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## On a Delicate Mission: Pope John Paul II in Ukraine\*

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From 23 to 27 June 2001 Pope John Paul II made what he described as a pastoral journey and pilgrimage to Ukraine. The Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma, who is under intense internal political pressure, had issued an invitation to the pope with the support of the churches in Ukraine which owe allegiance to Rome. Patriarch Aleksi II of Moscow and All Russia protested vehemently against the papal visit, claiming that the Catholic Church was involved in 'proselytism' and 'massive mission' on the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church (the former Soviet Union). Despite this, the pope was convinced that his visit to Ukraine would bring an improvement in interreligious relations, in particular in the relations between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. It has to be doubted whether he has succeeded in this delicate mission. Any hopes that Patriarch Aleksi would change his mind at the last minute were dashed: the patriarch took the opportunity to make a well-publicised 'state visit' to Belarus' and the representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP), Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan, born 1935) of Kiev and All Ukraine, travelled to the Czech Republic 'for medical reasons', in order to avoid meeting the pope.

In the course of his 94 visits abroad, Pope John Paul has previously visited other traditionally Orthodox countries (Georgia and Romania in 1999 and Greece earlier in 2001). As in Ukraine, he was invited by the heads of state, but also by the heads of the Orthodox Churches. The Greek Orthodox Church, whose leader, Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and All Greece, is known for his conservative and even anti-ecumenical views, was thought by some observers to present far rougher terrain than Ukraine. The fact that the pope was so warmly welcomed by the Greek Synod encouraged those who had high hopes of the Ukrainian visit. However, these enthusiasts had overlooked the fact that the situation in Greece is totally different from that in Ukraine. The average Greek Orthodox believer is barely aware of the Roman Catholic Church: Catholics in Greece are a negligible minority and not a threatening presence. The Greek bishops applauded their Roman visitor when he apologised for the vandalism of the Fourth Crusade after the conquest of Constantinople (1204) and during the Latin Empire (1204–1261). However, a caustic remark from the Moscow patriarch demonstrated the difference between this and the Russian view: 'Haven't the Catholics done any harm to us since 1204? What about the Catholic proselytism of the last 500 years, and especially during the last decade?'

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The religious situation in Romania is more comparable to that in Ukraine. As well as the dominant Orthodox Church, there is Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic presence. As in Ukraine, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was effectively banned under the socialist regime and has been rebuilding itself since the fall of communism, in conflict with the Orthodox Church. The fundamental difference between the situations in the two countries, however, is that the territory of Romania covers areas which for centuries have belonged to a variety of different peoples (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Roma and Jews) who have lived together and whose faiths (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Unitarian and Jewish) are familiar to Orthodox believers and generally held in respect. The ecumenical climate of Romania is traditionally better than that of other mainly Orthodox countries. There is also the fact that the Greek Catholics in Romania are distributed over wide areas of the country, and this creates more normal relations between Orthodox and Greek Catholics than those to be found on the territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, where up to now the Greek Catholics have been confined to Galicia, in the far west of Ukraine. For this reason most Orthodox believers in the former Soviet Union have no real concept of what Greek Catholics are and hence are particularly receptive to the hostile propaganda of the Orthodox leadership.

### **Moscow's 'No'**

It was President Kuchma who invited the pope to Ukraine – first and foremost in order to further his goals in internal and external politics. Both the churches loyal to Rome – the Greek Catholics and the Roman Catholics – supported the invitation. The leaders of the two Ukrainian Orthodox churches which are separated from the Moscow Patriarchate (the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kiev Patriarchate (UOC–KP) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC)) welcomed the papal visit, hoping that they might be able to arouse western sympathy for their cause by arranging a meeting with the pope.

### *Orthodox Quarrels*

In contrast, Patriarch Aleksi launched vehement protests against the pope's visit. In particular, the Moscow Patriarchate emphasised its claim to Ukraine as part of its 'canonical territory'. Modern-day Ukraine covers the central parts of old Kievan Rus' which became the cradle of Orthodox Christianity in Russia with the baptism of the people of Kiev in 988. For this reason, claims the Moscow Patriarchate, Orthodox Ukraine is an inseparable part of the Russian church. Nevertheless, two Ukrainian national Orthodox churches have sprung up since *perestroika*, unrecognised by Orthodoxy worldwide and therefore considered 'uncanonical'. The UOC–KP is led by Patriarch Filaret (Denisenko, born 1929), who was the exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine until 1992. He was elected as head of the 'Kiev Patriarchate' in 1995 and excommunicated by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1997. The UAOC is temporarily led by Metropolitan Mefodi (Kudryakov, born 1949). Both churches have a national Ukrainian identity and are steering a course which conflicts sharply with that of the Moscow Patriarchate. They declare that Russia may no longer consider itself to be the 'sole heir of the historic Kievan Rus'; Ukraine has suffered too long under 'Russian imperialist mentality',<sup>1</sup> and they accuse the Russian Orthodox Church of having used ecclesiastical means to support the 'russification' of Ukraine by the tsars and the Soviet regime in the past, and of helping to continue this

'russification' today. Since June 2001 the two schismatic Ukrainian Orthodox churches have been working intensively to achieve union.

In spite of the schism, however, the UOC-MP, under the leadership of Metropolitan Volodymyr, has almost 9000 parishes – more than twice as many as the UOC-KP (with 2800) and the UAOC (with at most 1000) together. According to Patriarch Aleksi, the pope should not have set foot on Ukrainian soil without an invitation from the spiritual head of the dominant Orthodox church in Ukraine, that of the Moscow Patriarchate, and against the patriarch's clearly-expressed wishes. Given that the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches regard themselves as 'sister churches', the visit should have taken place only in a context of mutual understanding.

To avoid straining the relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Moscow Patriarchate even further and to a degree which Moscow would find unacceptable, the Vatican diplomats had to avoid at all costs a meeting between the pope and the heads of the schismatic Orthodox churches – which could easily come to pass given their relations with President Kuchma. At the same time, the declared nature of the pope's visit as a pilgrimage and pastoral outreach called for careful planning. Compromises would have to be made in any case, as this was an official state visit. In deference to the Orthodox majority in Ukraine, any celebration of Catholic triumphalism had to be avoided.

#### *Accusations against Rome*

The much-publicised major accusations levelled against the Roman Catholic Church by the Moscow Patriarchate are, first, that it is engaged in proselytism in Ukraine, enticing believers away from Orthodoxy, and, second, that massive Catholic missionary activity is taking place on Russian Orthodox canonical territory.

In detail, the Moscow Patriarchate's first accusation claims that Orthodox belief was driven out of western Ukraine and that Rome was – at least in part – responsible for this. Behind this claim lies the Russian Orthodox Church's discontent at the resurgence of the Greek Catholic churches set up by the Union of Brest (1596) and the Union of Uzhhorod–Munkács (1776). These churches, banned under Stalin in 1946 and 1948 and integrated into the Moscow Patriarchate, achieved a stormy and unexpected revival after their relegalisation in 1989. Millions of Greek Catholic believers (re)joined their churches, reestablished their parishes and repossessed their former church buildings which had been given to the Moscow Patriarchate by the Soviet government in 1946. This repossession did not always take place peacefully. For the Russian Orthodox Church, having been driven almost completely out of Galicia, it is a heavy cross to bear. Of its previous 3000 parishes in the region, there are now only between 100 and 200, and in L'viv itself there is only one. As well as the majority of the church buildings, the Cathedral of St George in L'viv, seat of the bishop of L'viv, has been returned to the Greek Catholic Church. The number of Greek Catholic parishes is now almost 3000. However, the Moscow patriarch's polemic that the Greek Catholics have driven Orthodoxy as such out of Galicia is incorrect. Only the Moscow Patriarchate has been driven out; Ukrainian Orthodoxy retains 1800 parishes in Galicia.

Moscow's second accusation, that Rome is engaging in 'frantic missionary activity' on the 'canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate', is a response to the setting up of Catholic structures in Russia. It is true that since 1991 there has been a buildup of Catholic parishes and networks in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan,

which has caused the Moscow Patriarchate much anxiety. The reason for this build-up, however, is that during the Soviet era Catholic communities were denied state recognition throughout almost all regions of Russia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia (in 1988 there were only 15–20 registered in Soviet Asia). For decades, 50,000–100,000 Catholics were forced to meet in secret, a fact which explains why there is now such an enormous need for compensatory growth. The tremendous statistical growth of Catholic parishes is therefore due to the fact that most of them already existed prior to 1990 – but only underground. They were made up of people belonging to national minorities with Catholic traditions; most often Germans and Poles. Since 1990, ethnic Russians have also joined these parishes, especially in the cities. The approximately 200,000–500,000 Catholics, with 150 parishes, are a mere fraction of one per cent of Russia's population of 150 million.

While attempting to rebuild its structures, the Roman Catholic Church has found itself becoming the target of extremely hostile reactions from the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian nationalists. At the same time it is telling that the Lutherans in Russia (Germans and Ingrians), who have established far more parishes than the Catholics and whose membership contains a far higher percentage of ethnic Russians, have never been accused of 'frantic missionary activity' by the Moscow Patriarchate.

Patriarch Aleksii's vehement protests to the Polish pope are to a large extent also the expression of historical Russian resentment against Poles and Catholics, and against the West: for centuries, the very existence of Russia as a state was threatened by Poland. The celebration of Catholic masses in the Kremlin from 1610 to 1612, when Polish troops occupied the Russian capital, is etched deeply into Russian Orthodox collective memory. Over the course of many centuries the idea that Russia's Polish neighbours presented an existential threat developed into an allergic reaction against everything that was Polish, Catholic or western. This deep-seated anti-Polish feeling, together with anti-Catholicism, became a basic trait of the Russian mentality, which can be seen constantly, for example, in Russian literature of the nineteenth century. That it was a Polish pope, no less, who visited Ukraine, no doubt served to intensify this allergic Russian Orthodox reaction even further.

### *Political Aspects*

The invitation issued to Pope John Paul by President Kuchma had purely political motivations. The president has been accused of human rights violations (amongst others the so far unsolved murder of the opposition journalist Georgi Gongadze) as well as of a dictatorial style of government. Corruption is said to be the most striking feature of his internal politics. The papal visit was supposed to help improve Kuchma's image. As far as external politics were concerned, Kuchma wanted to underline Ukraine's increasingly prowestern orientation and distance from Russia. To this end Kuchma took every opportunity to be seen at the pope's side and to attend the religious services, even the Byzantine liturgy in L'viv. One result of the pope's visit to Ukraine – certainly not planned by the pope – has been to support the position of the much-embattled president.

Patriarch Aleksii took similar political action in response. While the pope was in Ukraine Aleksii travelled to Belarus' and met the Belarusian president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, whose reputation is much blacker than that of Kuchma: for example, his 'death-squadron' is said to have organised the 'disappearance' of five opposition figures to date.<sup>2</sup> After their meeting the Russian patriarch and the Belarusian

president called for an even closer bond between Belarus' and Russia: Orthodox Russians, Belarusians and, yes, Ukrainians must stand together, and their respective member-churches of the Moscow Patriarchate must prepare the ground for a political unification of their countries. Ukraine was called upon not to join the European Union. The pope's visit, it was said, had no other aim but to drive a wedge between these brother-nations.<sup>3</sup>

### The Pope in Ukraine

Pope John Paul received a cool reception to begin with from the population of Kiev, a city of highly Russian character. However, public interest increased up to his journey on to L'viv, once the Ukrainian press had turned the papal visit into a media event. Clearly his charisma, his frailty and the unpretentiousness of his appearances had won the hearts of the populace of Kiev. By the end of his visit, according to opinion polls, 57.6 per cent of the Ukrainian population expressed themselves in positive terms about it.<sup>4</sup> Such *ad hoc* polls do not of course give more than a superficial and snapshot picture of the general mood.

#### *In Kiev: A Welcome with Reservations*

On his arrival at Kiev airport the pope declared the aim of his visit to Ukraine:

As a pilgrim for peace and brotherhood I have faith that I will be received in friendship by all those who, although they do not belong to the Catholic Church, have an open heart for dialogue and cooperation. I assure you that I have not come here to proselytise but to witness for Christ with all Christians of all churches and church communities. ... It is in this spirit that I greet from my heart especially my respected brother bishops and the monks, priests and laypeople of Orthodoxy who make up the majority of the population of this country. I am glad to remember the times in history when the churches of Rome and Kiev have enjoyed harmonious relations.<sup>5</sup>

The pope went on to remind his audience of the worsening of Orthodox-Catholic relations during the course of history and – in his very first speech on Ukrainian soil at Kiev airport – begged his Orthodox brethren for forgiveness.

Unfortunately there have also been dark times, in which the icon of the love of Christ has been dimmed. We prostrate ourselves before the One Lord and acknowledge our guilt. We beg for forgiveness for all that we have done wrong in the recent and distant past and on our part we promise forgiveness for any injustice done to us. Our hearts are filled with the great desire that the errors of the past may not be repeated in the future. We are called to bear witness for Christ and to do this together. Memories of the past should not create a barrier on our way towards that common understanding through which brotherhood and cooperation are furthered.<sup>6</sup>

With these words, Pope John Paul repeated the plea for forgiveness which he had made to the Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church a few weeks previously. For their part, the Orthodox welcomed the pope's public acknowledgment of Catholic guilt, but in Russia in particular the question is being asked whether these words will be followed by the necessary deeds. The Orthodox will be remembering the Greek Catholic churches which, supported by Rome, have split off from various Orthodox

national churches at various times in the past. To the Orthodox churches, these are still a painful thorn in their flesh.

In the days before the pope's arrival there were protest demonstrations in Kiev, led by monks and priests and attended by between 10,000 and 20,000 members of all dioceses of the UOC-MP. As well as icons, the protesters carried placards and banners with slogans such as 'Ukraine Does Not Need the Pope!', 'Hands Off Orthodoxy!', 'Orthodoxy or Death!', 'No to the Pope's Visit!' and 'The Pope – Messenger of Antichrist!'. There were calls for 'civil disobedience against the papal visit'.<sup>7</sup> Barricades and a mass presence of allegedly 30,000 police prevented larger protests in Kiev (by way of comparison, at the world economic conference in Genoa in July 2001 there were 16,000–20,000 police on the streets). Strict spot-checks on individuals drew criticism even from Catholic bishops. At the Monastery of the Caves, the residence of the head of the UOC-MP, Metropolitan Volodymyr, hundreds of demonstrators waited to disrupt any potential surprise gesture by the pope such as a visit to the monastery with government representatives.

In Kiev, attendance at the masses held by the pope on an airfield was lower than expected: 30,000 participated in the Latin-rite mass and 100,000 in the Byzantine liturgy, compared to predictions of over 500,000 participants altogether.<sup>8</sup> In his impressive sermons the pope returned repeatedly to the baptism of Kiev in 988 – and hence to Orthodoxy, which was the foundation for the Christianity of the eastern Slavonic peoples. He reminded his listeners of the great Orthodox inheritance to which both Roman and Byzantine Catholicism in Ukraine were firmly bound. During his speeches and the discussions between events, the pope insisted time and again that 'ecumenical dialogue must be the first priority for churches and believers in Ukraine'. The division of Christianity into various confessions was 'one of the greatest challenges of our time'.<sup>9</sup>

During his two days in Kiev, as well as attending the central religious events, the pope completed the strenuous programme of an official state visit. After the opening visit to President Kuchma there was a meeting with representatives from the worlds of politics, culture, science and business. At this meeting the pope called upon the divided Christian churches to overcome barriers and mistrust. He appealed to the politicians' consciences, demanding democratisation, a just and incorruptible administration and religious tolerance, thereby indirectly criticising the corruption in Ukraine:

'Do not allow those in power to tread the people underfoot', wrote Vladimir Monomakh (died 1125). ... These words are still fully valid today. '... Politicians! ... It is your task to serve the people by guaranteeing freedom and equality for all. Resist the temptation to misuse power for personal ends or for party interests. Always remember your responsibility for the poor and do all that you legitimately can to ensure that every citizen prospers as he ought. ... In your work, always keep the common good and the legal rights of all citizens in mind and work within the framework of the legality that guarantees justice.'<sup>10</sup>

Another of the pope's state engagements was a meeting with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations. The churches of Ukraine appear to have little interest in this body, which Kuchma is trying to use as his instrument. In the presence of a large number of Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical Christians as well as a few representatives of Judaism and Islam – but no representative of the UOC-MP – the pope stressed religious liberty, tolerance and the co-

operation of believers of all faiths so necessary for a fruitful future for Ukraine. But the pope made no mention of the schisms in Ukrainian Orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> This event, scarcely worth mentioning otherwise, provided the only encounter between the pope and representatives of the two uncanonical Orthodox churches. However, there was no real meeting with the ‘schismatics’, which seems to have kept the indignation of the Moscow Patriarchate within bounds. A commentary giving the Moscow view reads as follows: ‘As feared, the meeting and kiss of peace between the pope and the “patriarch” has taken place – admittedly only in the course of a general meeting of various religious leaders, but it has taken place. In the “neutral” setting of the Kiev Philharmonia ...’.<sup>12</sup>

Pursuing his wider programme, the pope visited the memorial of Baby Yar near Kiev to remember the 34,000 Jews who were shot there a few days after the invasion of Ukraine by the Germans on 29 and 30 September 1941 and the further 70,000 who were killed there later. After this he visited the memorials to the fallen of the Second World War, and to the victims of Stalinism and fascism. These gestures, as well as his special act of remembrance of the eight million who perished from hunger as a result of the famines deliberately inflicted by Stalin in 1921–22 and 1932–33, appealed to the state of mind of many Ukrainians and won the pope their sympathy.

#### *In L'viv: a ‘Home Match’*

In contrast to the welcome the pope experienced in Kiev – cool to begin with, accompanied by police presence and Orthodox protest – in Galician L'viv he was on home territory and here his visit became a local festivity. The aged pope was borne along by the great joy of the Ukrainians at the resurrection of their Greek Catholic Church, banned for 43 years (from 1946 to 1989). The Roman Catholic minority – mainly of Polish origin – also celebrated the visit of ‘their’ pope and their voice was strengthened by tens of thousands of Poles who had streamed over the nearby border from their neighbouring country. Here too the pope repeatedly talked about close links with Orthodoxy, but another reconciliation was evidently equally dear to his heart in L'viv: the reconciliation of the Roman Catholic Poles and the Greek Catholic Ukrainians, who for centuries had watched each other in hostility.

Galicia belonged to Poland from the fourteenth century, to the Habsburgs from 1772 and again to Poland from 1918. Poles and Ukrainians lived in the region for centuries in a tense symbiosis in which the Poles ruled over the Ukrainians and treated them as an underclass with few rights. For the Poles, the Ukrainians were a race of uneducated serfs, and they treated them with condescension and often with disdain. This experience remains deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of the Ukrainians. At the same time, many Poles nurse a latent hatred of the Ukrainians. In the Polish view, all Ukrainians made common cause with the Nazis during the German occupation (1939/41–44) and betrayed Poles to the invader. A particularly demeaning experience for the Polish minority in Ukraine was that after the annexation of Galicia by the Soviet Union in 1944 the Ukrainians carried out a campaign of systematic discrimination against their former Polish masters. A Pole who did not wish to be sent packing back to Poland but to remain in his Galician homeland had to conceal his Polish nationality and language, and claim to be Ukrainian.

In the light of this history, the coexistence of the Roman Catholic Church (associated with the Poles) and the Greek Catholic Church (associated with the Ukrainians) remains difficult. For this reason the pope found it especially important to call both ethnic groups to reconciliation. In a moving speech the head of the Greek

Catholics, Cardinal Archbishop Liubomyr Husar, begged his Polish fellow-Christians to forgive the sins of the Ukrainians just as the Ukrainians wished to forgive the historical guilt of the Poles.

Altogether there were a million participants at the two large services in L'viv, which were held on a former racecourse. These included pilgrims from all parts of the former Soviet Union and tens of thousands from Poland. The Latin-rite mass, during which the pope preached mainly in Polish, was intended to underline the principle of equality for the Latin rite in Ukraine and to raise the profile of the Polish minority. During the two services in L'viv the pope performed 30 beatifications. 'In the course of my pilgrimage I wanted to honour the holiness of this land, which has been washed in the blood of the martyrs.'<sup>13</sup> During the Latin-rite mass the pope beatified two clergy, Archbishop Józef Bilczewski (1860–1923) and the priest Zygmunt Goradzowski (1845–1920), in both cases for their exemplary work and not because of political persecution. During the Byzantine-rite liturgy 28 Greek Catholics were beatified. These were a mixed group: ten bishops, eight priests, four nuns and six monks. Most had been brutally persecuted under communism and some had been martyred. One of them, Teodor Romzha (born 1911), bishop of the small Greek Catholic Church in Carpatho-Ukraine (set up at the Union of Uzhhorod–Munkács in 1776), was killed in 1947 in a car 'accident' when the Soviet authorities destroyed this church. Leonid Fedorov (1879–1935) was the exarch of the Russian Catholic Church, founded at the beginning of the twentieth century. Arrested in 1923, he was sent to several Soviet camps, where he eventually died. The prelate Dr Petro Verhun (1890–1957) worked during the war in Berlin, providing spiritual aid to Ukrainian forced labourers. After Berlin fell to the Soviet forces, he also disappeared in the Gulag. Iosafata Hordashevskaya (1869–1919) founded an order at the end of the nineteenth century; the priest Omelian Kowtsch (1888–1944) kept Jews in hiding and was killed by the Nazis.<sup>14</sup>

All the joy and enthusiasm generated by the pope's visit to Galicia meant that one disappointment went unnoticed, at least by ordinary believers. In some church circles it had been expected that the pope would use his visit as an opportunity finally to raise the Greek Catholic Church to the level of a patriarchate. The pope had after all promoted Archbishop Husar to the rank of cardinal on 28 January 2001. He probably hesitated to take this step out of deference to the Moscow Patriarchate, which would have seen this 'exaltation' of the disliked 'Uniates' as a provocation.

### **Open Questions**

Pope John Paul had been describing his visit to Ukraine as a 'pilgrimage for peace'. Again and again he called for a return to the original unity of Eastern and Western Christendom. His speeches and sermons were notable for his efforts to diminish the tension between Catholicism and the Moscow Patriarchate. As in Athens, he also pleaded with his Ukrainian fellow-Christians for forgiveness for the wrongs done to them in the past millennium by the Latin West.

### *Moscow's View*

Ukraine's largest church, the UOC-MP, has refused the pope's offer. In a message dated 22 January 2001 from Metropolitan Volodymyr, head of the UOC-MP, to Pope John Paul, the metropolitan stated in the name of his fellow-bishops that the Vatican was deluding itself if it believed that a papal visit would 'help towards a

final, peaceful resolution of the interdenominational conflict in western Ukraine'. The message continues:

Can we shake hands and by doing so create the illusion of agreement and harmony ... ? Millions of ordinary Orthodox believers will reject this visit, which puts myself and the whole episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in a position which does not allow us to meet you. We are therefore declaring officially that – should Your Holiness visit Ukraine for the period you mention – there may be no meeting between us and, further, that no single member of our clergy will take part in any event of your visit.<sup>15</sup>

Moscow's opinion on the pope's visit to Ukraine is here clearly stated: it is not possible, when there are two sister-churches of equal standing, that one should break into the other's house against the latter's will and in pursuit of goals which are against the interests of that householder. Together with hundreds of thousands of believers, the pope has celebrated the miraculous revival of the Greek Catholic Church in Galicia and Carpatho-Ukraine. In doing so, however, he has reopened the Moscow Patriarchate's most painful wounds. The very event the pope celebrated was the direct cause of the banishment of the Patriarchate from that region. Before Patriarch Aleksi can issue his own invitation to the pope, the major sources of discord between Moscow and Rome must be settled: proselytism; the question of 'Uniate' churches; the growth of new Catholic structures.

Pope John Paul's pastoral visit to Ukraine was therefore, on a subliminal level, overshadowed by the fact that the Moscow Patriarchate had not given its agreement (although the Greek Catholics and Roman Catholics will scarcely have noticed this). There are good grounds for rejecting Moscow's accusations against Rome and its arguments against the papal visit as inconsistent with the facts. However, in view of the fact that the pope was constantly emphasising his respect for the Russian Orthodox Church as a sister-church, his actions do become problematic. The messages of peace and reconciliation offered by the 'unwelcome guest' and his pleas for forgiveness were received with reservation by the Moscow Patriarchate: they doubted his sincerity. In addition, the Ukrainian Orthodox loyal to Moscow saw the pope's liturgical programme in Kiev as a provocation. Although they might accept to some extent the Latin-rite liturgy, this is not the case with the Byzantine liturgy: it is only in the last few years that Greek Catholics have reestablished themselves in central Ukraine. Meanwhile the laying of a foundation stone for a Greek Catholic theological college was greeted with anything but enthusiasm in Orthodox circles in Kiev and the Moscow Patriarchate's frosty reaction to the papal visit was doubtless compounded with a certain bitterness at the fascination the aged pope aroused among Ukrainians.

#### *Rome's View*

Papal diplomacy, as far as it concerns Moscow, appears to have reached a dead end. The pope must feel that he is being blackmailed by the Russian Orthodox. As noted earlier, there is a feeling in western ecclesiastical circles – and indeed in the small proecumenism minority within the Moscow Patriarchate – that Moscow's reproaches against Rome are exaggerated. The Patriarchate seems to be using its stereotypical accusations in order to lend plausibility to its own wide-reaching claims. Democratically-minded Orthodox observers suggest that Moscow's fundamental motiva-

tion is not spiritual but rather a desire to maintain its grip on power in its ‘canonical territory’, and that the Moscow Patriarchate is more than willing to accept support from the state in order to further this goal.

The two churches hold to radically different interpretations of various crucial issues. Meanwhile irritation is sparked off in Rome when the Moscow Patriarchate refers to its ‘canonical territory’, stubbornly clings to inaccurate analyses of the situation and issues inappropriate protests. The Roman Church faces the question of how it is to behave towards its Moscow ‘sister’. Many in Rome must feel that ‘sisterhood’ cannot mean that Rome must give way to Moscow in all matters. This kind of self-denial is likely to engender frustration and finally dislike. Mindful of past failures to resolve the churches’ differences, Pope John Paul perhaps hoped to cut this Gordian knot with a single, powerful stroke and persuade the Moscow Patriarchate to give in. He has not succeeded.

### **Future Developments?**

There are varying assessments of the success of the pope’s visit to Ukraine. The Ukrainian Christians loyal to Rome have certainly experienced a considerable strengthening of their position as a result of the visit. The Vatican’s appraisal is also generally positive with regard to relations with the Orthodox Christians, although Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Vatican’s Commission on Christian Unity, is more guarded: as far as the Moscow Patriarchate is concerned, he feels, the pope’s visit did not have the *negative* consequences that many feared would be the result, but Patriarch Aleksi has made it clear openly that he does not want any real dialogue with Rome at the moment. Many Roman Catholics also believe that the pope should have waited a bit longer and attempted once more to meet Patriarch Aleksi himself. However, observers generally concede that given the past record success in arranging such a meeting would have been most unlikely, even after years of tough negotiation.

Pope John Paul’s visit to Ukraine has certainly made the ecumenical situation more complicated. The Moscow patriarch allowed himself to be goaded into harsh displeasure by the Vatican’s bold actions and has now – one might even say in a fit of pique – manoeuvred himself into a difficult position from which he will find it hard to withdraw without losing face. The patriarch’s complaints were plainly to be heard across the Belarusian–Ukrainian border: the papal visit to Ukraine would bring neither peace nor stability and still less an improvement in relations between the two churches.

From Rome over the past weeks there have often been statements to the effect that with his visit to Ukraine the pope has already succeeded in travelling halfway towards Moscow. This however raises the all-important issue: the success or failure of the Ukrainian visit will be demonstrated finally in the decision of Patriarch Aleksi. Will the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia invite His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Russia, or not? Any thoughts about a papal visit to Russia without the patriarch’s consent are idle speculation; President Putin would never issue such an invitation without the patriarch’s blessing. One invitation, however, has already been issued: from the Roman Catholic archbishop in Moscow, Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz.

### **Notes and References**

<sup>1</sup> Nina Kovals’ka, Ukrainian envoy to the Vatican, in an interview with Radio Vatican, 22 June 2001.

- <sup>2</sup> Markus Wehner, 'Das Lukaschenka-Regime unter Mordverdacht', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 July 2001.
- <sup>3</sup> *Kathpress* (Vienna), 29 June 2001, p. 8.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>5</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 June 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Kathpress*, 16 June 2001, p. 13.
- <sup>8</sup> *Kathpress*, 22 June 2001, p. 15.
- <sup>9</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 June 2001.
- <sup>10</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 25–26 June 2001.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Orthodoxie aktuell* (Bochum), no. 6, 2001, p. 4.
- <sup>13</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5 July 2001.
- <sup>14</sup> For more on the new saints, see *La nuova Europa*, no. 4, 2001, pp. 60–71.
- <sup>15</sup> *Orthodoxie aktuell*, no. 6, 2001, p. 3.

(Translated from the German by Rachel Kellett)