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The Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Memory and Memorialization of the Holodomor

Most discussions on the study and memory of the Holodomor stress the role of the Ukrainian diaspora. Yet despite assumptions about the significance of the Ukrainian diaspora, relatively little research has addressed the memory of the Great Famine (as the Holodomor was known for most of the period from the 1930s to the 1980s) and the institutions and events through which memory has been cultivated and inculcated and memorialization has been conducted.

Certainly one of the most significant institutions to this discussion is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. From the First World War to the renewal of Ukrainian independence in 1991, the various jurisdictions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church constituted some of the largest organizations within the Ukrainian diaspora. Unlike the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the various Ukrainian Orthodox Churches contained a considerable constituency from territories that were in Soviet Ukraine in 1932–33, especially after World War II, when many Famine survivors arrived in the West. Of all the various branches of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the West, it was the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA that encompassed the largest number of Famine survivors after the Second World War. With its center in South Bound Brook, New Jersey (the grounds were purchased in 1950), its Memorial Church (building began in the 1950s and it was consecrated in 1965), and its cemetery a de facto necropolis of the Ukrainian diaspora, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA (UOC in the USA) has been a leading force in the forming and cultivating of Ukrainian diaspora memory and memorialization of the Holodomor. While other Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions played significant roles—such as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (Europe, South America, and Australia) as well as the smaller Ukrainian Orthodox Churches—it is fruitful to begin discussion with the UOC in the USA.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA emerged from groups in the Ukrainian community who during World War I saw the need to establish a distinctly Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the United States. In 1924 they accepted as their hierarch Archbishop Ioan Teodorovych, a bishop of the

Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) established in Ukraine in 1921, who had been sent to minister to the diaspora flock. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA, predominantly composed of former Ukrainian Greek Catholics from Galicia, had a clergy that included a considerable number of Eastern Ukrainian émigrés, and the hierarch, a native of Volhynia, had served as a chaplain in the army of the Ukrainian National Republic and later as bishop of Podillia. From his seat in Philadelphia, he sought to unite Orthodox Ukrainians and converts from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church into one Ukrainian Orthodox Church. His efforts were hampered by questions of the canonicity of his episcopal consecration, and after 1928 he had to contend with the rival Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America, a jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople, as well as with the destruction of the UAOC in Ukraine.

The situation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy changed after World War II and the arrival in the United States of tens of thousands of Orthodox Ukrainian displaced persons, including numerous clergy and hierarchs who had served in various Orthodox churches in Ukraine and interwar Poland. In 1949 Archbishop Mstyslav Skrypnyk came to the United States from Canada to join the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America. Born in Poltava, he was the nephew of Symon Petliura, the head of the Ukrainian National Republic. As an émigré in interwar Poland, Stepan Skrypnyk was a member of the Sejm from Volhynia. During World War II, he was consecrated as Bishop Mstyslav of Pereiaslav in Kyiv in the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church revived in 1942. After Archbishop Ioan accepted reconsecration in 1949 for the sake of unity, Archbishop Mstyslav arranged a union of most of the parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in America with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA in 1950. Archbishop Ioan served as metropolitan of the united Church.

Buoyed by the arrival of new immigrants and the rapid formation of new religious communities, the hierarchs and church consistory in 1950 purchased an estate in South Bound Brook, New Jersey, as a church center. Soon after, they proposed to build a church in memory of all the Ukrainians killed by the communist regime, those who gave their lives for Ukrainian independence, and all the holy places destroyed. The Great Famine and its victims occupied a central place in the Church's memorialization project. The Memorial Church, planned by the prominent architect Yurii Kodak, was to be a symbol of Ukrainian church architecture, built in the Ukrainian baroque style. In 1963 the marking of the thirtieth anniversary of the Great Famine at Bound Brook was attended by thousands of participants and associated the

Memorial Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA with commemoration and memorialization of the Famine. Further research is needed to evaluate the place of the Famine and its victims in discussions of the intentions for the Memorial Church.

Reproduced here are articles dealing with the Holodomor that appeared in *Ukrains'ke pravoslavne slovo (UPS)*, the news organ of the Church, in the years 1963 to 1965. The year 1963 was selected for review as the thirtieth anniversary of the Holodomor, and 1965, as the year of the consecration of the St. Andrew Memorial Church at Bound Brook. Many of the selections are reports of parish gatherings, frequently associated with commemorations and actions to complete the Memorial Church. The materials collected here shed light on the degree to which the Famine was an issue of importance well before the 1980s. More thorough research is required of the *UPS* as well as other Church publications and archives to assess the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA in shaping diaspora commemoration and memory of the Great Famine (Holodomor). Other research has already demonstrated that the national interpretation of the Famine had arisen in the 1930s, long before the Cold War. These materials illustrate its continuing resonance. The materials presented here also confirm the role of Ukrainians originating from the pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine in carrying on the memorialization. In the 1960s the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA still had a strong component of immigrants and their children from Galicia as well as post-War refugees from Volhynia and Bukovyna. The church also had influential groups of inter-war émigrés who originated in pre-1939 Soviet Ukraine, including Archbishop, later Metropolitan, Mstyslav. These groups drew on the conceptualization of the Great Famine they had developed in Warsaw, Prague, Berlin, Paris, and other centers of the Ukrainian emigration in the 1930s as they observed events in their homeland with horror.

Perhaps most important, the Church had a large number of survivors and their families. Their direct witness to the Great Famine charged the issue with an immediacy that had been lacking before the arrival of the survivors. Indeed the accenting of the Famine in the process of building the Memorial Church may have been an integrating factor for these members into the ecclesiastical community. The interaction of these groups must be examined to understand the evolving image of the Holodomor and its relative importance in the memorial project of the Church. The one English-language item of 1965 (it was at just this time that *UPS* introduced English to serve the children and grandchildren of its interwar members) gives the figure of seven million victims as do other statements of the Church. A most striking finding

from reading these documents is the degree to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA sacralized the Holodomor by referring to its victims as martyrs.

Much more remains to be done in studying the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in memorializing the Holodomor. The materials of the 1950s have yet to be examined to determine the significance of the twentieth anniversary of the Great Famine in the Bound Brook project. Research based on *Dnipro*, the earlier journal of the Church issued in Philadelphia from 1928 to 1950, would establish the Church's reaction to the Great Famine. A study of Church archives, including the recently recovered archives of Metropolitan Ioan, would allow scholars to determine what its leaders knew about the tragedy in Ukraine and how they shaped community understanding. The role of the other Ukrainian Orthodox jurisdictions and their representatives should also be the subject of systematic study.

I hope that the materials included here will stimulate scholars to undertake such studies. I thank the Peter Jacyk Resource Centre of Robarts Library for assisting in locating the materials, especially Wasyl Sydorenko, and Olga Khometa for scanning them.