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RE : The Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union

SOURCE : Father B, one of Ukrainian Orthodox priests sent from the Soviet Union to Canada to service orthodox communities in that country (See separate report on the Source himself)

DATE : 2 August 1963

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

*Best reference
to dispatch to
Canada - Inquiry*

1. Efforts to establish Ukrainian Orthodox Metropoly in Kiev

According to the Source there are being now made efforts by Ukrainians in the Orthodox Church to establish Ukrainian Metropoly in KIEV. So far, it is difficult, however, to say whether and when this will be done.

2. Church communities

A church community has to have at least 20 members (parishers) officially registered with Oblast Otdel for church affairs. That means that every parisher has to be in possession of a valid Soviet passport. In case of death of a parisher the priest must have a substitute to meet this numerical requirement.

Priests are paid their salaries by the Patriarch, i.e. by the state through the Patriarch. They receive about Rubel 50.- per month. Retired priests are also entitled to pension. Priests cannot be party-members. Source stressed that there were no communists in the church. All assertions to the contrary, in particular all the allegations of KGB officers functioning as priests, are untrue. Party and KGB spread, however, deliberately such rumors about individual priests ~~and~~ in order to compromise them in eyes of their parishers.

3. Church language

As a rule in West Ukraine only Ukrainian is being used in orthodox churches. In Eastern Ukraine, in the countryside and smaller towns - Ukrainian,

SECRET

SECRET

in larger cities - mostly Russian. Source 's explanation for that was that in large cities there were many Russians who did not understand Ukrainians.

4. Financial situation

Churches exist on donations and "voluntary" income from sale of candles, "proskura", etc. In some locations this income is surprisingly high. Thus the St. Volodymyr Sobor in KIEV in 1961 had about 11,000,000 Rubel. ~~In~~ Otherwise, it had always about 3,000,000 Rubel, per year.

Churches have to pay taxes. In 1961 there was implemented a re-appraisal of church-properties and ^{were} taxes, highly increased.

5. Liquidation of churches

As a rule the state authorities allow to function only those churches in which priests are available "on the spot". The so called "daughter-churches" which were serviced by priests from a "mother-church" - were being closed. At the closing all church-property, i.e. all articles of direct religious use, are given to the "mother-church". Non-church items, for instance such things as tables, chairs, benches - are given to Orphan Houses and Old People's Homes.

A closed church can be opened for funeral in cases where it was explicitly wished by the dead or his family to be buried "from his ^{or her} church" (provided the church was not demolished yet).

6. Guarantees of state to church

The rights of church are guaranteed and "defended " now by the constitution. No atheist meeting, no interference with mass and other ritual services, no entering with hat on into church, no approaching of priest in church ~~during his services~~ by government or party officials - are allowed.

SECRET

7. Theological Academies and Seminars

In the Ukraine Seminars are in LUCK (LUTSK), UZHGOROD, ODESSA. Studies at seminars and academies last 4 and 8 years, respectively. It is also possible after graduation from a seminar to continue theological studies as correspondent-student at academies.

Ordained could be only married men and monks after age of 40.

Books used in churches are mostly old although also some new ones have been already printed.

8. The late Bishop Melnyk of Drohobych

According to Source the late Bishop Melnyk, after his "conversion" to the Orthodox church played a "very clever policy". He pretended to accept and follow willingly all the orders of the Patriarch but in reality did not fulfill them and even hid in his premises some priests who refused to join the Orthodox church.

9. There is no Seminar in Lvov because the local bishop failed to organize it within two years which were at his disposal together with premises of former Priests Seminary in the city.

SUBJECT: Father BARSHCHEVSKYI, Evhen, Protierel of Edmonton, Canada

SOURCE: S

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1. Subject arrived in March 1963 in EDMONTON as one of Ukrainian orthodox priests sent by Alexal's Church to Canada to service orthodox communities in that country. He is Ukrainian, aged 60, married (his wife arrived with him in Canada), their grown up sons remained in the Ukraine. Subject finished his theological studies in WARSAW, Poland, then studied history in PRAGUE, CSR. During the German occupation of the Ukraine he lectured at Gymnasium (Secondary school) in KHOLM (CHELM), or HRUBESHIV (HRUBIESZOV). He is a good theologian, very intelligent, smooth, and sympathetic. ~~He is~~ His wife is also very sympathetic, sociable, and speaks fair English. Source met him accidentally in a bus near EDMONTON when Subject was on his way to a nearby place where he was supposed to help another priest in confessions. Then Subject ^{has} visited Source and now they are on quite a friendly foot.

2. In June 1963 Subject left for the Soviet Union with his wife for vacations. On 29 July 1963 he telephoned Source that he just returned from vacations and was going to visit Source in a few days. Subject told Source that he spent his vacations with relatives in KIROVOGRAD. There was some delay with his return to Canada because he could not get ~~xxxxx~~ plane-reservation in time.

3. Prior to his departure for vacations in the Soviet Union, Subject called on Source. They drank "a little bit" and consequently had quite a sincere talk. Subject was rather nervous and did not conceal his reluctance to go to the Soviet Union. He told Source that if he had no children in the

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RID/ANV
to SR/Rpts 6 Aug. 63

Ukraine he would remain in Canada, "defect" and go over to the Ukrainian Catholic church. But because of children he had to return.

He also told Source that ^{at} the recent synod in NEW YORK, N.Y. Subject had an argument with Bishop Panthaleimon. The latter proposed to print new prayer books in Russian to what Subject protested explaining that there were practically ~~no~~ ^{very few} Russians in their Church here and therefore no need for Russian prayer books. On his part Subject suggested to print prayer - books in Ukrainian as there was a great demand for them, or if the hierarchy was unwilling to print Ukrainian ones, to print some in Old -Slavic. Anyway, Subject stressed that there was no point to publish Russian books because people do not understand Russian.

To that Bishop PANTHELEIMON reacted very strangely: he stood up and announced that there was no Ukrainian nation and no Ukrainian language. In his turn Subject pulled then his ~~valid~~ Soviet passport and pointed out his ~~nationality~~ Ukrainian nationality as stated in it. Bishop Panthaleimon was very angry and commented only: Ah, I see - "a little Ukrainian" (Ukrainehyk)! At that moment another Bishop interfered with their quarrel and by pointing out that their argument was irrelevant to the problem of prayer-books, stopped the argumentation. Anyway, the question of prayer-books remained unsolved at that synod.

Shortly afterwards Subject ^{received} a letter from the Patriarch in Moscow that he will have to spend his ~~vacations~~ ^{vacations} in the Soviet Union. Subject was not sure whether they will send him back to Canada and therefore liquidated partly his household in EDMONTON before leaving for the Soviet Union.

4. On 21 May 1963 Source was told by the Subject that the latter will go in June 1963 for 4 weeks-vacations ~~to~~ the Soviet Union. At the same time there were rumors in EDMONTON that Subject and another orthodox priest were actually recalled back to the Soviet Union and instead 6 new priests will

arrive. As it turned out finally, Subject came back to Canada.

5. Early spring 1963 when Soviet Ambassador visited EDMONTON, his secretary met Subject .

6. Subject told Source that ~~when~~ he was leaving first time for Canada he paid a visit to Bishop SAVRASH of STANYELAVIE (now IVANO-FRANKIVSKYI). The Bishop "played a comedian", let him wait for an hour though had nothing to do, then received him very officially in full orate and gave his blessings. Subject was surprised because he knew ~~very~~ well the Bishop still from times ^{the} when the latter was only a priest too.