THE CLERGY OF THE ORTHODOX REFORMATION CONFESSIONS AND PRECONDITIONS OF INSTITUALISATION OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE DIOCESES IN THE DONBAS (at the beginning of the 1920s – mid-1950s)

Abstract. The purpose of the research is to elucidate the clergy’s influence of the oppositional Reformation denominations on the prerequisites for institutionalization and development of the Ukrainian Exarchate dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Donbas (at the beginning of the 1920s – mid-1950s). The methodology of the research is based on the principles of historicism, systematicity, scientificity, verification, the author’s objectivity; as well as the use of general scientific and special historical methods. The scientific novelty of this study consists in the attempt to do an unbiased systematic analysis of the circumstances of the Orthodox Church eparchial network development in the Donbas based on a comprehensive analysis of sources and scientific publications. The conclusions. The historical analysis of the prerequisites and circumstances of the institutionalization of Voroshylovhrad Diocese proves that the clergy’s integration of the Reformation Orthodox denominations allowed the leadership of the renewed Moscow Patriarchate, headed by the former member of the renewed VCU, Patriarch Serhii (Strahorodsky), not only to solve the acute personnel shortage of the higher hierarchy and workers of the Diocesan Administrations, but also to minimize partially the consequences of the marginalization of the religious consciousness of the believers. Due to the abolishment of the legal parish life in the Donbas by force at the end of the 1930s, the confessional division resumed against the background of a general church revival during the German occupation of 1941 – 1943. However, owing to the lack of the liberal UAOC episcopate, the restoration of church structures was mainly implemented under the jurisdiction of the conservative Autonomous Church, which indicates the scarcity of awareness concerning the importance of church reforms by local followers of the opposition denominations in the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, the exclusive discrediting of the Orthodox Reformation and the concealment of their original confessional affiliation by the clerics led to the emergence of unresolved key issues of the church system and the restoration of division under the conditions of religious policy liberalization at the end of the 1980s, the consequences of which could be felt in the religious discourse of the post-Soviet countries up till nowadays. Further analysis of interfaith dialogue experience and integration of the oppositional Reformation clergy will allow us to elaborate new conceptual approaches to restoring the unity of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

Key words: Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Renovatonist Movement, political repression, the German-Soviet war, the Nazi occupation, the postwar period, Donbas, Voroshylovhrad Diocese.
ДУХОВЕНСТВО РЕФОРМАЦІЙНИХ ПРАВОСЛАВНИХ КОНФЕСІЙ ТА ПЕРЕДУМОВИ ІНСТИТУАЛІЗАЦІЇ ЇПАРХІЙ МОСКОВСЬКОЇ ПАТРІАРХІЇ НА ДОНБАСІ (початок 1920 – середина 1950-х рр)

Анотація. Мета дослідження – розкрити вплив духовенства опозиційних реформаційних конфесій на передумови інституалізації та розвиток єпархії Московської Патріархії на Донбасі (початок 1920 – середина 1950-х рр). Методологія дослідження базується на принципах історизму, системності, науковості, верифікації, авторської об’єктивності, а також використанні загальнонаукових і спеціально-історичних методів. Наукова новизна розпадається на спробі неупередженого системного аналізу обставин розвитку спархіальної мережі Православної Церкви на Донбасі на підставі комплексного аналізу джерел та наукової літератури.

Висновки. Історичний аналіз передумов та обставин інституалізації Ворошиловградської спархії доводить, що інтеграція духовенства реформаційних православних конфесій дозволила керівництву оновленої Московської Патріархії на чолі з колишнім членом обновленського ВЦУ патріархом Сергієм (Страгородським) не тільки ліквідувати гострий кадровий дефіцит вищої ієрархії та працівників спархіальних управлінь, але й часто в мінімізувати наслідки маргіналізації релігійної свідомості вірних. Оскільки наприкінці 1930-х рр. легальне парафіяльне життя на Донбасі було сили міцно ліквідовано, конфесійне розділення відновлювалось на тлі загального церковного відродження під час німецької окупації 1941 – 1943 рр. Однак, з огляду на брак спискової легальної УАПЦ, відновлення церковних структур здійснювалося переважно в юрисдикції консервативної Автономної Церкви, що свідчить про недостатнє усвідомлення значення церковних реформ місцевими послідовниками опозиційних конфесій 1920 – 1930-х рр. Водночас виключна дискредитація православної реформації та приховування клириками своєї першої конфесійної належності призвели до неврегульованого виселення ключових дискусійних питань церковного устрою та відновлення розділених в умовах релігійної політики наприкінці 1980-х рр., наслідки чого відіграли в релігійному дискурсі пострадянського періоду до нашого часу.

Ключові слова: Українське Православ'я, обновленський рух, політичні репресії, німецько-радянська війна, нацистська окупація, післявоєнний період, Донбас, Ворошиловградська спархія.

The Problem Statement. The prerequisites for the formation and the circumstances of the institutional formation of Voroshylovhrad Diocese of the Ukrainian Exarchate of Moscow Patriarchate belong to the least covered pages in the domestic church historiography. The main peculiarity of the issue is that in the Donbas a religious life revival was carried out under the conditions of the German occupation and was marked by confessional division on the basis of contradictions regarding the canonical status of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy, moreover, after the de-occupation of the territory under the conditions of the political course of the Soviet government implementation in support of the unified pro-government denomination, there was a mass transition of the clergy’s survived representatives of separate denominations to Moscow Patriarchate clergy, owing to which many reformation practices and ideas entered the liturgical and canonical tradition of the latter. Finally, the topicality of studying the historical experience of the Orthodox dioceses organizational formation in the Donbas during the post-war period, the influence of the renewalist clergy on the implementation of the specified process acquires exceptional importance in the context of researching the final period of separate denominations activity in Ukraine, the search of the reunification model of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the definition of conceptual approaches regarding the local Church development in the Ukrainian-Russian border region.

The Analysis of Recent Researches and Publications. The issue of the historical circumstances of the Orthodox confessions formation and development in Ukraine is
considered to be of a high topicality on the national religious historiography pages. Among the Ukrainian researchers the topic of the Orthodox Church position in Ukraine in the 1920s–1950s is presented in the works of Yu. Voloshyn (Voloshyn, 1997), O. Lysenko (Lysenko, 1999), A. Kurydon, V. Paschenko (Paschenko & Kurydon, 2004), P. Bondarchuk, V. Danylenko (Bondarchuk & Danylenko, 2012), A. Smirnov (Smirnov, 2019; 2020) and the others. The analysis on tendencies concerning the key reformation confessions development was carried out in the scientific works of S. Zhyliuk (Zhyliuk, 2002), V. Sylantiev (Sylantiev, 2005), O. Ihnatusha, T. Hruzova (Ihnatusha, 2006; Ihnatusha & Hruzova, 2021), O. Tryhub (Tryhub, 2009). Among foreign historiography representatives, the prominent monographs published by the Russian researchers should also be mentioned: Metropolitan Theodosius (Protsiuk) (Protsiuk, 2004), L. Regelson (Regelson, 2007), Archpriest V. Lavrinov (Lavrinov, 2007; 2017) and priest I. Soloviov (Soloviov, 2002). The historical aspect of church revival in the occupied territories and subsequent transformation of the state-church relations during the years of Stalin’s rule was presented in the articles written by R. Boer (Boer, 2018) and D. Harrisville (Harrisville, 2019). The works of O. Forostiuk (Forostiuk, 1999; 2000; 2004), I. Lukovenko (Lukovenko, 2011), M. Rebrow (Rebrow, 2016) and V. Pidhaiko (Pidhaiko, 2020) deal with the study of the circumstances of the Orthodoxy institutionalization in the Donbas, and the human dimension of this issue is considered in the researches carried out by I. Hridina (Hridina, 2001), I. Dovzhuk (Dovzhuk, 2012) and the others. However, since the available historiography is often marked by the tendency of confessional reception and there could be some inaccuracies, there is a drastic need not only to involve new sources into scientific circulation, but also to carry out a detailed comparative analysis of available factual material in the context of a regional section of the above-mentioned issue.

Hence, the subject of the study is the historical circumstances and a personal factor of the Moscow Patriarchate dioceses institutionalization in the Donbas. The chronological boundaries of the study cover the period from the organizational formation of the movement for the Orthodoxy renewal at the beginning of the 1920s to the leadership of Voroshylovhrad Diocese by the former cleric of the Synodal Church – Metropolitan Borys (Vik) in 1956. The territorial boundaries of the study are delineated by the actual boundaries of the dioceses – the territories of Stalinska and Voroshylovrad (at that time) regions.

The purpose of the research is to trace, based on a comprehensive analysis of historical sources and scientific publications, the influence of the clergy of the Reformation Orthodox denominations on the prerequisites for the creation, organizational formation and development of the Moscow Patriarchate dioceses in the Donbas, which involves solving the following research objectives: first of all, to find out the prerequisites for the emergence and quantitative composition of the reformation Orthodox denominations in the Donbas; second of all, to analyze the peculiarities of church revival in the territory of the region during the period of the German occupation; third of all, to find out the integration circumstances of the reformation denominations clergy into the composition of local dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate. The following methods were used while working on the research: general scientific methods and principles of historical research. The article is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, continuity, multifactoriality, complexity and pluralism. Historical comparative, prosopographic, problem chronological methods were applied in the research (Fullerton, 2011).

The Results of the Research. The ideological design of the movement for the Orthodox Church reformation in Ukraine dates back to the time of the Pre-Conciliar presence in 1906. The revolutionary events of 1917–1921 contributed to the destruction of the control system
over a spiritual life of society that existed during the autocracy and intensified the activities of reformation movements due to the liberalization of religious policy and the possibility of creating communities without the hierarchy sanction. The policy of oppression concerning the conservative hierarchs, who were marked by a political unreliability, began right after the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship. The actual instrument for the destruction of the organized structure of the Orthodox Church was the deepening of its internal contradictions and the establishment of multi-confessionalism. However, the first experience of an open discussion on possible reforms regarding the depoliticization and normalization of the parish life in accordance with the challenges of the era remained unrealized at the All-Ukrainian and All-Russian Councils of 1917 – 1918, and within the Church a powerful opposition of ordinary clergy and intelligentsia was formed, whose participation in the management of church affairs was minimal. In May of 1922, the imprisoned Patriarch Tykhon was visited by a group of the clergy – the supporters of church reforms – and persuaded the hierarch to renounce power. By his resolution, Patriarch Tykhon transferred the clerical office to the specified clerics until the arrival of the vicar, which was interpreted a bit later as permission to transfer church power to them.

On May 29, 1922, the founding meeting of the renewed Higher Church Administration for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (hereinafter referred to as the VCU) was held in Moscow (Soloviev, 2005, p. 104), and already on June 16, 1922, the future Patriarch of Moscow (at that time – Metropolitan) Serhiy (Strahorodsky) as part of a group of hierarchs signed an open appeal to the episcopate, in which he recognized the VCU as the only canonical, legal, Supreme Church Authority, and all its decrees were legal and binding, calling the following: “all true shepherds and believing sons of the Orthodox Church to follow our example” (Gubonin, 1994, pp. 218–219). As a result, soon Metropolitan Serhiy became a member of the VCU and was proposed as one of the candidates for its leadership (Soloviev, 2005, p. 105). It should be stated that the VCU was recognized by 37 out of 73 bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate already in 1922 (Regelson, 2007, pp. 84, 310). The VCU was officially recognized by the future heads of the Moscow Patriarchate – bishops Oleksiy (Symansky) and Mykolai (Yarushevych), who, however, showed a wait-and-see attitude (Krasnov-Levitin & Shavrov, 1996, p. 140).

As a result of significant disagreements regarding the degree of reforms radicality, the mass separation of a number of renewalist groups began. On May 8, 1923, Metropolitan Serhiy (Strahorodsky) did not join the renewed composition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was named the Supreme Church Council, but already on August 27 he repented in public, in front of Patriarch Tykhon (Lavrynov, 2017, p. 516). As the threat of collapse loomed over the renovationist movement as a result of a significant organizational crisis, the course was taken to curtail reforms, which, however, did not improve its situation. Instead, the Soviet special services searched for the mechanisms to control the activities of the remaining Orthodox denominations. On June 4 – 5, 1925, in Ukraine, Lubensky assembly was held with the participation of 5 hierarchs, at which the Cathedral-Episcopal Church was formalized – a canonical alternative to the UAOC and the renewed Synodal Church (hereinafter – USC). There were registered 207 parishes of reformation denominations (UAOC, USC, and USEC) in the Donbas on January 1, 1928, which was only 36,8% of the total number of the Orthodox communities in the region (CSAHAAU, f. 5, d. 3, c. 116, pp. 114–119).

On July 29, 1927 the Declaration of Loyalty to the Soviet Government was proclaimed and the Temporary Patriarchal Holy Synod of Metropolitan Serhiy was formed, who after
the death of Patriarch Tykhon became the Deputy Patriarchal Vicar of Metropolitan Peter Krutytsky (Poliansky) and soon actually headed the Moscow Patriarchate, crisis arose – a part of bishops accused the hierarch of exceeding his authority, abusing the highest church authority and creating “a newly renewed split” (Shumilo, 2011, p. 42). Since Metropolitan Serhiy resorted to numerous concessions to the authorities in his actions, in particular, the introduction of the practice of actual intervention of the authorities in church personnel policy, a number of clerics and hierarchs formed the basis of the so-called Catacomb Church. Under those circumstances, Metropolitan Serhiy carried out personnel rotations of the governing bodies of the Moscow Patriarchate at the expense of hierarchs loyal to the Soviet government, many of whom were in the Renewal Movement previously. Hence, according to R. Rehelson, Metropolitan Serhiy carried out “a terrible and irreparable act – a purposeful change in the hierarchy of the Russian Church” (Regelson, 2007, p. 117). However, despite the hierarchs’ loyalty of the renewed Moscow Patriarchate, Synodal and Cathedral-Episcopal Churches, all denominations were subjected to repression. Thus, at the end of the 1930s, in the Donbas, a legal religious life was brought to a halt completely. The exception was only two congregations of the Renovationist Church: Pokrovsky Church (khram) in the village of Staromykhailivka, Stalin Region, and Ascension Church, in the city of Oleksandrivsk, Voroshylovgrad Region (Pidgayko, 2020, p. 538).

However, the German-Soviet war changed the situation drastically. With the beginning of the Nazi occupation, Metropolitan Feofil (Buldovsky), the last First Hierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine, restored Kharkiv Diocesan Administration, whose jurisdiction included more than 400 parishes in Kharkiv, Poltava, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kursk, and Voronezh regions by the middle of 1942 (Voloshyn, 1997, p. 56). On July 27, 1942, at the meeting of Kharkiv diocesan administration, with the participation of Bishop Mstyslav (Skrypnyk), a protocol was signed on the integration of parishes subordinate to Bishop Feofilo into the Administration of the UAOC of Archbishop Polikarp (Sikorsky) (Zinkevych, 1987, pp. 726–727). First of all, the revival of a religious life in the Donbas covered its western part (from October of 1941 – the beginning of the occupation of Stalino), and by July of 1942, when Voroshylovgrad and Rostov were captured, it spread to the eastern part of the region. The occupation government did not interfere with a religious revival in Ukraine, but, on the contrary, sought to use it for its own ideological purposes.

In the absence of local bishops and an organized system of church administration, believers spontaneously created temporary diocesan administrative bodies on their own, which were given the functions of restoring liquidated churches, coordinating the activities of district deacons, and also ensuring the conditions for appointing a bishop. The surviving representatives of the clergy were found by the parishioners themselves, less often by the occupation administration, and they were involved in the restoration of divine services. In November of 1941, a member of the All-Ukrainian Synod from Donetsk Diocese of the Synodal Church, a priest Prokip Drahozhynsky, was appointed the abbot of Mykylsky Church (Krasnoarmiysk) and Deacon of Krasnoarmiysk District. Owing to his efforts, 11 mostly former renewal communities were restored, which became part of the Autonomous Church, which recognized canonical submission to the Moscow Patriarchate (Нікольський, 2013, с. 122). On December 1, 1942, permission was received to create Donetsk Diocesan Administration of the Autonomous Church, with its center in Bakhmut. However, due to the impossibility of holding services at the dilapidated former renovated Trinity Cathedral of the city, the center of the diocese, which included most of the Orthodox communities of Stalin
and Voroshlyovhrad regions (544 parishes) (Rebrova, 2016, p. 60), was situated in the city of Ordzhonikidze (nowadays – Yenakiyeve). There was also Makijiv Diocesan Administration, subordinate to the Vicar of Rostov Diocese (Pidgayko, 2020, p. 538).

After signing the unification act of the Autocephalous and Autonomous Churches on October 8, 1942, Metropolitan Feofil, having the ambitions of a superior, made an unsuccessful attempt to convene the Synod session of the United Church in Kharkiv in December of 1942 (Prykhodchenko, 2011, p. 47). Taking into account the failure of the unification, on December 8, 1942, Metropolitan Feofil was given the authority of the administrator of the UAC in Left-Bank Ukraine and was asked to appoint bishops to the main cities of the eastern dioceses, including Mariupol and Voroshlyovhrad immediately (Feodosii (Protsiuk), 2004, p. 475). Among the possible applicants, the candidacy of Bishop Mstyslav (Skrypnyk) was considered, whom the occupation authorities demanded to be transferred to one of the eastern cathedrals to choose from: Rostov, Stalin or Voroshlyovhrad (Vlasovsky, 1998, p. 238), as well as the secretary of Kharkiv Diocesan Administration, Archpriest O. Kryvomaz, whose episcopal ordination was approved at Lutsk Cathedral of the UAPC on October 10, 1942 (Feodosii (Protsiuk), 2004, p. 453). There is information about the activities of the Trinity Deanery of Valuisk Diocese of the UAPC, which covered the northern regions of Luhansk region (Forostiuk, 2004, p. 197).

In January of 1943, Bishop Dymytriy (Mahan), who received the title of “Katerynoslav and Donetsk”, was appointed the head of Donetsk Diocese of the Autonomous Church (Feodosii (Protsiuk), 2004, p. 562), and already on January 11, 1943, by order of the Reich Commissariat, the activities of bishops and their movement outside the boundaries of their own dioceses were strictly limited to local general commissioners, whose competence also included permission for new episcopal ordinations and the transfer of the clergy (Zinkevych, 1987, p. 751). Because of these circumstances, the formation of new diocesan administrations became impossible. On February 14, 1943, the Soviet troops occupied Voroshlyovhrad, and by September of 22, the entire territory of the Donbas. On the eve of this, Metropolitan Feofil requested his acceptance into the Moscow Patriarchate. In the fall of 1943, the hierarch was arrested, and on January 23, 1944, he died in prison (Prykhodchenko, 2011, pp. 47, 50).

It is worth noting that during the war, the Soviet authorities also managed to support the religious feelings of society, trying to use this factor in ideological speculations. In particular, religious communities restored during the Nazi occupation not only continued to operate in the liberated settlements, but new ones were also opened. Taking into consideration the ideological isolation and physical destruction of the most radical hierarchs, the minimization of reformation tendencies in the majority of communities, the Soviet party leadership aspired to form a single loyal pro-government denomination – the renewed Moscow Patriarchate with the aim of its further use to increase international authority among allied countries and as a response to the Nazi policy of a religious revival with its subsequent use as a controlled ideology. On September 4, 1943, during the personal reception by Y. Stalin of the above-mentioned Metropolitans Serhiy (Strahorodsky), Oleksiy (Symansky) and Mykolai (Yarushevychi), it was agreed to hold the Council of Bishops, at which Metropolitan Serhiy was elected Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia on September 8 (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 517).

On February 29, 1944, during a meeting with the head of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, H. Karpov, Metropolitan Oleksandr Vvedensky raised unsuccessfully the issue of permission to appoint Metropolitan Filaret (Yatsenko) as Exarch of Ukraine (Soloviev, 2002, p. 48). On March 2, 1944, the former Renovation First Hierarch
Metropolitan Vitaliy (Vvedensky) was accepted into the Moscow Patriarchate in the rank of bishop, who was already promoted to the rank of archbishop on May 5, 1944, and on July 13, 1944, he was appointed archbishop of Tula and Bielevsky. Since July 19, 1946 – Archbishop Dmitrovsky, Vicar of Moscow Diocese, Chairman of the Missionary Council at the Holy Synod (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 173). As of July 1, 1944, 98 renewal parishes were officially functioning on the territory of Ukraine, and 88 priests, 16 deacons, and 18 psalmists were registered (CSAHAAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 3, pp. 24–25.). However, by April 1, 1945, not a single Renewal cleric was registered on the territory of Ukraine (CSAHAAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 3, p. 49.). In June of 1945, under the conditions of actual liquidation of the Renewal Church due to the refusal to register the clergy, Metropolitan Oleksandr requested to be accepted into the Moscow Patriarchate. However, after a long consideration, the final decision was made that it could only be accepted by a layman, so the reunion never took place (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 52). The last renewalist hierarch, Metropolitan Filaret (Yatsenko), having made a number of unsuccessful attempts to restore the Church, passed away at the beginning of 1951 (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 560).

Meanwhile, the eparchial network of the Moscow Patriarchate underwent an active development. In the summer of 1944, 128 religious communities functioned on the territory of Voroshlyovhrad region (CSAHAAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 3, p. 53), 126 of which were opened during the German occupation. In September of 1942, Archpriest Leontiy Yarzhemsky, a cleric of the USEC (SAKhR, f. Р-845, d. 2, c. 825, pp. 2–4), later a clergyman of Voroshlyovhrad District of the Autonomous Church, headed the former Renewal community of Kazan Cathedral (Voroshlyovhrad) (Fordiuki, 1999, p. 16), whose starosta (head) received permission from the city administration to restore the cathedral and the center of the Orthodox diocese in the city (Podgaiyko, 2020, p. 539). On October 1, 1942, the restored congregation of the Ascension Church (Voroshlyovhrad) was headed by Archpriest Ioakim Oleksiuk, a former commissioner of the renewal Donetsk Diocese, who in the spring of 1943 became a Deacon of Voroshlyovhrad district, and in the spring of 1944, at the local clergy Congress, was elected as a candidate for the bishop of Voroshlyovhrad (Podgaiyko, 2020, p. 539). However, during the discussion of this issue by Patriarch Serhiy with the head of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church H. Karpov, due to the anti-Soviet speeches of Archpriest I. Oleksiuk during the Nazi occupation, the cleric’s candidacy was rejected, and already on September 16, 1944, he was arrested (Holenko, 2005, p. 686).

On May 19, 1944, a former Revivalist priest was appointed Bishop of Voroshlyovhrad, Vicar of Dnipropetrovsk Diocese, and later Archpriest Oleksandr Petin, Deacon of Kalinin district of Kalinin region. It should be noted that O. Petin was in the Renewal Movement since 1922 (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 457). In 1928, a celibate, he was ordained a priest and appointed Abbot of Kazan Cathedral in Penza. In the fall of 1931, he was promoted to the rank of Archpriest. There is information that in the Renewal Church, the issue of the episcopal ordination of Archpriest O. Petin was raised three times. On August 24, 1932, he was appointed Bishop of Ural and Huryevsk, however, on September 7, the appointment was cancelled. On December 7, 1932, the cleric was recommended to replace the vacant Kozlov Diocese, and in 1933 he was appointed Bishop of Kimra. However, the episcopal ordination never took place, as he was already arrested on March 8, 1933 (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 457). Hence, Archpriest O. Avdiugin’s statement that only after returning from exile in the summer of 1937, the future bishop “joined the revivalist split ... in order to obtain a priestly position” is false (Avdiugin, 2010, p. 17). At the end of 1943, Archpriest O. Petin...
repented to Patriarch Serhiy and was admitted to the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate with the recognition of a priestly rank (Lavrinov, 2017, p. 457). On May 20, 1944, he was ordained a monk, and on May 21 he was ordained a bishop, presided over by Metropolitan Mykolai (Yarushevych) (Narechenyi i khriotonyia, 1944, pp. 8–9). One of the priority tasks of the hierarch was the consolidation of the surviving clergy, including reformation confessions. Hence, the documents contain references to clerics’ complaints about the “liberalism” of the hierarch (CSAHAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 23, pp. 192–193).

In October of 1944, priest Dymytriy Klepachevsky, a former member of the renewal Luhansk Diocesan Administration, was appointed to the Petro and Pavlo Cathedral in Voroshyllovhrad (Zhyliuk, 2002, p. 189; Sumishyn, Kornieyev, Brel & Kravchenko, 2011, p. 31). In the autumn of 1947, after a 10-year imprisonment, a graduate of Moscow Theological Academy (1927 – 1931), candidate of Theology, Revivalist priest Volodymyr Molchanov was admitted to the clergy of Voroshyllovhrad Diocese (CSAHAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 8, p. 54), as well as the former secretary of Metropolitan Feofilo (Buldovsky) of the USEC, Archpriest Fiodor Obmok, were enrolled in the clergy of Voroshyllovhrad Diocese (later – Archimandrite Feofan) (Feodosii (Protsiuk), 2004, p. 399; Forostiuk, 2004, p. 113). In the summer of 1947, Archpriest Leontiy Yarzhemsky acted as a lecturer at three-month theological courses organized by Voroshyllovhrad Diocesan Administration (CSAHAU, f. 4648, d. 3, c. 8, pp. 40–41).

Since 1947, the strengthening of anti-religious policy began in the USSR. On August 3, 1948, after the conflict aggravation between Bishop Nykon and the commissioner of the Russian Orthodox Church in Stalin region regarding the expropriation of the Trinity Cathedral in Sloviansk, the hierarch was appointed temporarily in charge of Odesa Diocese, and on October 21, 1949 – the Bishop of Kherson and Odesa Dioceses with the right to manage Voroshyllovhrad Diocese (Pidgayko, 2020, p. 539). Actually the above-mentioned decision started a long-term practice of the leadership of the Donbas Dioceses by Odesa Bishops and provided for the limitation of their role in a spiritual life of the region. In October of 1949, the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church agreed to close and remove the building of Mykyl Cathedral in Voroshyllovhrad. In March of 1950, by decree of Bishop Nykon, the episcopal chair was moved to Petro and Pavlo Cathedral of the city (Forostiuk, 2004, pp. 88, 90). Despite this, the process of staffing the clergy of the diocese continued due to the hierarch’s measures. In particular, on December 10, 1950, Archpriest Leonid Borodulin, a former Deacon of the Renewal Diocese of Nizhnyi Tahil, was enrolled in the clergy of the Diocese, and he was appointed to the position of Rector of the church in the village of Khanzenkovo, Stalin region. From January 22, 1952, he became the Abbot of Mykylska Cathedral and Deacon of Voroshyllovhrad District, from April 14, 1953, he was transferred to Petro and Pavlo Cathedral of the city, and from 1954 – the Abbot of Mykylska Cathedral in Artemivsk (Lavrinov, 2007, p. 210).

In 1955, Archbishop Nykon (Petin) was diagnosed with leukemia, and on May 16, 1956, he died prematurely. In the end, it was the hierarch’s efforts that not only created the organizational structure of the Voroshyllovhrad Diocese, but also strengthened it with powerful personnel potential and new parishioners, including former representatives of reformation denominations. Thus, it was his activity that marked a new stage in the religious life of the Donbas. On April 25, 1956, Archbishop Borys (Vik) was appointed the new head of the Diocese, who also began his service in the Renewal Church, where in 1926 he was ordained celibate to the rank of Deacon, and already in 1934 he became a monk in Moscow Patriarchates without recognition of ordination (Kopylova, 2003, p. 35).
The Conclusion. Thus, at the beginning of the 1920s, in view of the unsolvedness of many urgent problems of church life, a number of oppositional Orthodox denominations arose in Ukraine, differing in the degree of the reform programme radicality. As legal parish life was abolished at the end of 1930s, religious life and denominational separation resumed during the Nazi occupation of 1941 – 1943. However, taking into consideration the lack of a bishopric of the liberal UAOC, the restoration of church structures in the Donbas, in particular the former congregations of the USC and USEC, was carried out under the jurisdiction of the conservative hierarchs of the Autonomous Church. After the end of the war, in view of the ideological discrediting of the majority of denominations, there arose objective prerequisites for the formation of a single Diocesan network in Ukraine loyal to the Soviet leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate, which was significantly strengthened by the clergy of the Synodal and Cathedral-Episcopal Churches. A special role in the formation of Voroshilovgrad Diocese was played by the activities of the former Renewal cleric – Archbishop Nykon (Petin).

The historical analysis of the formation of Voroshilovgrad Diocese proves that the integration of the opposition clergy allowed the leadership of the renewed Moscow Patriarchate not only to solve the acute personnel shortage of the higher hierarchy and employees of the Diocesan Administrations, but also to minimize the consequences of the marginalization of the religious consciousness of the faithful, since a number of former representatives of the renewalist clergy of the Donbas had high authority of clergy and preachers. At the same time, the exclusive discrediting of the Orthodox Reformation and the concealment by clerics of their original confessional affiliation led to the unresolved key debated issues of the church system, the deepening of secularism and, ultimately, the restoration of division under the conditions of the liberalization of religious policy at the end of the 1980s, the consequences of which are felt in the post-Soviet religious discourse to our time. We believe that further analysis of the experience of interfaith dialogue and the circumstances of the integration of the opposition clergy will allow us to offer new conceptual approaches to restoring the unity of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

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