical Patriarchate did the same by sending a relevant Verbal Communication on 25.11.1939 to the German Government through the German Consul in Istanbul<sup>9</sup>. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Greek embassy in Berlin, informed Archbishop Chrysanthos that Dionysius and the other high priests of the Polish Orthodox Church do not have health problems, specifically stating that "...All the Bishops of the Orthodox Church in Poland are

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<sup>8</sup> Archive of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece (AHSCG), F. 14, Doc. Nr. 2747/62/19-10-1939, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece to the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Σχολτες ὑπ' ὄψει τὰς ἐκ τοῦ ἐν Εὐρώπῃ ὑφισταμένου Πολέμου γενομένας ἐπ' ἐσχάτον ἀνωμαλίας καὶ ἀναστατώσεις ἐν Πολωνίᾳ, Συνοδικῆ διαγνώμη, προαγομέθῃ παρακαλέσαι ὑμᾶς θερμῶς, ὄπως, εὐαρεστούμενοι, ἐξετάσητε, δι' ὧν ὑμεῖς γνωρίζετε μέσων, καὶ πληροφορήσητε ἡμᾶς περὶ τῆς τύχης τοῦ Μακαριωτάτου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Βαρσοβίας καὶ πάσης Πολωνίας κυρίου Διονυσίου, Προέδρου τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τῆς Αὐτοκεφάλου Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Πολωνίας, ὡς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν Ἀρχιερέων αὐτῆς".

<sup>9</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Doc. Nr. 19-12-1939, the Consul General of Germany in Istanbul to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

healthy, but only Bishop Savva left Polish soil and took refuge in Lithuania”<sup>10</sup>. The German Consul General of Constantinople also reported the same to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in his Verbal Communication of 19 December, 1939, that all the bishops of the Orthodox Church of Poland were in good health and still exercising their duties, except for bishops Savva and Matthew, who had fled to Lithuania and noted that the information about the bishops of the Polish Church “from across the line [under Soviet occupation] was given by Orthodox priests who fled to Warsaw”<sup>11</sup>.

Despite this positive information, the German occupying authorities, after forcing Metropolitan Dionysius to resign, arrested him on 27.11.1939 and confined him to house arrest in Otwock; his seat was occupied by the Metropolitan of Germany, Seraphim Lade, who assumed the administration of the Orthodox in the territories of the “General Governorate”<sup>12</sup> as the territories of Poland occupied by the Germans were called and he received the title “Bishop of Berlin, Warsaw and Chelm” (Republic of Poland/Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1940, 35-36; Grzybowski 2018a, 160; Markiewicz 2021, 81ff). Bishop Timotheus was also arrested and taken to the monastery of Jableczna, where he was ordered to remain imprisoned (Bendza 2006, 112).

This tragic situation into which the Orthodox Church of Poland had fallen and the contradictory declarations of the occupying authorities,

<sup>10</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Doc. Nr. 30426/7-12-1939, the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Archbishop of Athens Chrysanthos: “ἄπαντες οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς τῆς ἐν Πολωνίᾳ Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας χαίρουσιν ἄκρας ὑγείας ἐκ τούτων δὲ μόνον ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος Σάββας ἐγκατέλειψε τὸ Πολωνικὸν ἔδαφος καταφυγὼν εἰς Λιθουανίαν”.

<sup>11</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Doc. Nr. 19-12-1939, the Consul General of Germany in Istanbul to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. See also relevant announcement of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at „Anakoinōthen tou Oikoumenikou Patriarcheiou” 1939, 380.

<sup>12</sup> The “General Governorate” (Generalgouvernement) included the territories of the Warsaw, Radom, Lublin, Kraków regions and after 1941 the Lvov region (Eastern Galicia), with Kraków as its capital. See Duraczynski 1973, 39-61, mainly 44; Kochanski 2012, 96 ff.

are described in the Report Bishop Grodno Savva submitted to the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin<sup>13</sup>, wishing on one hand to inform the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the conditions that prevailed in the Orthodox Church of Poland after the double occupation of the country by the Germans and the Soviets and, on the other hand, to motivate the Ecumenical Patriarchate together with the Patriarchates of the East and the newer Orthodox Churches to support the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland.

## **2. The Report-memorandum of Bishop Grodno Savva**

### **2. 1. The author of the Report**

The Report-Memorandum on the situation of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland after the occupation of the country by the German and Soviet troops was submitted to the Ecumenical Patriarch by Bishop Grodno Savva who had fled to the West. Bishop Savva had the name Jerzy (George) Jewgieniewicz Sowietow as a layman (in Russian Георгий Евгеньевич Советов)<sup>14</sup>. He was born on 6 April, 1898 in St. Petersburg and was brought up in an environment of military discipline. In 1916, at his father's wish, he joined the Tsarist army with the rank of second lieutenant and participated in the battles fought by the Russian army during World War I on the German front (Grzybowski 2021a, 12). After the October Revolution he joined the White Army, which attempted to stop the advance of the Communist Red Army and the latter's seizure of power in Russia but failed and so the remaining soldiers and officers fled to the West. Among them was Jerzy Sowietow, who settled in Belgrade in 1920. In 1922 he enrolled at the Belgrade Theological School, from which he graduated on 15 October, 1926 (Puzovič 2015,

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<sup>13</sup> For the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin see „Ta kata tēn astheneian, ton thanaton kai tēn kēdeian tou aeimnēstou Patriarchou (Veniamēn)” 1946, 38-63; Mauropoulos 1960, 241-249; Stavrides 2001, 580-601; Mamalos 2011, 199-227.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the biography of Bishop Savva see Grzybowski 2021a, in which his personality is evaluated in totality. Also cf. Grzybowski 2016c, 287 ff.

65-83, mainly 77). At the same time, he decided to join the clergy of the Orthodox Church. Thus, in 1922, after previously becoming a monk, where he was given the name Savva, he was ordained a deacon and in 1925, a presbyter (Grzybowski, Grzybowska 2017, 82-83). After a short ministry in the Russian parish of Bari in Italy, in 1926 he decided to go to Poland and join the jurisdiction of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland. As soon as he arrived in Poland, he joined the service of Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw. In 1928, after a conflict with the authorities in Volhynia, he was forced to leave Poland and move to Budapest and Munich where he undertook pastoral services in the Orthodox parishes of the area (Grzybowski 2021a, 21-22). In 1929 he returned to Poland and Metropolitan Dionysius awarded him the title of "Archimandrite" and assigned him the duties of directing the Orthodox student boarding school for Orthodox students at the Warsaw Theological School (1929-1931) (Pelica 2007, 381; Mitrofan 2006, 46-47). In 1931 he was assigned the duties of the head of the monasteries that came under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese, that is, in the areas of Warsaw, Chelm and Volyn (Grzybowski 2021a, 23). At the same time, he was appointed by Metropolitan Dionysius to the position of the representative of the Polish Orthodox Church at the Lambeth Conference, where Anglican and Orthodox relations would be discussed<sup>15</sup>. And in 1931 he accompanied Metropolitan Dionysios to the Faith and Order conference in Lausanne (Grzybowski 2021a, 24).

In 1932, he was elected assistant Bishop to Metropolitan Dionysius. He was ordained on 3 April, 1932 and was assigned the task of pastoring

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<sup>15</sup> In his appointment letter sent by Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw to the Ecumenical Patriarch, he stated that he had sufficient knowledge of the German and French languages see „Gramma mēropolitou Varsovias kai pasēs Polonias Dionysiou” 1930, 254-255, where the letter of Metropolitan Dionysius to Ecumenical Patriarch Photios. Also Rozmarëis 1930b, 619. On the Lambeth Conference and related debates, see Rozmarëis 1930a, 583-595; Rozmarëis 1930b, 619 ff., 637 ff., 655 ff. Also Meletios 1930, 835-840 and 851-856. Douglas 1930, 49-64.



the Orthodox in the area of Lublin that came under the Archdiocese's jurisdiction (Pelica 2007, 312). As a bishop, he worked vigorously for the homogenization of the believers of the different ethnic and linguistic origins of the Polish Orthodox Church and he found the introduction of the Polish language in divine worship and in all manifestations of the Orthodox communities to be the only means towards the success of his goal. He was an ardent supporter of the Polish Orthodox movement and was the president of the commission for the translation of the liturgical books into the Polish language, especially John Chrysostom's Divine Liturgy. In 1937, he was appointed vicar of the diocese of Grodno and the following year he became its Bishop. During his pastorate in this diocese, he worked towards its complete reorganization and the introduction of the Polish language into use by the diocese, such as holding holy services in the Polish language for the Orthodox soldiers who served in the military units of his jurisdiction<sup>16</sup>.

His work was interrupted by the start of World War II and the occupation of Poland by German and Soviet troops. The Grodno region was occupied by the Soviets. In order not to be arrested by them, Bishop Savva, using the Yugoslav passport he possessed, fled to Lithuania and then through East Prussia to Berlin. There he met Archbishop Seraphim (Lade), who proposed that he take over the leadership of the Orthodox Church in Poland on the territories of the General Governorate, a proposal he did not accept (Grzybowski 2021a, 53, 55-56). To avoid further pressures, he went to Romania in December 1939, at the invitation of the hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church and settled in the monastery Căldărușani (Vasilache 1940, 19-24)<sup>17</sup>. There he worked for both the spiritual and financial support of the Orthodox Polish refugees

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<sup>16</sup> For the pre-war activities of Bishop Savvas in the area of his diocese and in general see Grzybowski 2021a, 24-52.

<sup>17</sup> Also „O Episkopos Grondo Savvas” 1951, 255; Grzybowski 2018b, 89-112, mainly 90, where the author notes that this time (1939) until his death (1951) was the most interesting period of Bishop Savvas' life.

who had taken refuge in Romania after the start of the war. When German troops invaded Romania, he left. After passing through Istanbul and Belgrade, he moved to the USA, where he lived until 1943. Between 1940-1943 he worked for the preservation of the pre-war jurisdiction of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland and its support and strengthening against threats and irregular interventions of the Soviet and German authorities. To achieve this goal, he visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchates of Antioch and Serbia several times<sup>18</sup>.

In 1943 he went to London, where on 29 November, following a decision of the Polish government-in-exile, he joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West with the rank of Brigadier General. As a member of the Polish military religious service, he strove for the pastoral care of Orthodox soldiers and officers serving in the Polish army abroad<sup>19</sup>. It should be noted that he was the first Orthodox Bishop to be appointed in the Polish army (Filipow, Suchcitz 1997). Of course, the Presidential Decree of 1938 contained the appropriate proviso that determined the position of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland within the state but it was not implemented due to the outbreak of World War II (see „O stosunku Państwa do Polskiego Autokefalicznego Kościoła Prawosławnego” 1938, 1324, art. 65)<sup>20</sup>. In pastoral care of the Polish Orthodox soldiers, he visited the units where they served and performed various divine services. He also published an Orthodox prayer book in Polish as well as a magazine with the name “Polski Żołnierz Prawosławny” (Zięba 1998, 31-51; Grzybowski 2015a, 75-98; Grzybowski 2021a, 103)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> On this action see Grzybowski 2016b, 215-257; Grzybowski 2019, 456-472; Grzybowski 2021a, 56 ff.

<sup>19</sup> For his pastoral action in the Polish Armed Forces in the West see Grzybowski 2015b, 11-30; Grzybowski 2021a, 109 ff.

<sup>20</sup> On the development and evolution of the Orthodox religious service in the Polish armed forces between the years 1919-1939 see Grzybowski 2016c, 38 ff.

<sup>21</sup> For other Orthodox publications of books about the Orthodox Polish soldiers in the West during World War II see Pawluczuk 2016, 253-260.

After the end of the war, he did not return to Poland, where in the meantime the Communist regime had been established and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the country had come under the absolute power of Moscow. He remained in London and joined the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, taking over the pastoral care of the Polish-speaking Orthodox parishes of Western and Central Europe (Grzybowski 2016a, 25-56). In 1947 he was granted the title of Archbishop by the Metropolitan of Warsaw Dionysius (Grzybowski 2021a, 132). He died in London on 21 May 1951 and was buried on 26 May in Brompton Cemetery („Archbishop Sawa” 1951, 1; Grzybowski 2021a, 159). In 2012, his relics were transported to Poland and in an official ceremony held on 31 December 2012 they were interred in the Warsaw Orthodox Cemetery (Dudra 2019, 332; Grzybowski 2018b, 110)<sup>22</sup>.

## **2.2 The contents of the Report**

Bishop Savva’s Report is written in French and is seven pages long, accompanied by a letter. The letter is signed at the end as “† Evêque Sawa”, while the Report is signed as “† Evêque Sawa Délégué de l’Église Orthodoxe Autocéphale de Pologne”. Neither the Report nor the letter mention the place of their writing, nor the date on which they were compiled. However, from internal testimonies within the text of the Report we can safely define January 1940 as the terminus post quem. The Report and the accompanying letter were drawn up and sent or submitted after January 1940. The above information should be combined with the visits of Bishop Grodno Savva during this period. In particular, in February 1940, Bishop Savva left Romania and arrived in Constantinople where on the 9th of the same month he met with the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin. He was hosted at the Ecumenical Patriarchate for fifteen days and had the opportunity to meet with the Ecumenical Patriarch and the synodical Bishops of the Patriarchate several times, during which

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<sup>22</sup> Also, in 2018 the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland unveiled a plaque commemorating Archbishop Savva in the cathedral church of Transfiguration of the Lord in Lublin, see Grzybowski 2021a, 175.

he had the opportunity to discuss the situation that had developed in the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland with the division of the country between the occupying forces of Nazi Germany and Soviet Union („Iera Synodos: O sev. Episkopos Grodno eis ta Patriarcheisa” 1940, 62)<sup>23</sup>. Thus, we can draw the conclusion that the Report must have been delivered to the Ecumenical Patriarch during Bishop Savva’s stay at the Patriarchate in February 1940. It should be noted that Bishop Grodno Savva visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a guest of the Ecumenical Patriarch twice after the visit of February 1940; in May 1940 on his return from the Holy Land, where he stayed for eight days („Ekklēsia Polōnias” 1940, 165) and in August 1940 („Anahōrēseis- Afixeis” 1940, 261)<sup>24</sup>.

In the accompanying letter of his Report, Savva expresses his protest to His All-Holiness at the actions of the two occupying forces of Poland against the Orthodox of Poland and especially at the irregular interventions of the overseer of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergius, in the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, noting that: “D’après des informations qui me sont parvenues de source absolument sûre, le Métropolitaine Serge de Moscou, a pris sous son pouvoir ecclésiastique plusieurs diocèses orthodoxes de Pologne, notamment ceux qui se trouvent actuellement sous l’occupation soviétique”<sup>25</sup> and continuing to express his protest against this irregular act of mixing and effectively dissolving the pre-war organizational structure of the Polish Orthodox Church, stressing that “je me vole, hélas, obligé de protester auprès de Votre Sainteté, de la façon aussi respectueuse que catégorique, contre cet acte anti-canonique et présentant tous les caractères d’une infraction

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<sup>23</sup> On this visit see also the relevant information presented by Grzybowski 2019, 461-462.

<sup>24</sup> It is noted that Grodno Savva’s visits to the Middle East took place in order to inform the Orthodox Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem to support the integrity of the autocephalous regime of the pre-war Polish Orthodox Church. Regarding the matter see Grzybowski 2021a, 90-91; Grzybowski 2016b, 224-227.

<sup>25</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Letter of Bishop Grodno Savva to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

flagrante mx Statuts intérieurs de l'Église que j'ai l'insigne honneur de représenter"<sup>26</sup>.

The content of Bishop Savva's Report is in the same vein. The Report is entitled "Persécution de l'Église Orthodoxe en Pologne"<sup>27</sup> and is structured in the following five subsections: 1) "Guerre totale", 2) "L'Église orthodoxe autocéphale en Pologne", 3) "Occupation soviétique", 4) "Occupation allemande" and 5) "Evêque Seraphim".

At the beginning, he wrote up a short introductory Report, in which he stated that the Soviets and the Germans had carried out extensive destruction of the socio-economic life of the country (Koryś 2018, 255ff), the consequences of which were painfully experienced by the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland<sup>28</sup>. Then, Report proceeds to a brief presentation of the life of the Orthodox Church of Poland from the re-establishment of the Polish state after 1918 until its dismemberment in 1939. It provides sufficient information on the organization of the Polish Orthodox Church and its life within the Republic of Poland, noting that, despite the occasional problems and upheavals that the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland endured, it managed to find its place within the Polish democracy. In this section, it is interesting to see Savva's position on the secularism that prevailed in the country of Poland from the time of the re-establishment of the state until the outbreak of World War II, clearly stating that: "Grâce à la tolérance religieuse, existant en Pologne ainsi qu'à l'aide de la part du Gouvernement Polonais, l'Église Orthodoxe a eu la possibilité de se développer librement"<sup>29</sup>.

In fact, in the above Report, Savva unequivocally states that the events that occurred in Poland in 1938, such as the closing, confiscation and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Report of Bishop Grodno Savva entitled "Persécution de l'Église Orthodoxe en Pologne", 1-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

demolition of Orthodox churches in parts of the country, had nothing to do with the secularism that existed in Poland. He believes that they happened because the government and local administrative officials and especially the executive bodies implemented administrative decisions and orders with excessive zeal. He does not hesitate to lay the blame not only on these executive bodies, but also on factors from abroad, which, as he emphasizes, for political and propaganda reasons inflated and distorted the events. Regarding all the above, he writes in his Report:

“En 1938 furent répandus à l'étranger des bruits tendancieux au sujet de prétendues persécutions des orthodoxes en Pologne. Sans entrer dans les détails, il faut constater, que ces nouvelles étaient artificiellement amplifiées et avaient leur source dans la liquidation en ce temps, par voie administrative, de certaines situations juridiques de propriétés foncières, qui ont subsisté encore du temps du régime tsariste.

Bien que le Gouvernement Polonais d'alors ait toléré, il faut le reconnaître, l'application en cette matière de méthodes par trop rigoureuses et inutilement vexantes de la part des organes exécutifs, néanmoins l'opinion publique ne se solidarisa pas avec cette action et n'en était même pas informé. Il y avait dans ce domaine certaines intrigues en jeu et certaines influences politiques étrangères.

Néanmoins cette question douloureuse ne touche ni à l'autocéphale de l'Église Orthodoxe ni à sa structure juridique interne.

En peu de temps une harmonie complète fut rétablie entre l'Église Orthodoxe et le Gouvernement Polonais, ce qui trouve d'ailleurs sa confirmation dans la correspondance publiée en cette matière<sup>30</sup>.

Closing the presentation of the life of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland, he mentions, in general, the effects of the war on the country and on the Church in particular. Its faithful suffered persecution and its administrative organization was dissolved due to the military operations and the interventions of the occupying forces. He states that the Orthodox citizens of the country, clergy and laity did

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

their duty defending its freedom and fought against the invaders<sup>31</sup>. Many of them were killed and he cites as an example the head of the cathedral of Warsaw Fr. Terencjusz Teodorowicz. The conquerors, he says, after occupying the country, started a silent persecution in the religious field “sous forme de terreur organisée”<sup>32</sup>, and turned against all Churches and religious denominations. Concluding this section, the Report states which Church areas came under German and which under Soviet occupation. On this he states that the jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Warsaw and a small part of the diocese of Grodno fell under the German zone of occupation, while the remaining ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland came under the Soviet occupied zone.

Then, he refers in a dramatic way to the policy implemented by the Soviets in the Polish territories under their control. Massacres, persecution, displacement of clergy and monks; destruction of worship and other religious monuments; prohibition of all religious teaching and of the existence of religious symbols. The properties of monasteries and parishes were confiscated, those who resisted were exiled violently and all religious events were forbidden. Essentially, as he emphasizes, what was applied in the Soviet Union against the Church was applied, in a more violent way, in Poland by the Soviet atheistic propaganda machine, which overwhelmed the Soviet-occupied territories of Poland (among them the organization “Atheists”, which was immediately established in the newly conquered area). Continuing his Report, he refers to the actions of the German occupation forces and the conditions they created for the Church. He believes that the Germans behaved more leniently than the Soviets, but that their intervention in the internal administrative organization of the Polish Orthodox Church completely disrupted its

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<sup>31</sup> Regarding the aforementioned in Savva’s Report, see his similar research findings in, Grzybowski 2016c, 206-211.

<sup>32</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Report of Bishop Grodno Savva entitled “Persécution de l’Eglise Orthodoxe en Pologne”, 3.

administrative structure and unity. He states that the biggest blow was the arrest by the Gestapo of the Metropolitan of Warsaw and All Poland Dionysius, his forced resignation and his confinement in the city of Otwock under surveillance, as well as the bishop's assistant Timotheus, whom they imprisoned in the Orthodox monastery of Jableczna. The main thing, he notes, was that in the place of Dionysius, the dubious Orthodox Metropolitan of Berlin Seraphim (Alfred) Lade was appointed as head of the Autocephalous Church of Poland in the German-occupied Polish territories, who dissolved every existing organization of the Orthodox Church. On this, Bishop Savva notes, "Après s'être emparé du pourvoi l'évêque Seraphim s'entoura de personnages expulsés des organisations religieuses et commença son activité administrative par la remise en vigueur de l'ancien calendrier julien"<sup>33</sup>.

Bishop Savva's Report continues with its last section in which he presents and analyzes the personality of Metropolitan Seraphim Lade focusing on his life and activities until his settlement in Warsaw. He states that he is irregularly ordained based on an article in *Le Temps* newspaper, in which the following information is found: "Le Métropolitte Serge de Moscou, gardien du trône patriarcal, dans son okaz du 9 septembre 1937 rappelle que Lade, prêtre bigame, n'a aucun droit au titre d'évêque et que l'exercice du sacerdoce lui est interdit"<sup>34</sup>. Continuing, he refers to Seraphim's anticanonical activities from 1930 until World War II, in Ukraine, Romania and Czechoslovakia. He notes that Seraphim is an instrument of the Third Reich and his main purpose is to dissolve the Polish Orthodox Church and dominate it, so as to carry out the Third Reich's plan to create a single Orthodox Church, which would include the Orthodox of Poland, Ruthenia, Subcarpathia, Slovakia, Bohemia, Moravia and Ukraine. He emphasizes that Metropolitan Dionysius considers "tout à fait illégal"<sup>35</sup> the involvement of the Seraphim, which,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 6.



he notes, is against the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church stating that: “... l’activité de Seraphim est en contradiction flagrante tant avec les principes de la moralité chrétienne, qu’avec les canons de la sainte Église Orthodoxe. En effet, en vertu des résolutions des Synodes Œcuméniques de Carthagène /résolution 65/ et d’Antioche /résolutions 16 et 21/, l’évêque qui s’immisce dans l’administration d’un autre diocèse est passible de peines ecclésiastiques le plus sévères”<sup>36</sup>. He goes on to quote information from the press published in the newspapers of the time, referring to the attitude of the clergy towards the actions of Seraphim: “... le clergé orthodoxe engage en ce moment une lutte acharnée contre le pseudo-évêque et contre les moyens machiavéliques, dont il se sert pour réduire à l’impuissance ceux qui cherchent à rester fidèles à leurs chefs religieux”<sup>37</sup>.

Bishop Grodno Savva closes his Report with an exhortation to the Ecumenical Patriarch noting: “Votre devoir à nous est de venir en aide aux frères persécutés en Pologne, aussi bien sous l’une que sous l’autre occupation, frères maltraités par les bourreaux bolchévistes autant que par les pasteurs qui, comme disait notre Sauveur, bien que portant des peaux de brebis sont intérieurement des loups féroces”<sup>38</sup> and expresses the hope “... que Sa Sainteté ne reconnaîtra sous aucune forme ni d’aucune manière, directe ou indirecte, les faits accomplis qu’un évêque dissident tache de créer en Pologne par ordre des autorités d’occupation et au détriment des droits et des libertés de Notre Sainte Église Orthodoxe Autocéphale”<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid..

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 7.

### 3. Analysis-Evaluation of the Report

By carefully examining the Report of Bishop Grodno Savva and analyzing the individual thoughts and formulations, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. In the accompanying letter of the Report, as well as in the Report itself, his love for the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland can be confirmed. At the same time, he shows his anxiety for the preservation of its autocephalous status and the strong repulsion of external interventions in its autocephalous life. He is adamant about this because he believes that only this way will it be possible for the Orthodox Church in Poland to survive and overcome internal divisions and schisms. It must be emphasised that the Polish government in exile was also interested in securing the pre-war autocephalous status of the Polish Orthodox Church, because through this it would help its basic aim of preserving the pre-war borders of Poland after the end of World War II and primarily turned to the Ecumenical Patriarchate<sup>40</sup>.

Of course, his Report does not mention that the autocephalous regime of the Polish Orthodox Church had its internal opponents. These were the Ukrainians with their Ukrainian national claims and moves to develop an independent Ukrainian Church as a vehicle for their national restoration. Essentially this desire was to create an independent Ukrainian state, wedged between Poland and the USSR and with territorial claims that altered existing borders. This desire was fully exploited by the Nazi occupying forces, and they satisfied these ambitions by leading to the creation of various ecclesiastical jurisdictions<sup>41</sup>. The fact that

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<sup>40</sup> On this see Grzybowski 2019, 456-472; Grzybowski 2016c, 233ff.; Grzybowski 2018a, 163ff.

<sup>41</sup> On the Ukrainian national movement and relations between Ukrainians and Poles during the inter-war period see Reshetar 1951, 39-49; Motyl 1985, 45-55; Wynot 1985, 214ff.; Subtelny 2000, 425-452; Mironowicz E. 2007, 126ff.; Višivanjuk 2014, 160-183; Mironowicz 2014a, 489-516; Wynot 2014, 27ff. noting that the author considers the bestow of the autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1924 as a “non-canonical act”.

Bishop of Grodno Savva did not mention in the Report this internal problem, which was literally directed against the autocephalous status of the Polish Orthodox Church, is due to the fact that the movement of the Ukrainian ecclesiastical authorities had not fully and completely manifested itself, since the eastward expansion of the Nazi German occupying forces had not yet begun. Also, at this time the priority was to deal with the Nazi and Soviet external factor and less with internal tensions and tendencies within the Orthodox community<sup>42</sup>.

2. Savva's great fear was the intervention of the Soviet Union and the Moscow Patriarchate, which he considered the most dangerous factor that could lead to the dissolution of the Polish Orthodox Church through the loss of its autocephalous status. On this point, the Bishop was not wrong, because during the interwar period the pressures exerted by the Church of Russia, through the overseer of the Moscow Patriarchate, were continuous and permanent. The Soviet regime took advantage of these events to intervene in the internal situation of the Polish state<sup>43</sup> and to cause problems and destabilization of the state with the aim of expansion towards the West especially because of the heavy defeat suffered by the Polish army during the war that determined the eastern borders

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<sup>42</sup> Smirnov 2021, in which the author, apart from some sentimentalism, presents and documents with the methodological use and balanced presentation of his material the Ukrainian ecclesiastical issue during the years of the Second World War and demonstrates in how great a role the religious (Orthodox) factor played in the processes of building the Ukrainian state or, more correctly, the Ukrainian nation. Markiewicz 2021, 16 ff., where the above issue is examined objectively. Also see Kirillova 1998, 71-86; Armstrong 1980, 188 ff.; Grzybowski 2018a, 161 ff.; Fotiev 1997, 7-85, mainly 63 ff., where there is much of information on the subject from the Russian point of view.

<sup>43</sup> As a typical example it should be mentioned that the great atheist and propagandist of the Soviet regime B. Kandidov, who, while advocating the extinction of all religious expression within the Soviet Union, published a book (Kandidov 1930) in which he defended the religious rights of the Orthodox in Poland against the "violence of militant Catholicism and its exploitation by state power over the desires of a heterodox national minority (насилие воинствующего католицизма и эксплуататорской государственной власти над желаниями инаковерующего национального меньшинства)" (Kandidov 1930, 52).

of Poland (1918-1921). This purpose was realized after the agreement with Nazi Germany, when in 1939 with the start of the Second World War it occupied the eastern provinces of Poland.

It is known that after the establishment of the state of Poland, the Patriarch of Moscow Tychon refused to grant the former autocephalous status, but only the status of autonomy, to the ecclesiastical Orthodox provinces that came within the Polish state. The status was given despite the fact that the Church of Russia knew it could not be in communication with these provinces because of the creation of the independent state of Poland and the internal problems it faced from the anti-religious and anti-ecclesiastical policies of the Bolsheviks<sup>44</sup>. The leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate did not understand that it was very difficult to govern Orthodox populations in a country which was at the very least cautious of its relations with the Soviet Union, if not openly hostile. Especially when considering that over the centuries the relations between the two states formed negative stereotypes, mainly due to the dominance of the strong memory of the conflicts and the ideological reasons which were implanted in the Russian and Polish societies<sup>45</sup>. Despite all this, the Patriarch of Moscow Tychon, assisted by the Synod of the Russian Church, strongly protested in a letter to the Metropolitan Dionysius about the granting of the autocephalous status, which he considered invalid (Gubonin 1994, 320-321).

After the death of Patriarch Tychon, Metropolitan Dionysius tried to communicate with the vicar of the Patriarchate, Metropolitan Petros, by sending him a relevant letter (Gubonin 1994, 426; Aleksija 1937, 120-122; Bendza 2006, 78). In this letter, Dionysius mentioned the events of the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Poland and

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<sup>44</sup> On the difficulties faced by the Moscow Patriarchate at the time see Vasilieva 1993, 40-54; Vasilieva 1994, 35-47. Also Langord 1931, 58 ff.; Fougias 1957, 41.

<sup>45</sup> On the historical and ideological contrasts between the two peoples and the persistent and strong negative stereotypes between them, see the interesting presentations in the collective volume Khorev 2000.

asked him to convince the Moscow Patriarchate to recognize the new status as well and allow the autocephalous and independent course of the Polish Church. The attempt failed because Metropolitan Peter was arrested by the Soviet authorities<sup>46</sup>.

After the arrest of Metropolitan Peter, the administration of the Moscow Patriarchate was taken over by the deputy vicar, Metropolitan Sergius, who took a hard line towards the Polish Orthodox Church. In January and September 1927, Metropolitan Sergius sent letters in which he emphasized that the Polish Orthodox Church had made a terrible mistake by receiving autocephalous status, because the normal granting of this status was a prerogative only of the Moscow Patriarchate, under whose jurisdiction the ecclesiastical provinces of Poland belonged. For this reason, he emphasized that the existing autocephalous was of no value (Svitič 1997, 141; Heyer 1953, 146; Janin 1997, 265; Pantainos 1930, 632-633). The Polish Orthodox Church, through the Metropolitan of Warsaw Dionysius, responded to these letters noting that the Orthodox ecclesiastical provinces that had become part of the Polish state had to be organized at the beginning of the autocephaly in order to manage to survive within the new state. Because of this, the Orthodox hierarchy of Poland requested from the Ecumenical Patriarchate the granting of autocephalous status and the Church of Russia was fully informed about this. He also mentioned that the autocephaly of the Church of Poland had been recognized by the other Orthodox Churches and he hoped that in the future the Church of Russia would also recognize the autocephaly of his Church (Svitič 1997, 142; Heyer 1953, 137-138; Godun 2009, 232; Fougias 1957, 42).

After the letter of Metropolitan Sergius, the Synod of the Church of Poland decided to communicate the issue on the one hand to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, asking to be informed about what the normal

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<sup>46</sup> About events in the Russian Orthodox Church during this period see Kalkan-djieva 2015, 12 ff. and 22 ff.

framework of relations between the two Churches was and on the other hand to inform the Polish Government, through the Minister of Religious Affairs, of the objections of Metropolitan Sergius (Bendza 2006, 91). The Ecumenical Patriarchate, responding to the above question, stated that the relations of the Church of Poland with the Church of Russia were part of the framework of equal fraternal relations between the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and were based on the normal and equal participation of the Church of Poland in the network of Orthodox relations after the declaration of her autocephaly<sup>47</sup>. The Minister, in his reply to Metropolitan Dionysius' letter, commented negatively on Metropolitan Sergius' letter and emphasized that nothing he had claimed had any basis (Bendza 2006, 91-92).

Metropolitan Sergius decided to strike again in 1930 with a letter in which he addressed a "Warning to the Orthodox Church of Poland". In the letter, among other things, after stressing that the only Church competent to grant autocephalous status was the Church of Russia, he noted that the Orthodox Church of Poland because of its insistence on the non-canonical autocephalous status would become like the Church of Bulgaria, which at that time was schismatic and had found itself in a difficult and extremely stressful situation<sup>48</sup>.

Following the above actions of Metropolitan Sergius, by which he considered the Church of Poland as part of the Church of Russia, not recognizing its autocephalous existence but also condemning its actions, the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Poland considered it right to sev-

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<sup>47</sup> Archive of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Code of Patriarchal Correspondence (AEP, CPC), A/96, p. 26-27, no. 2871, the Ecumenical Patriarch to Metropolitan Dionysius of Warsaw and all Poland.

<sup>48</sup> For the correspondence of Metropolitan Dionysius with the Church of Russia see Gubonin 1994, 320-321, 422-426, 752-756 etc.; Janin 1997, 265; „Ekklēsia Polōnias” 1930, 320; „Ekkl. Rössopolōnika” 1930, 632-633 and „Ekklēsia Polōnias” 1931, 93. Also Fougias 1957, 45 and footnote 1, where the entire letter of Metropolitan Sergius can be read.

er its relations with it, “to serve the interests” of the Church of Poland (Papierzyńska-Turek 1989, 129-130; Mironowicz 2005, 108-109)<sup>49</sup>.

Against the autocephaly of the Polish Orthodox Church, the Russian hierarchs (Bishops), other clergy and laity who had fled to the West after the imposition of the Bolshevik regime in Russia, were strongly opposed to the granting of autocephalous status to the Polish Orthodox Church. That is why they proceeded to weaken and discredit it through letters of protest to the leaders of the Orthodox Churches and decisions of the Synod they had created in Karlovci, Serbia, which were highly nationalistic<sup>50</sup>. It is characteristically mentioned that Metropolitan of the Russian Diaspora Eulogius Georgievskij (Георгиевский), in his letter sent on 5/18 May 1926 to the Ecumenical Patriarch Photios, after expressing his respect for the first throne of Orthodoxy, noted that the autocephalous to Orthodoxy Church of Poland was a wrong action and considered it “an intervention in the internal affairs of the Autocephalous Church of Russia, which is not justified by the rules” („Mitropolit Evlogii ob otiošenii Vselenskoj Patriarhii k russkim cerkovnym delam” 1929, 29)<sup>51</sup>. The reaction against the autocephalous regime of the Polish Orthodox Church from lay Russians of the diaspora, from the group of

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<sup>49</sup> See also the statements of the Metropolitan of Warsaw Dionysius during the work of the “Preliminary Committee of Mount Athos”, in 1930, in Ecumenical Patriarchate 1930, 105.

<sup>50</sup> Antonii, *Mitropolit* 1925, 1-4, where the letter of Metropolitan Antony of the Russian hierarchs of the diaspora to the Ecumenical Patriarch Constantine VI. See „Ekklesiá Rôsiás: Mêtropolis Polônias” 1924, 608-609; Pospelovsky 1984c, 266. About the positions of the Russian hierarchs abroad for the Autocephalous Church of Poland see Kostrjukov 2011, 59-65, 219-220.

<sup>51</sup> Metropolitan Eulogius had served as a bishop in the provinces of the Church of Poland, when the regions were under the Russian state’s administration. In 1931 he came under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which named him its Metropolitan Exarch and head of the Exarchate of the Russian parishes of Western Europe. Related see Anderson 1947, 562-567; Stepanov 2009, 574-575; Tzoumerkas 2012, 367-368.

Slavophiles was also strong<sup>52</sup> (e.g., Anatolij Popov<sup>53</sup>, Aleksandr Svitič<sup>54</sup>, K. N. Nikolaev)<sup>55</sup>, protesting in writing against the autocephalous status. They also turned against those who were in favor of the autocephalous status and participated in its granting, because, as they emphatically emphasized, by granting autocephalous status they subjected the Polish Orthodox Church to the violence of an anti-Orthodox state. Of course, the aforementioned Russians overlooked the fact that the Church of Russia was so closely associated with the Russian state that “it was always

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<sup>52</sup> The “Slavophiles” are an ideological movement of many Russian intellectuals who tried through the study of the ideological movements of Europe to turn Russia towards the West. But they quickly became disillusioned with the materialistic Western culture and turned towards Orthodoxy and the promotion of Russian Orthodox greatness which they considered a universal value that could enlighten and save Europe and the whole world. They believed that the universal message of Orthodoxy could only be expressed on a global level through Russia, because all the ancient Orthodox Churches of the East had degenerated and were not capable of imparting and realizing the universal message of Orthodoxy; the new center of Orthodox faith was now Russia. This ideological movement was associated with both Russian-imperial nationalism and Soviet nationalism. On this movement see Feidas 2014, 526-535; Rabow-Edling 2006; Devlin 1999; Janov 2002.

<sup>53</sup> He wrote the work: Попов 1937.

<sup>54</sup> A. K. Svitič (Свити́ч Александр Калли́никович 1890-1963) was the son of an Orthodox priest from Vilna. After the Bolshevik revolution he settled in Warsaw. He was a graduate of the Warsaw School of Theology and holder of a master's degree. He worked as a journalist and editor of religious magazines and newspapers. In 1945, after the Soviet troops entered Warsaw, he fled to Germany and around 1950 he moved to Denver (Colorado) USA, where he died in 1963. He wrote and published the study *Pravoslavnaja Cerkov' v Pol'she i ee avtokefalija*, Buenos Aires 1959. See Svitič 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Konstantin Nikolaev (Николаев Константин Николаевич 1884-1965) was a lawyer by profession in Kyiv, who, after the rise of communism in Russia, settled in Warsaw and served as a legal advisor to the Polish Orthodox Church from 1920 until 1933, when he was forced to leave Poland by order of the Polish authorities. After a short stay in Yugoslavia and Germany, he emigrated to the USA, where he remained until his death in 1965. He was quite militant in favor of the Orthodox Russian greatness, as evidenced by his speeches during the second session of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, such as: “Položenie Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi i very v Sov. Rossii”; “Položenie Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi posle vojny”; “Vostočnyj obrjad”; “Gonienie na Pravoslavie v Pol'she”, which were included in his books: Nikolaev 1939 and Nikolaev 1950.



unable to detach itself even from the most extreme choices of state power during the younger years” (Feidas 2014, 553; also see Varvounis, Tzoumerkas 2019, 413).

The above dispositions of the Moscow Patriarchate were certainly known to Bishop Grodno Savva and were fully confirmed after the occupation of Poland by the Soviet troops and the creation of the People’s Republic of Poland. At the time, the Moscow Patriarchate was used by the Soviet authorities to subordinate all the Orthodox Churches of the satellite states of the Soviet Union to the Moscow Patriarchate, in order to use the Church and the power of the Patriarchate as a tool to advance Soviet political and diplomatic goals, along with the foreign policy and international influence of the Soviet Union<sup>56</sup>. Applying this policy in Poland, the Moscow Patriarchate demanded that the Autocephalous Orthodox Church renounce its autocephaly and asked for it to be re-granted by the Church of Russia, a request granted in 1948. Another fact that justifies Bishop Savva’s thoughts was the move of the Moscow Patriarchate to appoint Makarios, the Archbishop of Lviv and Ternopol of the Moscow Patriarchate, as the head of the Polish Orthodox Church, because the Patriarchate judged that there was no suitable hierarch in the Polish Orthodox Church to be appointed to the position (Urban 1996, 67ff.; Mironowicz 2006, 671ff.; Wynot 2014, 62ff.; Dudra 2015, 263-276).

In addition, it should be noted that Bishop Savva’s struggle to preserve the autocephalous regime remained undiminished during wartime, as it can be seen from his correspondence with the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin. In fact, in a letter from Bishop Savva to the Patriarch on 30 July 1943 from New York, he thanked Benjamin for the support he provided to the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland. He also hoped that the Ecumenical Patriarchate would support the Orthodox

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<sup>56</sup> Related see Varvounis, Tzoumerkas 2019, 411-413, no. of comment 31. For the use of religion and Orthodoxy in particular by Russian-Soviet foreign policy see Fireside 1971, 183 ff.; Pospelovsky 1984a, 41-58; Pospelovsky 1984c, 303 ff.; Curanović 2010, 176 ff.

Church of Poland in its reorganization after the war, since, as he noted, efforts would be needed for its recovery so that it could heal from the internal and external blows it suffered during the war. He also referred to Soviet propaganda and its actions in occupied Poland as well as the efforts of the Exarch vicar of the Moscow Patriarchate in the USA in favor of the Church of Russia and informed the Ecumenical Patriarch that he had not contacted him because the Exarch worked against the Autocephalous of the Polish Orthodox Church and he was supported by the Soviet diplomatic missions (Filipow, Suchcitz 1997, doc. no. 3). The Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin responded to the above letter of Bishop Savva with his letter dated 25 January 1944, in which he noted, among other things: “We declare in response that our Mother Church, as it has been until now, will continue to surround the Holy Orthodox Church of Poland with loving interest”<sup>57</sup>.

3. Bishop Savva’s reference in his Report and in the brief description of the activity of the Polish Orthodox Church from its foundation until 1940, that the Church had developed thanks to the “religious tolerance” that had prevailed in Poland and the help offered by the Polish government is noteworthy. Of course, he does not deny that the Polish Orthodox Church was pressured by the actions of state bodies directed against it and that these were violent and often unjustified. But this does not dispute Poland’s religious tolerance and that reports of suffering in the Polish Orthodox Church reaching the West were “artificially” inflated. These pressures, he states, mostly came from machinations and actions from abroad. With these views, Bishop Savva, as it turns out,

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<sup>57</sup> AEP, CPC, A/101, 74-74a, doc. 16/25-1-1944, Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin to Bishop Grodno and Novogrodek Savva: “Δηλοῦντες, εἰς ἀπάντησιν, ὅτι ἡ καθ’ ἡμᾶς Μήτηρ Ἐκκλησία ὡς ἄχρι τοῦδε οὕτω καὶ ἐφεξῆς διὰ στοργικοῦ ἐνδιαφέροντος μέλλει περιβάλλειν τὴν Ἀγιοτάτην Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Τολωνίας.” It should be noted that in the Codes of Patriarchal Correspondence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate there are letters replying to the letters of Bishop Savva, such as for example: AEP, CPC, A/101, 85-85a and A/101, 148-148a.

is fully in favor of the Polish state and government and considers that any interventions by the state were carried out to settle its own pending internal state affairs. However, it is known that the Polish Orthodox Church was under severe pressure mainly from the Roman Catholic Church during the 1920s-1930s, either due to the violent occupation of its religious institutions or the countless lawsuits that it submitted to the country's local courts for the return of many religious institutions owned by the Orthodox to the Roman Catholic Church or the Polish Unitarian communities. These actions were carried out based on the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church was the first owner and possessor of them and that they came into the possession of the Orthodox Church after the intervention of the Russian authorities that occupied the country until the First World War. The Orthodox Church defended its properties and saved most of them. Of course, the state was constitutionally secular under the 1921 Constitution („Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej” 1921, 653 {Article 111}), and the 1935 Constitution („Ustawa Konstytucyjna z dnia 23 kwietnia 1935 r.” 1935, 497 {Article 5}), in which there were clear provisions relating to the securing of freedom of religious conscience and religious duties by the state towards all its citizens, regardless of origin and religious belief. However, this religious freedom, guaranteed in theory many times by the constitutional texts and by the state executive bodies, was not implemented in practice, because the state apparatus, mainly at the local level, if not at the high government level, failed to resist the often-excessive demands and claims of the Roman Catholic Church. The government did not adequately control the local administrative authorities and service factors by which the Polish Orthodox Church was under pressure, which weakened its work and absorbed its vital force. These actions gave reason to the deniers of its Autocephaly to propagandize that the Autocephaly was to blame for everything, which, as they claimed, led to the subordination of the Church to the state. This abnormal situation was aggravated by the pending determination of the legal position of the Orthodox Church within

the state. The Roman Catholic Church was vehemently opposed to the organization of an independent Orthodox Church which it regarded as its foe within a Roman Catholic state and was of the opinion that all its citizens should affiliate with or join the Roman Catholic Church in order to become true citizens of the state, since for her the axiom that Pole = Roman Catholic was valid. For this reason, the struggle against the Orthodox Church was permanent<sup>58</sup>. It began by challenging the ownership status of many religious properties (temples, pilgrimage sites, monasteries, etc.) supported by the local political and military authorities. During the years 1927-1929 the Roman Catholic Church filed over five hundred lawsuits against the claims of Orthodox religious institutions, of which the Orthodox Church lost more than a third. This forced Metropolitan Dionysius to issue an encyclical to the flock of his Church<sup>59</sup>. The local administrative authorities implemented a harsh policy, not of secularism, but of identification with the aspirations of the Roman Catholic Church and were drawn to become vehicles for the enforcement of the unrestrained aspirations of the Roman Catholic Church to create a purely Roman Catholic state according to the doctrine of “the Catholic state of the Polish people”<sup>60</sup>.

In fact, the year 1938 saw violent attacks by the local political and mainly military authorities against the Orthodox Church peak in the provinces of Chelm and Lublin. As a result of these actions, about 127

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<sup>58</sup> For further remarks and comments on the Roman Catholic Church's attitudes toward in the various manifestations of Polishness see Pease 2009.

<sup>59</sup> The question of the ownership of the churches and institutions of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland was a matter of concern in Polish public life throughout the interwar period. There is a rich bibliography on this issue, see, for example, Mysiek 1987, 164ff.; Mędrzecki 1988, 30ff.; Chojnowski 1988, 177-190; Pelica 2007, 204-205 and 210ff.; Mironowicz 2005, 127ff.; Mironowicz 2014b, 405-420; Mironowicz 2017, 38-50.

<sup>60</sup> Further information on the position of the Roman Catholic Church within Poland during the interwar period see Pease 1991, 521-553; Wynot 1973, 223-240; Porter-Szűcs 2011. Also Tzoumerkas 2020, 120ff.

properties were demolished (most were worship) or came into the ownership of the Roman Catholics. Following these dramatic developments, many parishes in these two provinces were deprived of their parish church and the faithful could not perform their religious duties. It should be noted that there were about 30 cases of destruction of Orthodox churches in Poland after its independence where the authorities destroyed the churches because they considered them symbols of tsarism and Russian occupation. These disasters happened gradually and occurred case-by-case and not systematically. The first systematic destruction of churches took place in 1938 with the participation of the army, the police and Roman Catholic fanatics<sup>61</sup>.

Bishop Savva argues in his Report that this was not a systematic destruction but rather an isolated event which did not affect the Orthodox Church of Poland in terms of the Autocephaly or in terms of its legal and administrative structure within the state and that complete harmony prevailed in the relations between the two sides. Of course, this remarkable position formulated by Bishop Savva stems from his basic stance that only with the autocephalous status and excellent relations with the state could the Orthodox Church survive. For this reason, he believes that no anti-Orthodox actions originated with the Polish government and the tragic events of May-June 1938 had no connection with the relationship of the Polish Orthodox Church with the Polish state. And this can be seen from the fact that these relations were further improved with the issuance of basic legislative regulations of the relations between

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<sup>61</sup> Kuprianowicz 2008, on the events of the operation of May-June 1938 from 37ff. Also see Stawecki 1969, 169-210. A description of the events of the imposition of Roman Catholicism in the Chelm region from 1918 to 1939, with extensions to the national Ukrainian question, can be found in the relevant studies of Sadkowski 1998a, 813-839; Sadkowski 1998b, 509-520; Markiewicz 2021, 11-12. See also „Ę en Polōnia Orthodoxē Ekklēsia” 1938, 253; „Ekklēsia Polōnias” 1938, 285 and „Ekklēsia Polōnias” 1939, 30-31; All the above actions of the representatives of the Polish state, especially the military, indicate the complex relationship between the interwar Polish state and the Roman Catholic Church.

the Church and the state, but also with the legislative sanction and issuance of the statute of the Polish Orthodox Church. Both of these legislative texts precisely regulated the external relations of the Church with the state and gave it the freedom of organizing its internal matters autonomously. The Report justifies the violent events of 1938, as being caused by the legal settlement of problems of ownership, jurisdiction and land possession that existed from the time of the Tsarist regime. Bishop Savva considers the Polish Orthodox Church an integral part of the Polish state and for this reason the Orthodox priests and citizens of Poland did their duty and fought for the freedom of their country against the invaders in September 1939. Here it should be noted that during World War II, the Polish Orthodox Church had several victims who lost their lives, and several of its members were martyred defending their Orthodox faith. Such was the case of the Orthodox Archpriest and ex colonel of the religious service of the Polish army Bazyli Martysz who was murdered by extremists (Grzybowski 2018c, 41-48; Grzybowski 2021b, 44-59) and that of the Orthodox Archpriest lieutenant colonel of the Polish army Szymon Fedoronko (Grzybowski 2021b, 59-75), who was murdered by the Soviets, together with thousands of other Polish officers in the forest of Katyn<sup>62</sup>. Archimandrite Gregorius Peradze was executed by the Nazi occupying forces for helping the Jews and collaborating with the Polish resistance forces<sup>63</sup>. Priests, monks and laity of

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<sup>62</sup> On the Katyn massacre see Stanford 2009; Allen 2010.

<sup>63</sup> He was a Georgian by birth and a professor at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Warsaw. In May 1942 he was arrested by the Nazi occupation forces and in November of the same year he was transferred to Auschwitz. On December 6 he was executed offering his life in place of other prisoners to save them. In 1996, the Church of Georgia ranked him among the saints. For a long time in Poland, and especially in Warsaw, his memory was honored and he was even referred to by the title of "holy Professor". In 1998, an Orthodox brotherhood named after him was founded in Warsaw. He is commemorated on November 23 (December 6 in the Gregorian calendar). On the act of canonization see "Akt kanonizacji" 1995, 4. See also Lenczewski 1974, 61-67; Paprocki 1986a, 7-20; Paprocki 1986b, 22-27; Radziukiewicz 2008, 182-183; Charkiewicz 2004.

Lublin and Chelm provinces were also martyred during the persecution unleashed by the occupying forces<sup>64</sup>.

It seems that Bishop Savva had great faith in the Polish state and believed the Polish Orthodox Church could only survive within the legal structures of the Polish state. However, despite the above, we cannot ignore the fact that the anti-Orthodox and violent interventions of state administrative bodies towards the Church “fed” the opponents of the Autocephaly. The latter blamed the Orthodox Church for requesting Autocephaly and was left unprotected inside a non-Orthodox state, and for presenting Poland around the world as a country that does not respect the religious freedoms of its citizens because they follow a doctrine different from that of the majority.

4. A noteworthy fact is that one third of the Report is taken up by a reference to the actions of the Bishop (Metropolitan) of Berlin Seraphim (Alfred Lade). He took over the administration of the Polish Orthodox Church in the German-occupied areas and made extensive changes that led to its complete Sovietization<sup>65</sup>. Savva’s extensive

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<sup>64</sup> These are priests, monks and lay people who were martyred during the persecution that was unleashed against the Orthodox in the areas of Chelm and Podlaskia, during the period of WWII. In particular, monk Ignatius, martyred in the Monastery of Saint Onuphrius Jableczna, on August 10, 1942; Priest Sergius Zacharczuk, who testified on May 6, 1943; Archpriest Paul Sz wajko and his wife Joanna, testifying on August 28, 1943; Priest Leo Korobczuk, who testified on March 10, 1944. Priest Nikolas Holc, who testified on April 2, 1944; Priest Peter Ohryzko, who testified on April 10, 1944; Protopresbyter Vasilios Martysz, who testified on May 4, 1945. In March 2003, by synodal decision, the Orthodox Church of Poland included them in the Orthodox canon and decided to honor their memory every first Sunday of June. Their official proclamation took place on Sunday, June 8, 2003. Related see „Męczennikom Chełmsko–Podlaskim”, 4; and *Kalendarz Polskiego Autokefalicznego Kościoła Prawosławnego* 2004, 3-5, for the decision of their proclamation. For the synodal act of canonization, see „Uchwała Świętego Soboru Biskupów PAKP o zaliczeniu do grona świętych Chełmskich i Podlaskich Męczenników XX wieku”, 3; Kuprianowicz 2003, 4-5; Charkiewicz 2003, 3; Sidorski 2003, 4-5; Charkiewicz 2004, for details about their lives.

<sup>65</sup> On the actions of Seraphim in the German-occupied areas of Poland see Mironowicz 2005, 199 ff.; Mironowicz 2006, 632 ff.; Mironowicz 2010, 105-114.

reference to Seraphim Lade should be read bearing in mind the rest of the Report and is probably because the events were recent and directly related to the Autocephaly of the Polish Orthodox Church. Referring to Seraphim's actions up to the writing of the Report, he tried to demonstrate that he was unfit for the administration and pastoral ministry of the Polish Orthodox population. This happened, as it can be seen from the style and conclusion of the Report, because he was afraid that the Ecumenical Patriarchate or the other Autocephalous Orthodox Churches would recognize as "normal-canonical" the newly shaped ecclesiastical situation in Poland. For this reason, he emphatically emphasized the anticanonical presence of Seraphim in Poland and puts forward a number of sacred rules of the Church, to prove that Seraphim's presence in Poland and his actions were against the canons of the Orthodox Church. He considered him to be an instrument of the Third Reich, serving Nazi Germany's plans to create a single Slavic Orthodox Church under his leadership, which would include all Orthodox Christians in the territories occupied by the Third Reich<sup>66</sup>.

Seraphim was a Prussian by origin who had converted to Orthodoxy and was in charge of the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany. In Poland, Seraphim made sweeping changes in the part of the Church under German occupation by destabilizing the entire autocephalous structure of the Polish Orthodox Church. He also shut down the Theological School in Warsaw and the Church's printing press (Fireside 1971, 77ff.; Urban 1996, 55-57; Williamson 2009, 151ff.; Smirnov 2021).

Bishop Savva gained information about the actions of Seraphim Lade and the situation in Poland from an article in the newspaper *Le*

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Markiewicz 2021, 81 ff.

<sup>66</sup> On the politics of the Third Reich and the use of religion and the Orthodox Church as a weapon for expansion to the East see, Fireside 1971, 49 ff. and 72 ff. Also see Smirnov 2021, 54 ff. M. Škarovskij notes that the German policy was to make the Orthodox Church an instrument for their consolidation in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, on this see Škarovskij 2004, 272 ff.



*Temps* of Paris, dated 28 January, 1940, which was scathing and extremely negative about the moves of Seraphim in Poland („LITUANIE: Les menées nazies contre l’Eglise orthodoxe” 1928, 2). Comparing the original French text of the Report and the newspaper article we find that he used the information from that text to compile this section of his Report. In addition, the aphoristic and pleading tone at the end of the Report that the Ecumenical Patriarch should not recognize the new incidents and especially the actions of Seraphim Lade, which Savva described at length, as well as his anxiety about this happening, probably came from the above publication of the newspaper *Le Temps*. In this publication, the newspaper’s correspondent emphatically pointed out at the conclusion that:

Afin de donner un semblant de légalité à son activité criminelle, Séraphime Laddé s’est adressé, par l’intermédiaire du gouvernement nazi, au patriarche de Constantinople dans l’espoir d’obtenir son appui dans la formidable spoliation des biens des trois Églises orthodoxes qu’il a entreprise. Aucune réponse n’a encore été obtenue, mais l’on espère toujours dans l’entourage de la patriarchie moscovite que malgré j’influence des conseillers germanophiles du patriarche de Constantinople et les divergences de vues qui existent entre lui et Moscou, il se refusera à prêter main-forte aux manœuvres déployées par le Reich et son agent de liaison Laddé pour briser l’unité morale de l’orthodoxie et mettre la religion au service de’ sombres desseins de la Gestapo („LITUANIE: Les menées nazies contre l’Eglise orthodoxe” 1928, 2).

The newspaper *Le Temps*’ very critical text about Seraphim and his actions received unfavorable comments by the journal of the Russian Metropolis of Berlin, headed by Seraphim. In this, the editor mentions bitterly that the meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided on 23 February, 1940, that it: “considers the violent seizure of power in the Polish Orthodox Church an illegal (anticanonical) act and recognizes only one Metropolitan, Dionysius”<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Viktorov 1940, 61-63, mainly 62: “считает насильственный захват власти

The information of the article in the newspaper *Le Temps* about the actions of the Nazis against the Ecumenical Patriarchate regarding the recognition of the actions of Seraphim in Poland was based on information published in the press. The German authorities approached the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin in December 1939 and requested he recognize Seraphim as the head of the Polish Orthodox Church, but the Ecumenical Patriarchate refused („Kirchliche Chronik” 1940, 94). The reports were rejected by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which stated that: “Regarding the publications that state... that a Representative of the German Ministry of Religion was sent to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to settle the Ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Orthodox Churches of Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Ecumenical Patriarchate categorically states that no Representative of the German Government visited the Patriarchate and no other contact or action was made in relation to it and therefore the above and all other points are completely unsubstantiated”<sup>68</sup>.

The intervention of the German authorities in this matter is not proven by the German archives, as Russian researcher (M. B. Shkarovskij) of these archives claims) (Škarovskij 2002, 133-134; Škarovskij 2007, 111-112). In fact, the latter considers Bishop Grodno Savva, who, as he mentions, visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate twice and convinced the Ecumenical Patriarch not to recognize Seraphim, responsible for the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s negative attitude towards Seraphim’s actions.

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в Польской Православной Церкви актом антиканоническим и признает только одного митрополита Дионисия”

<sup>68</sup> „Ἐν σχέσει πρὸς τὰ κατ’ αὐτὰς ἰδόντα τὸ φῶς δημοσιεύματᾶ καθ’ [ἃ] ἀπεστάλη εἰς τὸ Οἰκουμηνικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον Ἄντιπρόσωπος τοῦ Γερμανικοῦ Ὑπουργείου τῶν Θρησκευμάτων πρὸς διακακωνισμόν τῆς Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς δικαιοδοσίας τῶν ἐν Γερμανίᾳ, Πολονίᾳ καὶ Τσεχοσλοβακίᾳ Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν, τὸ Οἰκουμηνικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον δηλοῖ κατηγορηματικῶς ὅτι οὐδεὶς Ἄντιπρόσωπος τῆς Γερμανικῆς Κυβερνήσεως ἐπεσκέφη τὸ Πατριαρχεῖον καὶ οὐδεμία ἄλλη ἐπαφή ἢ ἐνέργεια ἐγένετο σχετικῶς καὶ ἐπομένως τὰ ἀναγραφέντα ταῦτα, ὡς καὶ πάντα τὰ λοιπὰ σημεῖα τυγχάνουσι τελείως ἀνυπόστατα” („Anakoinōthen tou Oikoumenikou Patriarcheiou” 1939, 380).

The researcher considers the synodal decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on 9 July, 1940 to be the result of Savva's actions, in which it is stated that the canonical Metropolitan of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland is Dionysius and that Seraphim's interventions in Poland are anticanonical (Škarovskij 2002, 134; also Škarovskij 2007, 11, 2).

As mentioned above, Savva visited the Ecumenical Patriarchate three times between February and August 1940 staying several days each time. So, it is possible to draw the conclusion that he also contributed to the stance of the Patriarchate with the submitted Report and through his private conversations with the Patriarch and the Synod. Thus, the decision of the Ecumenical Patriarch Benjamin and the Synod in favor of strengthening the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Poland with his firm support for Dionysius of Warsaw and the rejection of the anticanonical actions of Seraphim is partly thanks to him.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Bishop Savva ardently desired an independent and Autocephalous Orthodox Church within an independent and democratic state of Poland. Despite having been an officer in the Tsarist army, he never turned his gaze towards the Kremlin and the Church of Russia, perhaps because he was a staunch opponent of the Bolsheviks. His stance is a consequence of his permanent position, which is summed up in the fact that in order for the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland to survive within the Polish state, it would have to become a solid body, bypassing the problems of the unity of the Church created by the existence of Orthodox believers with different ethnic and linguistic origins. He considered the introduction of the Polish language into all manifestations of the life of the Orthodox Church a means to achieve this goal which would subsequently result in the Polish state letting the Orthodox Church organize its internal life in complete freedom.

While it may seem an exaggeration, a search in the history of Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland reveals Bishop Grodno Savva

to be the only ardent supporter of Autocephaly who was also in favor of smooth cooperation with the Polish government with regard to its foreign relations.

Moreover, what Grodno Savva desired (an independent Church within a democratic country) has been achieved to the greatest extent in the contemporary Republic of Poland, which as a member of the European Union fully respects and supports the European acquis of respect for the fundamental right of religious freedom. Within this state, the Orthodox faithful of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Poland under the leadership of the current Archbishop Savva<sup>69</sup>, can freely exercise their religious duties within the framework of national and international provisions of the equality of all citizens living in the Republic of Poland.

## APPENDIX

### 1. The cover letter of the Report<sup>70</sup>

*Votre Sainteté,*

*D'après des informations qui me sont parvenues de source absolument sûre, le Métropolitain Serge de Moscou, a pris sous son pouvoir ecclésiastique plusieurs diocèses orthodoxes de Pologne, notamment ceux qui se trouvent actuellement sous l'occupation soviétique.*

*Sans approfondir la question, ce fait eut-il lieu avec ou sans le consentement des Evêques de ces diocèses, en qualité de membre du Concile Général de la Sainte Église Orthodoxe de Pologne je me vole, hélas, obligé de protester auprès de Votre Sainteté, de la façon aussi respectueuse que catégorique, contre cet acte anticanonique et présentant tous les caractères d'une infraction flagrante aux Statuts intérieurs de l'Église que j'ai l'insigne honneur de représenter.*

*Je saisis o et te occasion pour supplier Votre Sainteté de daigner bien se souvenir de la souffrante Église Orthodoxe de Pologne et du soussigné.*

<sup>69</sup> The present Archbishop of Warsaw and all Poland Savva received the monastic name Savva in Serbia in the same way as Savva of Grodno received it.

<sup>70</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Letter of Bishop Grodno Savva to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Votre humble serviteur en Jésus-Christ, dans Vos Prières et de croire à mon respectueux et parfait dévouement

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "† Evêque Sawa". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured paper.

† Evêque Sawa

## 2. Report of Bishop Grodno Savva to the Ecumenical Patriarch<sup>71</sup>

### PERSECUTION DE L'ÉGLISE ORTHODOXE EN POLOGNE

#### Guerre totale

*Un do moments caractéristiques du système total do mener la-guerre consiste dans la destruction de tous éléments de la vie sociale, la destruction des institutions et des groupements sociaux, l'anéantissements de tous liens existants.*

*Les soviets l'ont toujours pratiqué et le pratiquent actuellement. L'Allemagne est entrée dans la même voie. Comme victime de leur méthode totale de faire la guerre est tombée entre autres également l'Église orthodoxe autocéphale en Pologne.*

#### L'Église orthodoxe autocéphale en Pologne

*D'abord quelques informations sur notre Église. Lorsque en 1916 les troupes russes quitteront le territoire polonais, le clergé orthodoxe en Pologne était constitué par deux ecclésiastiques supérieurs: l'archevêque Tikhon à Wilno, qui, devenu plus tard Patriarche de Russie, tomba victime des persécutions bolchévistes, et l'évêque Dionyse, actuellement Métropolitain de Varsovie, ainsi que do 10 prêtres.*

*Grâce à la tolérance religieuse, existant en Pologne ainsi qu'à l'aide de la part du Gouvernement Polonais, l'Église Orthodoxe a eu la possibilité de se développer librement. Le 13.XI.1924 elle est reconnue comme Autocéphale, ce qui fut confirmé par le Synode et par Sa Sainteté le*

<sup>71</sup> AHSCG, F. 14, Report of Bishop Grodno Savva to the Ecumenical Patriarch.

*Patriarche Œcuménique à Constantinople.*

*La Métropole Orthodoxe de Pologne compte actuellement plus de 4 millions de fidèles et se trouve sous l'autorité du Métropolitain Dionyse, docteur en théologie qui exerce son ministère en Pologne déjà depuis 1902.*

*La Métropole comprend 5 diocèses et 1500 paroisses ainsi que 14 couvents, entretenus par l'Etat Polonais. La hiérarchie ecclésiastique est constituée par un métropolitain, 4 évêques et 5 évêques auxiliaires.*

*Le clergé subalterne compte 2.500 prêtres et 600 moines et nonnes environ.*

*Pour l'instruction du clergé existe à Varsovie auprès de l'Université une Faculté de Théologie Orthodoxe avec un internat ainsi que deux séminaires ecclésiastiques.*

*Le Synode orthodoxe possède une imprimerie, il existe une presse religieuse ainsi qu'un réseau d'organisations confessionnelles.*

*En 1938 furent répandus à l'étranger des bruits tendancieux au sujet de prétendues persécutions des orthodoxes en Pologne. Sans entrer dans les détails, il faut constater, que ces nouvelles étaient artificiellement amplifiées et avaient leur source dans la liquidation en ce temps, par voie administrative, de certaines situations juridiques de propriétés foncières, qui ont subsisté encore du temps du régime tsariste.*

*Bien que le Gouvernement Polonais d'alors ait toléré, il faut le reconnaître, l'application en cette matière de méthodes par trop rigoureuses et inutilement vexantes de la part des organes exécutifs, néanmoins l'opinion publique ne se solidarisa pas avec cette action et n'en était même pas informé. Il y avait dans ce domaine certaines intrigues en jeu et certaines influences politiques étrangères.*

*Néanmoins cette question douloureuse ne touche ni à l'autocéphalie de l'Église Orthodoxe ni à sa structure juridique interne.*

*En peu de temps une harmonie complète fut rétablie entre l'Église Orthodoxe et le Gouvernement Polonais, ce qui trouve d'ailleurs sa confirmation dans la correspondance publiée en cette matière.*

*La vie religieuse orthodoxe en Pologne se développait favorablement jusqu'au moment tragique du début de la guerre.*

*Les orthodoxes ont [t] rempli leur devoir de citoyens. Une partie des prêtres a pris service dans l'Armée comme aumôniers. Plusieurs prêtres périrent pendant les bombardements /entre autres le curé orthodoxe*

de Varsovie, abbé Teodorowicz/. Beaucoup d'églises furent incendiées. Incendiée fut aussi la riche bibliothèque de la Faculté de Théologie orthodoxe de l'Université de Varsovie. Mais ce sort-là, il faut le dire, est la conséquence inévitable de toute guerre. Ce qui est pire, c'est la lutte, que les autorités d'occupation ont déclaré dans le domaine sacré de la vie religieuse à la population appauvrie et dénuée de toute défense. A côté des actes de violences dirigés contre les personnes et les biens des actes de même ordre, sous forme de terreur organisée, sont accomplis systématiquement contre la conscience et la foi. A l'égale des autres Églises et confessions, l'Église orthodoxe de Pologne est cruellement persécutée. En vertu du traité de Moscou, l'Allemagne et les Soviets se sont partagé le territoire de la Pologne. Par ce partage l'diocèse de Varsovie, ainsi qu'une faible partie du diocèse de Grodno, se sont trouvés sous l'occupation allemande, tandis que les autres diocèses - sous l'occupation soviétique.

#### *Occupation soviétique*

Après le départ des troupes polonaises plusieurs prêtres orthodoxes furent assassinés bestalement sur l'ordre des cellules communistes. Immédiatement après leur prise de pouvoir les autorités soviétiques ont décrété la confiscation de la propriété des Églises. Une partie des terres leur appartenant fut distribuée aux paysans. Les supérieurs des monastères /p.ex. celui du monastère bien connu à Poczajów/ qui osèrent protester contre de telles mesures, furent arrêtés et déportés. On proposa à certains prêtres des places d'instituteurs, mais on exigea en échange le reniement de leur enseignement «erronné» en même de Jésus Christ. Les crucifix furent éloignés des institutions publiques. L'enseignement religieux fut supprimé.

En même temps que les forces armées soviétiques arrivèrent en Pologne, des agences de propagande athéiste /Organisation des «Sans-Dieu»/. Elles distribuèrent la littérature antireligieuse et organisèrent des spectacles blasphématoires.

Il ne s'agit naturellement dans l'occurrence que de la première phase de la persécution religieuse qui ne manquera pas de se développer dans l'avenir selon les méthodes soviétiques bien connues et éprouvées.

#### *Occupation allemande*

Dans l'occupation allemande les persécutions religieuses ont un autre

caractère. Les Allemands ont fermé les instituts théologiques et l'imprimerie synodale. Cependant c'est à la hiérarchie ecclésiastique que fut porté le coup le plus dur. Séraphin, Evêque de Berlin, se chargea de l'exécution des plans allemands visant la désorganisation de la vie religieuse des orthodoxes. Il arriva de Berlin à Varsovie après l'occupation de la capitale polonaise par les Allemands et, à l'aide de la Gestapo, força le métropolitain Dionyse de renoncer à son pouvoir. Le Métropolitain séjourne actuellement à Otwock sous le surveillant de la police allemande. Son évêque auxiliaire Timothée, a été interné au monastère de Jableczno. Après s'être emparé du pouvoir l'évêque Seraphim s'entoura de personnages expulsés des organisations religieuses et commença son activité administrative par la remise en vigueur de l'ancien calendrier julien.

#### *Evêque Seraphim*

L'Evêque Seraphim - de son nom et prénom laïque Lade Alfred est allemand et ressortissant de Reich. Il apparut aux yeux de la surface de la vie religieuse orthodoxe en Ukraine vers 1928.

Il y collabora d'une façon intime avec l'élite dissidente ukrainienne. Jouissant alors de la protection avérée du Gouvernement Soviétique. Les circonstances de la consécration épiscopale de Seraphim restent entourées d'un secret difficile à percer. Par contre il est connu qu'il fut accusé publiquement de bigamie et d'activité nuisible aux intérêts de l'Eglise orthodoxe. Dans le «Temps» du 28 Janvier de l'année courante parut l'information suivante: «Le Métropolitain Serge de Moscou, gardien du trône patriarcal, dans son okaz du 9 septembre 1937 rappelle que Lade, prêtre bigame, n'a aucun droit au titre d'évêque et que l'exercice du sacerdoce lui est interdit».

Dès que la persécution religieuse s'accrut en Ukraine Seraphim s'empressa de quitter ce pays. En 1931 il arrive en Pologne et s'y présente comme victime de la lutte menée par les Soviétiques contre la religion.

Néanmoins les autorités ecclésiastiques orthodoxes de Pologne gardent vis-à-vis de Seraphim la réserve la plus prononcée. C'est pourquoi qu'il se rend à Vienne. Comme il l'a fait déjà ailleurs, il y développe une activité des plus suspectes.

En 1933 Seraphim apparaît en Roumanie en se livrant à une activité illégale en Bessarabie. Il est en relation avec une secte ayant un caractère



*communiste et sexuel /Chlysty/. C'est en ce temps qu'il procède, au mépris des canons de l'Église, à la consécration de plusieurs prêtres. Seraphim est expulsé de Roumanie sans droit de retour.*

*Quelques années plus tard il surgit à Berlin. Le Gouvernement du III Reich, tout en persécutant brutalement les églises catholiques et protestantes allemandes, entoure d'une protection perfidement empressée, évidemment pour des raisons purement politiques, une poignée d'orthodoxes, en écartant cependant l'éminent évêque Tikhon et en mettant à sa place Seraphim.*

*Ce dernier commence par placer sous son autorité toutes les paroisses russes du Reich. Le 3 Novembre dernier, l'évêque orthodoxe de Prague, Serge, «invité» à venir à Berlin, signe un accord par lequel il reconnaît l'autorité de Séraphin sur l'Église orthodoxe du Protectorat.*

*Les faits qui précèdent prouvent d'une façon évidente, que Séraphin n'est qu'un instrument politique dans les mains des dirigeants du III Reich. Il tend à briser l'unité religieuse, à supprimer l'indépendance de l'Église, à la désorganiser pour la gouverner ensuite selon le principe bien connu : «Divide et impera». Il est à supposer que fort de son aide le III Reich espère créer une Église orthodoxe complètement à ses ordres et à sa merci en Allemagne, en Pologne, en Routhénie Subcarpathique, en Slovaquie, en Bohême, en Moravie et en Ukraine.*

*Il n'est point nécessaire de prouver que l'activité de Seraphim est en contradiction flagrante tant avec les principes de la moralité chrétienne, qu'avec les canons de la sainte Église Orthodoxe. En effet, en vertu des résolutions des Synodes Œcuméniques de Carthage /résolution 65/ et d'Antioche /résolutions 16 et 21/, l'évêque qui s'immisce dans l'administration d'un autre diocèse est passible de peines ecclésiastiques les plus sévères.*

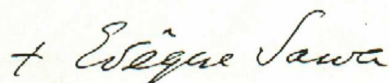
*Le Métropolitain Dionyse, bien que brisé par la Gestapo, considère, comme le confirment les preuves possédées, l'immixtion de Seraphim comme tout à fait illégale.*

*D'après les nouvelles parvenant de Pologne /voir p.ex. la correspondance de Kowno, publiée dans le «Temps» du 28 Janvier de l'année courante/ «...le clergé orthodoxe engage en ce moment une lutte acharnée contre le pseudo-évêque et contre les moyens machiavéliques, dont il se sert pour réduire à l'impuissance ceux qui cherchent à rester fidèles à leurs chefs religieux.*

*Votre devoir à nous est de venir en aide aux frères persécutés en Pologne, aussi bien sous l'une que sous l'autre occupation, frères maltraités par les bourreaux bolchévistes autant que par les pasteurs qui, comme disait notre Sauveur, bien que portant des peaux de brebis sont intérieurement des loups féroces.*

*On ne salirait douter que nos plus hautes autorités ecclésiastiques, avec Sa Sainteté en tête, après avoir examiné l'activité destructive, par laquelle Seraphim abaisse la sainte dignité épiscopale, feront tout ce qui est en leur pouvoir pour libérer les fidèles persécutés par un pasteur qui leur a été illégalement imposé.*

*Dans ces conditions il est à espérer que Sa Sainteté ne reconnaîtra sous aucune forme ni d'aucune manière, directe ou indirecte, les faits accomplis qu'un évêque dissident tache de créer en Pologne par ordre des autorités d'occupation et au détriment des droits et des libertés de Notre Sainte Église Orthodoxe Autocéphale*



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Autocéphale de Pologne.*

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