



REV. OLEKSANDR FEDCZUK* – LUTSK (UKRAINE)

MATERIALS ON THE HISTORY OF NEO-UNION IN THE STATE ARCHIVES OF VOLYN OBLAST

MATERIAŁY Z HISTORII NEOUNII W ARCHIWUM PAŃSTWOWYM OBWODU WOŁYŃSKIEGO

Abstract

This article delves into the Neo-Union, a religious movement that emerged in interwar Poland starting from 1924, particularly gaining ground in the Volhynian Voivodeship by 1925. Its focus lies in analyzing the materials sourced from the security department of the Volhynian Voivodeship Office stored in the State Archives of Volyn Oblast (Lutsk, Ukraine), aiming to glean insights into the Neo-Union movement. The significance of this study is underscored by the dearth of scholarly exploration on this subject, as well as the limited research on the Neo-Union's progression in Volhynia overall. Through the examination of archival materials, it becomes evident that while the fonds do not contain an extensive array of documents relevant to the history of Neo-Union, the ones present hold significant value. These materials encompass descriptions of Neo-Union parish development and evaluations of the movement by the voivodeship government and starosta offices. Particularly notable are documents vividly portraying the Neo-Union clergy, predominantly comprised of former Orthodox priests, who are deemed instrumental in the waning of the Neo-Union movement in Volhynia. Moreover, the qualitative study of individual Uniate parishes that emerged in the 1930s necessitates the utilization of documents from the aforementioned archival collection. These records provide indispensable insights into the dynamics and evolution of Neo-Unionism within the region.

Keywords: Neo-Union; Orthodox Church; Volhynian Voivodeship; head of powiat (starosta); Bishop Adolf Szelążek

* Rev. Oleksandr Fedczuk – PhD in history, candidate of historical sciences, Volyn Theological Seminary UOC

e-mail: ol_fedchuk@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8494-9066>

Streszczenie

Publikacja poświęcona jest problematyce neounii, czyli ruchu religijnego rozwijającego się w międzywojennej Polsce od 1924 roku, a w województwie wołyńskim od 1925 roku. Celem artykułu jest analiza materiałów działu bezpieczeństwa Wołyńskiego Urzędu Wojewódzkiego, przechowywanych w Archiwum Państwowym Obwodu Wołyńskiego (Łuck, Ukraina), gdzie znajdują się informacje o neounii. O przydatności takich badań świadczy brak kwerend naukowych odnoszących się do tego tematu, a także do zagadnienia o ogólnym rozwoju neounii na Wołyniu. Z przeprowadzonej analizy zasobu archiwalnego wynika, że nie ma w nim zbyt wielu materiałów niezbędnych do badania historii neounii, ale mimo tego ma on istotną wartość. Chodzi o archiwalia opisujące rozwój parafii neounijnych, a także ocenę ruchu neounijnego na Wołyniu przez władze administracji wojewódzkiej i starostwa. Szereg dokumentów wyraźnie charakteryzuje duchowieństwo neounijne spośród byłych kapłanów prawosławnych, których słusznie uznaje się za winnych upadku ruchu neounijnego na Wołyniu. Nie da się przeprowadzić badań jakościowych poszczególnych parafii unickich, które powstały w latach 30. XX wieku bez wykorzystania dokumentów ze wspomnianego zasobu archiwalnego. Źródła te dostarczają niezbędnego wglądu w dynamikę i ewolucję neounii w tym regionie.

Słowa kluczowe: neounia; Cerkiew prawosławna; województwo wołyńskie; starosta powiatowy; bp Adolf Szelażek

Neo-Union, also known as the Eastern, East Slavic, or Byzantine rite Union, began spreading in Poland with the permission of Pope Pius XI in 1924. It was conceived as a missionary project of the Catholic Church aimed at incorporating the Orthodox population, which had previously lived within the territory of the Russian Empire and then found itself in the newly reestablished Poland. In Volhynia, which became the region with the largest dissemination of Neo-Union, its first center appeared in 1925. Despite generally warm relations between the Polish government and the Catholic Church, culminating in the well-known concordat of 1925, doubts were raised from the outset within the higher echelons of power regarding the Vatican-supported Neo-Union project's viability. The crux of the matter lay in differing expectations between the Church and the State regarding Ukrainian and Belarusian Orthodox individuals: while the Church sought to make them Catholics, the government hoped to assimilate them into the Polish identity, considering it particularly important for internal security. Events in Galicia, where resistance to joining Poland existed, with the local Greek Catholic Church being one of the ideological proponents of this movement, exemplified the turmoil on national grounds. Thus, the government had every reason to fear that the preservation of the Eastern rite within the Neo-Union Church would only solidify the ethnic distinctiveness of the Eastern borderlands population. Consequently, the Polish authorities were convinced that the best method of Polonization of the Ukrainian and Belarusian population would be its Latinization, whereas the new union 'divides, weakens the Latin rite, which unquestionably has a Polish charac-

ter, in favor of the Eastern rite, the Polish character of which is conditional, if not problematic.¹ Based on the position of the Polish authorities, the aforementioned concordat stated that the Greek Catholic clergy from Galicia were prohibited from promoting Neo-Union beyond its borders. The propagation of Neo-Union was overseen by Catholic diocesan bishops, with Neo-Union clergy operating under their authority.² Some of the problems of Neo-Union in Volhynia were also considered in articles by V.-Y. Kovaliv,³ Yu. Kramar,⁴ and M. Kucherepa.⁵

Acknowledging the spread of Neo-Union, which enjoyed personal support from Pope Pius XI, the Polish authorities maintained a skeptical stance about the sense of spreading it. In the early 1930s, when the issue arose regarding the episcopal ordination of Mykola Charnetskyi, who was appointed by the Pope as apostolic visitor to the Uniate parishes of Volhynia and Polissya, the Polish government reiterated its objections. Conversely, mid-level provincial officials in Volhynia initially perceived little threat from the burgeoning Neo-Union movement. Consequently, the voivodship authorities and starosta offices lent their support to Neo-Union for a period, until its focal points of development began to evolve into centers of conflict involving peasants deemed undesirable by the authorities.⁶

This study is based on the analysis of documents preserved in the State Archives of Volyn Oblast (DAVoO), in fonds 46 (Volhynian Voivodship Office), inventory 9 (Security Department). The aim is to determine how many such materials are stored in this fonds, and to find out how the Polish authorities in the Volhynian Voivodship perceived Neo-Union. It is worth noting that scholars have not previously framed research tasks of a source study nature in this manner. Among

¹ R. Skakun, “‘Nova uniã’ u Drugij Reči Pospolitij (1924–939),” *Kovčeg. Naukovij zbirnik z cerkovnoi istorii* 2007, 5, p. 222.

² Ibidem, p. 209–230; S. Stępień, ‘Nowa Unia kościelna. Obrządek bizantyńsko-słowiański,’ in: *Polska-Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, ed. S. Stępień, Przemysł 1996, vol. 2, pp. 141–194; Z. Waszkiewicz, ‘Neounia – nieudany eksperyment?,’ in: *400-lecie zawarcia Unii Brzeskiej (1596–1996). Materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej w dn. 28–29.11.1996*, ed. S. Alexandrowicz, T. Kempa, Toruń 1998, pp. 115–146; M. Papierzyńska-Turek, ‘Akcja neounijna i kontrowersje wokół rozumienia polskiej racji stanu,’ in: eadem, *Między tradycją a rzeczywistością. Państwo wobec prawosławia 1918–1939*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 404–441; eadem, ‘Vizantinizm či latinstvo? Diskusiã v ukraïnskij presì Galičini Galičini mižvoënnogo periodu pro kul’turni cinnosti,’ *Kovčeg. Naukovij zbirnik z cerkovnoi istorii* 2000, 3, pp. 403–413.

³ V.-J. Kovaliv, ‘Likvidaciã neounii v Luc’kij diëcezii,’ *Naukovì zapiski Nacional’nogo uniwersitetu “Ostroz’ka akademiã.” Seriã: İstorični nauki* 2007, 8, pp. 271–288.

⁴ Ū. Kramar, ‘Problema neounii na Volini v mižvoënnij period,’ *Naukovij visnik VDU. İstorični nauki* 1998, 1, pp. 68–73; idem, ‘Neounijnij ruh na Zahidnij Volini v mižvoënnu dobu (1921–1939),’ in: *Studii i materialy z istorii Volini*, ed. V. Sobčuk, Kremeneč’ 2015, pp. 206–215.

⁵ M. Kučerepa, ‘Neouniã na Volini. “Da vsi ědinu budut,” ’ in: *Mižnarodna naukova konferenciã, prisivãčena istorii Greko-Katolic’koï Cerkvi na Volini, Luc’k–Volodimir-Volinsk’kij* 2010, pp. 134–141.

⁶ M. Mróz, *Katolicyzm na pograniczu. Kościół katolicki wobec kwestii ukraińskiej i białoruskiej w Polsce w latach 1918–1925*, Toruń 2003, pp. 226–268; K. Krasowski, *Episkopat katolicki w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa–Poznań 1992, p. 182–186.

Ukrainian researchers, R. Skakun⁷ and N. Stokolos⁸ have particularly delved into the authorities' stance on Neo-Union.

Fonds 46 stands out as one of the largest collections within the State Archives of Voyn Oblast, boasting over 24,000 storage units. Of these, 6,116 are affiliated with the Security Department, with 4,920 are stored under inventory number 9 and 1,196 under inventory number 9a. Quite a few cases relate to religious issues, but most often they concern the Orthodox Church, which was and remains quite powerful in Volhynia. The vast majority of documents in this fonds are in Polish.

File 983 ('Correspondence with starosta offices about Uniates and the Orthodox Church') contains a number of different situational reports from powiat offices, as well as quite interesting documents concerning the process of revision in favour of the Catholic Church of certain Orthodox churches that had previously been Roman Catholic churches, and only a part of the documents relates to the Greek Catholic Church itself.

The first document in this series is a copy of Voivode Henryk Józefski's report detailing the events of late winter in 1929 in the village of Żabcze (Zhabche**), the Łuck (Lutsk) powiat. Here, Orthodox peasants barricaded themselves inside a church that had been reclaimed from them by the Uniates in the summer of 1928 and subsequently sealed by authorities in the autumn. Over a hundred villagers, under the leadership of priest Witalis Sahajdakowski,** remained entrenched in the church for nearly a week, enduring deprivation of food and water, until the police stormed the church. Undoubtedly, the original report by the voivode was dispatched to Warsaw, where, on 26 February, he was summoned to provide an account of the events unfolding in Żabcze.

Józefski's report provides a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the majority of Żabcze parishioners' conversion to Neo-Union, along with the conflicts that arose within the divided parish in the autumn of 1928. While Józefski refrained from offering his personal assessment of the events, he underscored the involvement of Ksenia Dębicka, whose husband was serving a fifteen-year sentence for communist activities, as one of the instigators of the disturbances. Additionally, the voivode highlighted that along with Dębicka, five other villagers were apprehended, but notably, Priest Sahajdakowski was not detained. This clarification was crucial, as several newspapers had already circulated reports suggesting the priest's arrest in connection with the events in Żabcze.⁹

⁷ Skakun, "“Nova uniâ” u Drugij Reči Pospolitiy Reči Pospolitiy (1924–939),” p. 204–247.

⁸ N. Stokolos, 'Neouniâ âk eksperiment shidnoï politiki Vatikanu v Pol'si (1923–1939 rr.),' *Ukraïns'kij istoričnij žurnal* 1999, 4, pp. 74–89.

** The names of places that were located in the former Volhynian Voivodeship and are now part of Ukraine are presented in their Polish variants as used in the archive documents, with their current Ukrainian equivalents provided in brackets – translator's note.

*** The names of the clergy are presented in their Polish variants as used in the archive documents – translator's note.

⁹ State Archives of Volyn Oblast (later: DAVoO) in Lutsk, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 20–22. More about Żabcze: F. Rzemieniuk, *Kościół katolicki obrzǳdu bizantyjsko-słowiańskiego (neounia)*, Lublin 1999, pp. 195–202.

A detailed report by the voivode by the starosta of the Kowel powiat on the state of the Uniate movement in the powiat, dated 9 August 1929, should be considered very interesting. It explained how the Neo-Union parish in Dubeczne (Dubeczne) was organised and how its supporters managed to occupy the local church. The report also found room to describe further conflicts in Dubeczne between Orthodox and Greek Catholics. The comparative statistics of irregular church ceremonies performed in the parish in the second half of 1928 and the first half of 1929 by Eastern Catholics and Orthodox priests is worthy of note. Despite the document indicating a significantly higher number of Uniates compared to Orthodox in Dubeczne and its surrounding villages, the statistics of church ceremonies was only slightly in favour of the Greek Catholics.

The depiction of the Greek Catholic priest Bazyli Grosz in the report is indeed revealing, with the starosta assessing his moral character as low, and noting that his primary aim was 'to satisfy his material needs within the widest possible borders' and that he 'will not stop at anything if it is for material gain.' An incident cited in the report details a confrontation between Grosz and his psalmist within the church, leading to the disruption of the church service. Furthermore, the starosta highlights instances of fraudulent activities concerning church land, which further eroded Grosz's authority as a clergyman. In conclusion, the head of powiat provides the voivode with a series of conclusions drawn from his own observations, offering valuable insights into the character and conduct of Grosz. In his opinion: (1) 'both priests' (probably including the Orthodox priest, although the report pays little attention to him) do not represent any higher spiritual value, (2) the disputes in Dubeczne have a great impact on the spread of sectarianism, and 'sectarian fanaticism divides people much more deeply than extreme political programmes,' (3) by promoting hatred, the two priests 'cause much more devastation in the souls of the peasants than slogans for class or political struggle,' (4) the return of some Eastern Catholics to Orthodoxy will obviously cause widespread physical unrest. On this basis, the starosta argued that it was impossible to turn a blind eye or look with 'constitutional religious tolerance' at the state of affairs in Dubeczne, as this could turn into political harmfulness. The starosta saw the only salvation in the opening of an Orthodox parish not in Dubeczne itself, but in the nearest neighbourhood, which would include Orthodox parishioners from Dubeczne, and the authorities would help build a church for this new parish.¹⁰

As is well known, conflicts between the two confessions in Dubeczne resulted in a number of court cases brought by one side or the other. One of the documents preserved in the case under consideration is a list of cases brought against the Greek Catholics in the village. This list reveals that a total of 27 lawsuits were filed solely during the period from spring 1927 to spring 1928. Some of these cases have already concluded with diverse verdicts, while others have been dismissed.¹¹ The file also contains a copy of one of the verdicts of the Kowel City

¹⁰ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 26–31.

¹¹ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 33.

Court, from which we learn some details of the disputes over the land near the church house.¹²

Documents originating from the Eastern Catholic environment are notably scarce, lending special significance to such materials. One such document of significance is a complaint addressed to the Kowel (Kovel) starosta by Bazyli Grosz himself. In it, the priest describes the Orthodox attempts to regain the church previously taken away by the Uniates in the village of Kraska situated within the parish of Dubeczne, by force on 21 July 1929.¹³

The following document presents the development of the Neo-Union in the territories around Kostopol (Kostopil). On 31 July 1929, the local starosta, Z. Kubicki, informed the Volhynian voivode that Eastern Catholicism had long traditions here, and that churches in some villages still retained clear Uniate features. At the same time, the Episcopal Curia did nothing to promote the Union among the population, and therefore the efforts of some individuals to spread the Neo-Union did not yield any tangible results. The starosta reported that the first steps of Neo-Unionism in the Kostopol powiat date back to 1926, when a chapel was opened in a private room and attended by up to thirty people. As the effect of the chapel was not very significant, it was later moved to a Catholic parish near Kostopol. There, and in other places in the powiat, the aforementioned priest Bazyli Grosz tried to spread the Neo-Union, but he was not successful. The starosta acknowledged that among the local Ukrainian population, Uniate preaching did not bring any results. Instead, the Eastern Catholic clergy were expected in the colonies where people from Galicia resided densely. These people had no influence on the religious life of the local population, but they themselves held to their faith. The village of Antonówka (Antonivka) became the spiritual centre for Greek Catholics in the Kostopol powiat.¹⁴

No less interesting is the report on the development of the Neo-Union in the Łuck powiat. The first Neo-Union parish in Volhynia was established in the village of Jezioro (Ozero), where in April 1925 the Orthodox priest Euzebiusz Słozko declared his subordination to the Catholic bishop of Łuck, Ignacy Dubowski. The starosta acknowledged that no one in this village thought about the Union until Słozko initiated its implementation solely for career and material gain. The report states that this priest began to denigrate the Orthodox clergy in his sermons and at the same time idealise the Catholic clergy. According to the starosta, the gradual decline in the popularity of the Neo-Union idea in Jezioro was the result of changes in the Episcopal Curia in Łuck, which was headed by Bishop Adolf Szelążek instead of Bishop Ignacy Dubowski, who was fervently supporting Słozko. The starosta acknowledged that the local administrative authorities did not provide Father Euzebiusz with any tangible support, and the previous starosta, Tadeusz Rogożyński, even demanded that Słozko vacate the parish house. With no one to

¹² DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 32. More about Dubeczno: Rzemieniuk, *Kościół katolicki obrządku bizantyjsko-słowiańskiego*, p. 170–180.

¹³ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 34.

¹⁴ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 42–43. More about Antonówka: Rzemieniuk, *Kościół katolicki obrządku bizantyjsko-słowiańskiego*, p. 167.

rely on, Slozko was forced to leave Jezioro, and the entire population in the village adhered to the Orthodox faith.¹⁵

The second part of the starosta's report concerned the already mentioned situation in Żabcze. He acknowledged that despite the parishioners' conflict with the priest and the Orthodox consistory, which prompted their conversion to the Neo-Union, the new adherents hoped for recognition from state authorities, perhaps even in the forms of small plots of land. However, it was their disappointment in these expectations that led about half of the Uniates to revert to Orthodoxy. At the same time, one of the reasons for the gradual decline in support for the union in Żabcze was the lack of authority among the non-Uniate priests sent there by the Catholic clergy. In particular, it is the case of Aleksy Pełypenko, whom parishioners did not obey because of his tactless behaviour, unworthy of a pastor. The starosta acknowledged that some villagers were so shocked by Pełypenko's actions that they returned to Orthodoxy, and therefore 'his stay in Żabcze was one of the reasons for the weakening of the union here.' The next Eastern Catholic priest in Żabcze, Justyn Selecki, did not weaken himself like his predecessor, but 'due to the lack of initiative and energy, the cause of the union is becoming less and less relevant in Żabcze.'¹⁶

On 8 August 1929, the starosta of the Dubno powiat sent his report on the state of the Union in the district to the Voivodeship Office. The only Neo-Union institution in the district was the Eastern Rite Seminary opened in Dubno. Although it had been formally operating for a year, it would not become fully operational until 1931. Nevertheless, the report on the organisation of the educational institution and the first year of its conditional functioning is very important for Neo-Union researchers, as very little material about the Dubno Eastern Rite Seminary has been preserved, so each of them can provide information that cannot be found anywhere else. The starosta also noted that the proximity of Żabcze and the Uniate agitation did not arouse interest among the local population, which, on the contrary, participated in various incidents on the side of the Orthodox. The starosta openly stated that 'propaganda of the Union in an area where it has no ideological basis, and where its pioneers are individuals with low morals, such as Pełypenko, Grosz and the like, is an undesirable phenomenon that can inflame passions and lead to religious conflicts, which can ultimately have fatal consequences.'¹⁷

The last document in file 983 that attracts the attention of Neo-Union researchers is an undated and, unfortunately, unsigned paper entitled 'The Uniate Movement in Volhynia.' There is no place for a description of events in a particular Eastern Catholic centre, as the essay is devoted to an analysis of the causes and consequences of the emergence of Neo-Union in the province. The author of this document immediately emphasises that the Uniate movement here arose on purely material grounds, particularly in regions where Orthodox priests provoked

¹⁵ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 44–45. More about Jezioro: Rzemieniuk, *Kościół katolicki obrządku bizantyjsko-słowiańskiego*, p. 185–186.

¹⁶ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 45–46.

¹⁷ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 53–54; Rzemieniuk, *Kościół katolicki obrządku bizantyjsko-słowiańskiego*, p. 180–181.

dissatisfaction among their parishioners. The paper claims that one of the reasons for the Orthodox to change their denomination is the general dissatisfaction with the clergy, which 'consists of a 99 per cent people who are weak intellectually and not very religious.' Another reason for the search for new recognition is the difficult financial situation of the flock, which expects the new faith to improve their lives. Particular attention is paid to Orthodox priests who have converted to the Neo-Union. They are named as those who have compromised themselves the most in the Orthodox Church and have moved to the Neo-Union to protect themselves. These were the main pioneers of the Neo-Union in Volhynia, Euzebiusz Slozko and Aleksy Pełypenko, 'both skilful agitators, both, however, at a very low moral level and both well known in the prosecutor's office.' It was Pełypenko's personality that became a factor in weakening the Neo-Uniate movement, when it had already gained some momentum and seemed to be developing further.

Finally, according to the author, 'sobering up' gradually took hold among the Catholic clergy, who began to openly criticise the methods of implementing the Union in Volhynia. Despite Bishop Adolf Schelążek's aspirations for the students of the Dubno Eastern Rite Seminary, these hopes remained unfulfilled due to a shortage of individuals willing to pursue studies there. Furthermore, Catholic priests who embraced the Union 'for the sake of the idea' soon realized the futility of their efforts. Therefore, 'the Uniate movement has undoubtedly stopped developing and is rather showing the opposite trends.' According to the author of the paper, in order to properly navigate this matter, 'one must not forget the political side, which in connection with the Uniate movement must manifest itself not now, but in the near future.' It was assumed here that later, when the Ukrainian nation was more fully formed, the Eastern Catholics would come under their influence as a result of the work of Ukrainians in the cultural and national field. The Greek Catholic Church in Galicia, which was entirely Ukrainian, was used as an example.

Based on all of the above considerations, the author of the document came to the important conclusion that the Union should not be supported, as it would not bring any benefit: 'Given the peril of the potential union of these Uniates with the Greek Catholics in Malopolska is it better to forgo immediate gains to avoid a dire situation in the foreseeable future.' The Episcopal Curia in Łuck also came under criticism, as 'being concerned exclusively with the welfare of the Church of Rome, it does not and will never consider the interests of the State, which in this case do not coincide.' Finally, another reason why the Union should not be supported was that the mere mention of it 'arouses suspicion among the Orthodox population that the Union should be the basis for the Polonisation of that population, which the government, under the guise of the Union, is forcing hard.'¹⁸

No less interesting is file 1853 ('Information from starosta offices on the activities of religious parishes'), which contains even more documents on the topic of Neo-Union in Volhynia. Its significance is underscored by the inclusion of materials spanning from 1931 to 1938, a period for which few records on the Neo-Union in Volhynia are extant, especially in the latter half of the 1930s. This scarcity extends

¹⁸ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 983, ark. 55–57.

across various archives, including Polish repositories. Consequently, it can be confidently asserted that without certain documents preserved within this specific file, comprehensive examination of the emergence and progression of numerous Neo-Union parishes established in the 1930s would have been unfeasible.

This first document in the is an information letter dated 22 July 1931 from the starosta of the Równe powiat about the accession of the population of Zastawie (Zastavya) village to the Eastern Rite Union. The starosta described how this movement originated in the village and reported what percentage of the local population expressed their intention to accept the Neo-Union. At the same time, he did not give his own assessment of the events in Zastawie.¹⁹

Six months later, on 16 January 1932, another information letter about the Uniate movement in Zastawie was sent to the Voivodeship Office. This time, starosta S. Bogusławski informed the voivode about how the neo-Union had been developing in this village since the summer of 1931. According to the starosta, if all the intentions of the Eastern Catholics in Zastawie were realised, their movement could spread to other places. The success of the Union in the parish was all the more possible because the local Orthodox priest was unable to vigorously oppose Uniate propaganda.²⁰ A few days later, Bogusławski appealed to the voivode again, openly stating that 'further agitation in the village of Zastawie is becoming harmful to security and undesirable from a political point of view.'²¹

In April, the starosta of the Równe (Rivne) powiat was again forced to report several times to Łuck about the events in Zastawie, where a well-known Uniate priest, Niphon (Vedmid), also a former Orthodox hieromonk, had arrived. Thus, on 18 April, the official reported that Nifont had begun to apply for the allocation of 36 hectares of land to the Uniate parish in this village. According to the starosta, about half of the population in the village shared Uniate beliefs at the time, and there was a noticeable upward trend, which was explained by the hopes of granting land to the Greek Catholics.²²

On 28 April, the same starosta informed the voivode that the situation in Zastawie was getting worse. This time, he called 80% of the local population Uniates, while the residents of the assigned village of Dyweń (Dyven) opposed the change of faith.²³

Following this period, the starosta of the Równe powiat continued to furnish updates to the Volhynian voivode regarding developments in Zastawie, as well as in Miatyn, where one of the final Neo-Uniate centers in Volhynia emerged in 1934. Similar to another village in the Równe powiat, the rise of the Neo-Union movement there stemmed from the neglect of the Orthodox clergy. Lessons learned from the unrest in villages like Żabcze, Dubeczne, and Kraska, where Greek Catholics were permitted to remain in Orthodox churches they had occupied during the 1920s, prompted authorities to take a different approach, disallowing such occurrences.

¹⁹ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 3.

²⁰ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 9.

²¹ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 11.

²² DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 20.

²³ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 21.

Even if the entire parish was in favour of the transition to the Neo-Union, the powiat authorities, on the instructions of the voivodeship government, locked the church, refusing to give it to the Eastern Catholics. Not even the petitions submitted by the influential Volhynian bishop Adolf Szelażek could sway their decision. The case file includes both Bishop Szelażek's personal petition to the voivode and petitions from the local peasants, which he appended to his letters in support of their cause.²⁴

At the same time, the file also contains copies of detailed voivodeship reports to the Ministry of the Interior with information on the development of Neo-Union movement in the Równe powiat. In particular, on 24 November, the Voivodeship Office reported to Warsaw that hieromonk Ilian (Huk) was building a Uniate church in Miatyn, for which he did not have permission from local authorities.²⁵

Correspondence from the Równe powiat indicates a general disapproval from both the powiat and voivodeship authorities towards the emergence of Neo-Unionist centers in the Równe powiat, which swiftly became sources of destabilization in the region. In July 1937, starosta B. Rogowski informed the voivode that a Uniate priest from Miatyn, Ilian (Huk), had endeavored to revert to Orthodoxy.²⁶

Documents detailing the development of the Neo-Union movement in various powiats of the Volhynian Voivodeship are presented in file 1853. Noteworthy among these is a list of inhabitants of the Eastern Rite Redemptorist monastery in Kowel, dated 26 June 1937. Within the same document, the starosta of the Kowel powiat also provided a report on the state of Uniate parishes in Dubeczne and Kraska.²⁷ Additionally, a report sent on 12 July of the same year by the starosta of the Krzemieniec (Kremenets) powiat detailed the state of the sole non-Uniate parish in the powiat, located in the village of Kuśkowce Wielkie (Velyki Kuskivtsi).²⁸ On 17 July, the starosta of the Kostopol powiat briefly described the development of Greek Catholic centers in his powiat.²⁹ It is worth noting that all these centers were established for people originating from Galicia, thus the term 'Neo-Union' is not applicable in a literal sense.

It is worth mentioning that in June and July 1937, virtually all starostas, at the request of the Voivodeship Office, submitted similar reports. After processing these reports, the Voivodeship Office reported to the Ministry of the Interior in August, providing a brief overview of the situation regarding four Greek Catholic and twelve Neo-Union parishes in the Volhynian voivodeship.³⁰

The final document in the file is an intriguing profile of the priests who served in Neo-Union parishes in Volhynia in early 1938. It includes brief biographical data on each of them, along with details about their behavior and political beliefs. Unlike the first-generation apostates from Orthodoxy, who were often criticized for their immorality, the behavior of almost all these priests (except Grosz) was

²⁴ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 26, 46, 47, 52.

²⁵ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 37, 39, 42.

²⁶ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 83–85.

²⁷ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 80–81.

²⁸ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 88.

²⁹ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 90.

³⁰ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 97–100.

generally regarded as positive. Some individuals were noted for characteristics such as inactivity, rigidity, and stubbornness, however.³¹

Of particular interest is the documentation regarding the Równe Neo-Union parish, which was the last to emerge within this movement in Volhynia (file 4129 'Correspondence with starosta offices on the supervision of Greek Catholic priests' activities,' documents from 1938). These materials hold particular value due to the scarcity of information regarding the Równe parish, established in 1937. They shed light on the conflict between the aforementioned Bazyli Grosz, who also served in Równe, and some of his parishioners, notably individuals from Galicia. The parishioners demanded that Grosz conduct services in Ukrainian and insisted on the removal of an icon they deemed Orthodox from the church. This conflict underscores the considerable challenge faced by Greek Catholics and Neo-Unionists in forming a cohesive parish, as exemplified in Równe, owing to their disparate mentalities.³²

Several files of the Security Department contain personal materials on people who were involved in the neo-Union movement or actively fought against it. Particularly noteworthy are the personal files of the priests Euzebiusz Slozko³³ or Witalis Sahajdakowski.³⁴ However, they contain documents on the transfer of these priests to different parishes, which do not mention anything about activities related to the church Union. Therefore, these files can be useful only for compiling biographies of these priests.

We should also pay special attention to the *Monograph of the East Slavic rite in the territory of the Vilna Voivodeship* compiled in June 1938. It was sent from Vilna to Łuck for internal review by the Voivodeship Office. Almost half of the book (pp. 32–59) describes the Neo-Union movement in Poland as a whole, and thus some of the events that took place in the Volhynian Voivodeship.³⁵

We can also highlight the significance of file 1889 ('Lists of Greek Catholics living in the counties of the Volhynian Voivodeship'). Analysis reveals that individuals listed were natives of Galicia, thus not fitting the classification of neo-Uniates. However, given the frequent grouping of Greek Catholic centers with neo-Uniate parishes in Volhynia, such statistics still offer valuable insights.³⁶

There are no other files consisting entirely or almost entirely of documents on the topic of neo-Union among the files of the Volhynian Voivodeship Security Department. However, it should also be noted that documents on this topic can be found in many other files of the voivodeship's Security Department. First of all, these are weekly and monthly situational reports, which often reported on events related to the neo-Union movement.

To conclude, among the materials of the Security Department of the Volhynian Voivodeship stored in the State Archives of Volyn Oblast there are not many files

³¹ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1853, ark. 109.

³² DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 4129, ark. 9–14.

³³ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1868, ark. 1–20.

³⁴ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 3044, ark. 1–18.

³⁵ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 4419, ark. 1–33.

³⁶ DAVoO, f. 46, op. 9, spr. 1889, ark. 1–14.

related to the history of the Neo-Union in Volhynia, but there are very valuable documents among them. However, the author does not know whether the copies/originals of the documents presented here are not present in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw. This is difficult to verify due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The value of these documents can be seen, in particular, in the correspondence concerning the development of neo-Union parishes in the Równe powiat including Równe itself and the villages of Zastawie and Miatyn. The surviving documents are sufficient to show that the Voivodeship Office and starosta offices were generally critical of the neo-Union, which became especially evident in the 1930s. While in the latter half of the 1920s, exemplified by the case of Dubeczne, the conflict resolution methods suggested by the authorities were perceived as unfair to the Orthodox, it appears that in subsequent conflict scenarios, the authorities increasingly tended to favor the Orthodox side. By the end of the 1920s, both the voivodeship government and starostas were in agreement that the Neo-Union movement in Volhynia had entered a period of crisis. This decline was primarily attributed to the perceived immorality and unscrupulous behavior of Neo-Union preachers, many of whom were former Orthodox priests, often financially motivated by subordination to the Catholic bishop. Such conduct, noted by authorities, served as a deterrent for residents of Volhynia considering conversion to the Uniate rite. Authorities consistently observed that the majority of Neo-Union adherents within the population were largely irreligious individuals who embraced the new denomination for materialistic gain or due to grievances against their former priests. Lacking evidence of genuine faith and sincerity among these neo-Unionists, the authorities saw no rationale to support the Neo-Union movement or assist the Catholic Church in its expansion within Volhynia.

Translated by Andrij Saweneć

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