



## Forced change of faith in Ukraine

**Kyiv wants with all its might to bring the cradle of Slavic Orthodoxy under the control of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OKU), artificially created by the Ukrainian state in 2018, whatever the cost!**

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## Introduction

By March 29, 2023, monks living in the Kyiv Cave Monastery who belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and are close to the Moscow Patriarch should leave the monastery or change their faith.

Then-President Poroshenko created the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine" (OKU) in 2018; monks would have to convert to this church or leave the monastery.

Subsequently, for simplicity, I refer to the "Ukrainian State Church" when referring to the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OKU)," and I refer to the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOK)" as the "former Russian Orthodox Church."

According to the UN, the Kyiv Cave Monastery is one of the most important institutions of its kind in the world and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## Result: Forced change of faith

This coercion would correspond to a forced change of faith with all its consequences. For monks, such a step is unthinkable and, according to the Ukrainian constitution, illegal.

*"Everyone has the right to freedom of belief and conscience. This right includes freedom to profess any religion or to profess no religion at all, to worship without interference, either individually or collectively, to perform acts of worship, and to engage in religious activity."*

### ART. 35 OF THE UKRAINIAN CONSTITUTION

## The Ukraine conflict is also a religious war

The war in Ukraine is spreading ever wider. From the very beginning - and we are not talking about February 24, 2022 - it was an all-out war.

It was about people, about their heads, and only afterwards about territories, albeit with completely contrary goals. Anyone who reads the failed Minsk Agreements 1 and 2 carefully cannot come to any other conclusion.

One side aimed at enabling people to live in dignity in and with their own culture. The other side aimed at their physical destruction.

Ukraine is a multi-ethnic state. It still is, even if the reality of life is only on paper. Besides Ukrainians, there are Hungarians, Slovaks, Poles, Greeks, Romanians, Germans, Bulgarians ... and above all Russians and Belarusians.

In a functioning society, such diversity can be a blessing. The respective ethnic influences cross-fertilize each other, people grow up in cultural diversity, which shapes them from childhood and educates them in a completely natural way to tolerance and mutual respect.

The prerequisite for this, however, is, as mentioned, a functioning society with a good, humanistically oriented education system, an economy that benefits everyone, and especially a political system that is aware of this cultural wealth, appreciates it, and nurtures and develops it through wise actions aimed at achieving a balance.

These wise actions also include respect and regard for the religious views and traditions of the respective nationalities in a secular social environment.

## **Religious communities in Ukraine**

So what are we dealing with in Ukraine? Regardless of the ethnic diversity described above, the mutual tolerance and respect described above prevailed in matters of faith for a long time.

Historically, the Russian Orthodox Church developed into the largest religious community in Ukraine. In Ukraine today, it exists as the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" (UOK), which I will refer to below as the "former Russian Orthodox Church" as described above.

In addition, there is the Greek Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine, and other Protestant and Orthodox denominations. In 2018, there were a total of 14 Orthodox national churches alone, all of which were under the Moscow Patriarchate in terms of church law. This structure has evolved over the centuries and has nothing to do with any current Kremlin influence, as is repeatedly claimed in the media.

## **"Army, Language, Faith"**

With the events of 2013/2014 in Ukraine, which also clearly qualified as a coup d'état under Ukrainian law, there was unrestrained promotion of nationalist ideas. Based on this, it could only be a question of time and the right timing that this

development, which was massively and systematically promoted by the West, would also spill over into matters of faith, and even spill over.

The then President Poroshenko and his advisors saw the moment for this coming in the 2019 presidential election campaign, which Poroshenko conducted under the slogan "Army, Language, Faith."



Petro Poroshenko - "Army, Language, Faith."  
Source: Wikipedia

Let us recall: The first law enacted by the Ukrainian government after the violent overthrow in 2014 was the so-called Language Law of March 20, 2014, which declared Ukrainian to be the sole state, official and lingua franca, thus turning at least 40% of the population into second-class citizens overnight, according to the previously applicable national laws but also laws and agreements internationally recognized by Ukraine.

In an inhomogeneous multi-ethnic state like Ukraine, this law had to act like a bomb with a time fuse. Consequently, it was one of the triggers of the resistance in the Donbass. This law was tightened again in 2022. So much for the "language" in Poroshenko's slogan "Army, Language, Faith."

The "army" referred to the reorganization of the Ukrainian Army after the 2014/15 defeat with the aim of joining NATO, bypassing and abusing the Minsk agreements, which Ukraine also signed. Poroshenko, Merkel, Macron have themselves publicly admitted this breach of international law in recent months, self-revealingly and without any shame, devoid of any sense of responsibility.

From Poroshenko's point of view, the "faith" still had to be settled. He took care of this "problem" in December 2018 with the establishment of the so-called "Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OKU)," by extension the "Ukrainian State Church," with the active participation of Poroshenko personally (i.e., the state) and two exarchs from the United States and Canada.

"An exarchate is a diocese of an Eastern Church in the diaspora" (source: Wikipedia), i.e., an ecclesiastical administrative district; in Germany, diocese or diocese. Further in Wikipedia, "An exarchate is established for believers outside the ancestral territory of a church."

## **Ukrainian State Church by American Grace?**

So the state of Ukraine in the person of its president, together with two ecclesiastical administrative districts from the USA and Canada, founded the "Ukrainian State Church".

De facto, the Ukrainian state thus created a state church, and this without taking into account the opinion of the 14 Orthodox national churches already existing in the country. Without exception, they rejected the secession of the "Ukrainian State Church" from the "former Russian Orthodox Church", which was subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate.

The fact that this "former Russian Orthodox Church" has far-reaching autonomy in its subordination relationship should be expressly mentioned for the sake of completeness.

It is therefore quite obvious that this "act of state" contradicted applicable Ukrainian law:



*"Die Kirche und die religiösen Organisationen sind in der Ukraine vom Staat und die Schulen von der Kirche getrennt. Keine Religion darf vom Staat als verbindlich anerkannt werden."*

## ARTICLE 35, UKRAINIAN CONSTITUTION

### **A tradition more than a thousand years old is being destroyed**

What does this mean for the Kyiv monastery of the caves, its residents and other church institutions?

The ultimatum of the Ukrainian state power mentioned at the beginning of this article suggests bad things. Unlike in other countries, the monks are only tenants of their own monastery. Thus, the formal legal side is probably preserved when the tenants are asked to leave the property.

This tenancy is a remnant of Soviet policy. The USSR confiscated all church property and gave individual facilities to the church for use on a rental basis. After the establishment of the successor states of the USSR, these issues were then regulated according to new national law. Russia, for example, returned the church property confiscated earlier and generously helped in its restoration and recovery.

Since the establishment of the Ukrainian state in 1991, there have been repeated proposals and requests on the part of the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" to restore church property to the used facilities in Ukraine as a whole. However, unsuccessfully.

The said ultimatum shows what it is really about: the extinction of any Russian traditions, the destruction of the cradle of Slavic Orthodoxy and be they more than a millennium old.

The forcible transfer of church property from religious communities close to the Moscow Patriarchate to the "Ukrainian State Church" created by the Ukrainian state has been the order of the day throughout Ukraine since its founding, and is a very lucrative business both for the new church and for the church structures of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople that are superior to it. For the value of the tangible and intangible assets seized from the "former Russian Orthodox Church" in this way is enormous.

## The UN steps in

In the meantime, the actions of the Ukrainian state authorities have become a topic of discussion at the UN. In its report, the UN outlined the harassment of the "former Russian Orthodox Church." The measures include arrests, illegal searches, threats and attacks on churches, physical violence against church servants and believers under the protection of the SBU secret service and the police. The next days will show how the UN itself deals with its UNESCO World Heritage Site Kyiv Cave Monastery and to what extent this organization still takes itself seriously or can still be taken seriously.

What is so distressing about the fate of the Kyiv monks is that the political fantasies of omnipotence of the Ukrainian leadership, which are generously supported by the West, ultimately affect completely innocent, apolitical monks, in addition to the spiritual and cultural barbarity that is expressed in the process.

More than 200 men for the most part of advanced age live and pray in the cave monastery. If the eviction will take place - and it is certain, since the monks categorically ruled out a renunciation of their faith and a "victory" of the monks would definitely be seen as a political signal by the population - then they will literally go to nowhere. Thus, the service in the cave monastery of Kyiv on March 26 this year, when thousands of believers gathered once again, was probably the last of that faith community in this monastery founded in 1051 by monks Antony and Theodosius.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the significance of the fact that American church structures provided the ecclesiastical basis for the creation of another Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

There is not only a hint that ultimately a great deal of American money had persuaded the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the ecclesiastical administrative structure superior to the "Ukrainian State Church," to give the creation of this new church an ecclesiastical legal framework of some kind. This framework was massively criticized and rejected by the majority of Orthodox church structures worldwide.

# Metropolitan Pavel, deputy head of the cave monastery stands up for himself

On March 29, 2023, Metropolitan Pavel, Vicar of Kyiv Lavra (the Kyiv Cave Monastery) once again addressed Ukrainian President Zelensky directly in a [video message](#), holding him personally responsible for what happened:

*"You don't have the right to kick us out. Yesterday we received a letter from the UN saying we can stay in Lawra until the court decides. If we win, we win, if they win, we will appeal."*

A decision in this matter is not yet available.

It can be considered as a direct answer of Zelenski and disregard of the UN, if still on the day of the video message the competent court refused to suspend the evacuation of the cave monastery during the consideration of the lawsuit.

It seems to be very important for the Ukrainian leadership to have the issue of "Kyiv Cave Monastery" closed by the Orthodox Easter, which is celebrated on April 16. And so it is no great surprise that Metropolitan Pavel has now been placed under house arrest.

## Conclusion

In the history of mankind there is endless proof that rulers acted against faith and believers.

For reasons of power politics, there was murder, plunder, sin... and since Henry VIII we know that politics also recreates churches when it seems opportune.

However, we also know from history that true faith was not and cannot be defeated. It was rather the case in history that the beginning of the end of political regimes was heralded with the massive fighting of faith and believers.

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