

## The Diocese of Minsk, its Origin, Extent and Hierarchy

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### I

Those who would wish to study the history of Christianity in Byelorussia should certainly pursue the history of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, and to a lesser extent, that of various groups of Protestants. One must bear in mind that the Catholic Church in Byelorussia followed and still follows two Rites: the Latin and the Oriental-Byzantine. It is acceptable to call the latter by the name Uniate. In Byelorussia it dates back to the Synod of Brest-Litoŭsk in the year 1596. But here we propose to deal exclusively with the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite, and will further limit ourselves to a small section of its history, namely the foundation of the diocese of Minsk. Something also will be said of its bishops and administrators. Exactly how and when the Latin form of Catholicism came to Byelorussia is a question which has not been sufficiently elucidated. Here then are the basic historical facts.

From the beginning of the acceptance of Christianity in Byelorussia until the end of the 14th century, the population followed the Eastern Rite and until the end of the 12th century it formed part of the universal Christian Church. After the erection of a Latin bishopric in Vilna in 1387, and after the acceptance of Christianity in the Latin Rite by the Lithuanians, this episcopal see itself and its clergy started to propagate this rite.

It is well-known that Jahajła had virtually the same relations with the pagan Lithuanians as with Orthodox Ukrainians and Byelorussians. If an Orthodox woman married a Catholic, she was obliged to accept and follow the Latin Rite of her husband.<sup>1</sup> Some have maintained that already in the time of Jahajła, c. 1390, a Latin-rite church was built in Minsk and Abolsk. Without doubt such churches were also erected in Vilna, Troki and Kreva.<sup>2</sup> Some kings of the Commonwealth, such as Jahajła, and afterwards Jan Albrecht, Sġgismund I, Stephen Batory and others looked favourably upon the propagation of the Latin Rite in Byelorussia.<sup>3</sup> In addition to kings and bishops, religious orders, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, Trinitarians, various missionaries and other clerics, who had their own parishes and schools, in no small way contributed to the spread of Catholicism of the Latin Rite. There is, consequently, nothing strange in the fact that within the bounds of the ethnically Byelorussian territory in the 18th century, the number of Catholics of the Roman Rite was nearly equal to that of the

Uniates. Especially after the division of the Commonwealth, the Latin Church in Byelorussia gained many new members. Papal nuncios, and even some Uniate bishops, resolved that it would be better if Uniates were to accept the Latin Rite en masse. In this way at least, the faith would be preserved against Russian encroachments. Although nothing of the kind took place officially, many faithful, and even entire parishes, transferred to the Latin Rite.<sup>4</sup> Until 1772, that is until the first division of the Commonwealth, there were within the ethnically Byelorussian territories in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 1,500,000 Catholics of the Eastern Rite (Uniates) and 1,300,000 Catholics of the Latin Rite.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the Catholics of the Latin Rite were either Byelorussians or polonized Byelorussians, but in the courts and cities there were not a few true Poles among the inhabitants.

The 18th century was one of the darkest ages in Byelorussian history; it marked the greatest decadence of Byelorussian culture, a time of enslavement for the peasants and a time of unbridled oppression on the part of the Polish lords and lesser nobility. Finally, it was the time when the independence of Poland was lost and together with it that of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>6</sup> We should also remember that besides Catholics of both Rites, in Byelorussia there were also Orthodox (about 80,000), 'Staraviery' (Old Believers — about 60,000), Jews (about 100,000), Tartars (about 30,000) and Karaims (about 3,000).<sup>7</sup> Prior to the first division of the Commonwealth, Byelorussian Catholics of the Latin Rite belonged to the organised dioceses of Vilna, Smolensk, Inflanty or Livonia, and in part to the diocese of Łuck and Samogitia. When the Commonwealth disappeared from the map of Europe as an organised state, five dioceses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the diocese of Inflanty or Livonia found themselves under Russian rule. This large number of Catholics of both Rites in Byelorussia presented a challenge to Catherine II and her successor Paul I, who in their despotism and radical chauvinism, could not tolerate anything that might threaten the power of autocracy coupled with state Orthodoxy — even though these despots sought to present themselves as most just and tolerant in the face of a revolutionary Voltairian Europe. This explains the differences between the ukases, which superficially appeared to be just, and what was actually put into practice.

We will not here touch upon the Byelorussian Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite which was officially liquidated in 1839 by Czar Nicholas I, but will concern ourselves exclusively with Catholics of the Latin Rite, whom the Russians considered as polonized Russians, the Poles as Poles, and the French Jesuit Rouët de Journal as 'Russes-Polonais'. To us they were Byelorussians and the ancestors of those from whom in later times there came forth a line of truly Byelorussian writers and priests, such as Dunin-Marcinkievič, Bahuševič, Epimach-Šypiła, Kupala, Ziaziula, Hadleŭski, Adam Stankievič, and scores of others.

Although in Byelorussia, Latin-rite Catholicism subjected many

of our number to a process of polonization, none the less it took root in our soil, became Byelorussian, and found a field in which it could flourish. This cannot be said of the Ukrainians, for whom Latin Catholicism was never acceptable; the few Ukrainians who did accept the Latin Rite left their nation forever, with very few exceptions.

## II

Although Catherine II was essentially considered an opportunist, either because of the machinations of her ambassadors in Warsaw or on her own account, and although her title of 'Empress of all the Russias' did not extend to the 'Russian' lands within the boundaries of the Republic,<sup>8</sup> one of her prime political aims was to weld the Byelorussian people to the Russians as soon as possible. The surest way of achieving this end was to destroy the religion of the newly-annexed lands, first that of the Uniates, afterwards the Latin Rite. Standing in the way of this scheme were the faithful themselves, their lawful hierarchy, and the Rome of Pope Pius VI. The latter, however, had been severely humiliated by the French and at that time was himself on the defensive. As an autocrat, Catherine II took upon herself such matters as the establishment of the boundaries of ecclesiastical provinces, the nomination of the hierarchy, the running of the diocese, and the placing of Latin religious orders under the jurisdiction of the local bishop.<sup>9</sup> She did all this without any regard for what had been agreed at the first partition of the Republic, by Article V, which guaranteed the preservation of the *status quo ante* of her Catholic subjects.<sup>10</sup>

In the implementation of her religious policy Catherine found a collaborator in the person of Stanisław Bohuś-Siestrencevič, Titular Bishop of Mallo, later Metropolitan of Mahiloŭ. Because of the unusually important rôle this man played in the history of the Catholic Church in Byelorussia and in the Russian Empire, it is worthwhile to turn our attention to him for a little.<sup>11</sup>

Stanisław Jan Bohuś-Siestrencevič was born on 3 September 1731 in the village of Zamki which is located in the county of Vaŭkavysk, in the Navahrudak district of western Byelorussia. He was soon baptised — on 5 September — in Zabłudava. It is very probable that at the Radziwiłłs' Siestrencevič met Prince Massalski, Bishop of Vilna, who accepted him and directed him towards an ecclesiastical career (1754).

In 1759 he entered the seminary of the Piarists in Warsaw, and at the end of his studies he publicly defended his thesis: 'De infallibilitate papae'. On 3 July 1763, at the age of thirty-three, he received Holy Orders at the hands of Bishop Załuski of Kiev. Thanks to the Radziwiłłs and Bishop Massalski, Siestrencevič quickly advanced in his ecclesiastical career and simultaneously gained substantial

material benefits. Thus he became a canon of the Vilna chapter, and in the absence of the bishop, he acted as deputy for him in the administration of the Vilna diocese. There remained then only one step to the episcopacy. However, before he received it, Catherine II in the ukase of 14 December 1772, came to a decision about the administration of the Catholic Church in the Russian Empire.<sup>12</sup> In the decree it was provided that an episcopal see should soon be formed; that all religious orders would be subordinated to it, and that Papal Bulls could not be proclaimed without the consent of the empress. One of the draftsmen of this ukase was Baron Saldern, sometime ambassador in Warsaw, who knew Siestrencevič personally and in formulating the decree may have had him in mind.

When it came to the appointment of Siestrencevič as bishop, he was duly recommended to Pope Clement XIV by Bishop Massalski, by the Polish King August Poniatowski, and the Papal nuncio in Warsaw, Mgr. Garampi. Thereupon Siestrencevič was appointed Titular Bishop of Mallo (*in partibus infidelium*) and consecrated bishop on 3 October 1773, by Bishop Hülzen of Smolensk. Rome wished to have a suffragan or auxiliary bishop to the Bishop of Vilna, for that part of the diocese which after the first partition of the Commonwealth fell under Russia.

Rome did not contemplate separating that part of Byelorussia annexed by Russia from the ecclesiastical administration of Vilna. Russia, however, independent of anyone else, wanted to run the Catholic Church herself, in the same way as she controlled the Russian Orthodox Church. Siestrencevič quickly realised the intention of the Russian government, and completely submitted himself to it. So ukase after ukase was issued by Catherine II, and later by her son Paul I, which the Holy See, in order to save the situation of the Catholics in Russia, attempted to ratify (*sanare in radice*) through its nuncios Archetti, Litta, and Arezzo. Dissatisfied with Siestrencevič, Rome none the less tolerated him and approved the highest dignities which the Czars granted him.

Here we can return in brief to the further main developments in church history during the reigns of Catherine II and Paul I. Catherine II constituted a new bishopric having its episcopal see in Mahiloŭ. The title of the bishop, suggested by Siestrencevič himself was to be: Bishop of the Catholic Churches of Byelorussia. He was to have jurisdiction over all the Catholics of the Russian Empire. 10,000 roubles were allotted yearly for his upkeep, and for that of his consistory. Notwithstanding his antipathy to the Jesuits, Siestrencevič was ordered not to touch them or interfere in any way with their work, although Pope Clement XIV had liquidated the order in his Bull 'Dominus ac Redemptor' dated 21 July 1773. The fate of the Catholic Church was thus decided by decree of Catherine II. This was but the beginning.

After a time, in 1782, Catherine II elevated the episcopal see of Mahiloŭ to the rank of archdiocese and metropolis. Siestrencevič accepted this rank and celebrated the occasion with great solemnity.<sup>13</sup>

It was the task of the Papal legate, Archbishop Archetti, to journey to St. Petersburg and there, in the name of Pope Pius VI, approve all the decrees of Catherine made between 1783 and 1784. On 17 January 1784 the Brief of Pope Pius VI, 'Pastoralis sollicitudo', (which had been antedated 26 April 1783) and 'Onerosa pastoralis officii' (antedated 19 December 1783) were signed and promulgated in St. Petersburg, thus erecting the archdiocese of Mahiloŭ, and, on behalf of the Church, clearly regulating the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Mahiloŭ.<sup>14</sup> This Papal Bull was to become the charter of the Catholic Church in Byelorussia and Russia granted by the legitimate ecclesiastical authorities, although they were compelled by Russian autocracy and not on their own initiative to establish religious relations in Byelorussia.

### III

The ancient city of Minsk, mentioned by the chronicles as much as 900 years ago, and in which the remains of an 11th century place of worship were found, did not become an episcopal see until the end of the 18th century. How did this come about? In addition to all that has been said above concerning the religious policies of Catherine II, Metropolitan Siestrencevič, and the formation of the Mahiloŭ metropolis, there are still further facts which should be borne in mind. After the last division of the Commonwealth (1795), six Latin-rite dioceses and four of the Oriental Rite (Uniate) came under Russia. The Latin dioceses were the following:

1. Livonia, with both a Latvian and a Byelorussian population;
2. Samogitia, consisting of Lithuanians;
3. Vilna, with a population of Lithuanians and Poles, but having a majority of Byelorussians, for the entire district of Minsk was included;
4. Łuck, with both a Polish and a Byelorussian population;
5. Kiev, which included the provinces of Volhynia and Padolia. The bishop had his see in Żytomir.
6. Kameneč, which included the district of Braclav and extended into Austrian Galicia.

Catherine II had regard neither for the existing hierarchy nor for the prerogatives of Rome. On her own authority she 'reformed' or rather, compassed the ruin of the entire existing order of that time. She began by liquidating all the dioceses, with the exception of Livonia, whose territory she altered. She formed two pseudo-dioceses, on the 6/17 September 1795 — that of Pinsk, and the diocese of Latyšeŭ. Alterations to the dioceses carried with them changes in the various bishops. These bishops however, whom Catherine nominated without the knowledge and consent of Rome, were considered in the eyes of Catholics as usurpers. In addition to the decrees of liquidation and erection of dioceses, Catherine issued

orders regulating the relationships of the bishops — to each other, to Siestrencevič, and so on. If this was the officious manner in which the empress handled the Latin-rite Catholic Church, what might not be said of the way she dealt with the Uniates? This question would carry us far from our theme, but we will mention that at one stroke she liquidated four Uniate dioceses, and subjugated all the faithful to the Archbishop of Połack, Heraclius Lisoŭski. Pope Pius VI, to alleviate the plight of the Uniates, on 5 September 1793 appointed Bishop Siestrencevič to be his representative in order to protect them from the empress, and especially to ensure, that the Uniates did not abandon their Rite!..

In order somehow to set aright all the confusion caused by Catherine II, Pope Pius VI through his legate, Archbishop Litta, regulated a substantial number of questions after her death. The result of Archbishop Litta's mission was the formation of the new diocese of Minsk in 1798. It was established by the Papal Bull beginning with the words: 'Maximos undique', signed by the Pope, then an old man exiled in the Carthusian monastery in Florence, on 16 October 1798.<sup>15</sup> This Papal Bull settled various matters, the erection of the diocese of Minsk being one of the most important.

These regulations may be briefly summarised as follows:

1. The metropolis of Mahiloŭ was officially granted the most honoured position among all the dioceses of the Russian empire.
2. The dioceses of Vilna, Łuck, and Samogitia were separated from the metropolitan see of Gniezno, and the diocese of Kamenec, from that of L'vov. They were all now to be subject as suffragan dioceses for the time being to the Archbishop of Mahiloŭ (*uti suffraganeae dioceses pro tempore existenti Archiepiscopo Mohiloviensi subieciuntur*). Similarly all the Latin-rite parishes of the Kievan 'gubernija' were attached to the metropolitan see of Mahiloŭ, as well as all those that were located in Byelorussia, but which had previously been dependent on the diocese of Vilna.
3. The small diocese of Livonia was to be dissolved and joined to that of Vilna.
4. The diocese of Vilna was to have in future four suffragan bishops — those of Vilna, Kuronia, Troki, and Brest.
5. The diocese of Kiev was joined to Łuck; it was to be administered together with that of Żytomir, and be known as the diocese of Łuck-Żytomir.
6. The territory of the diocese of Kamenec was to be extended over all Padolia.
7. A completely new diocese of Minsk was to be formed, a Chapter of Canons established and there was to be nominated as bishop Jacob Dederko, 'doctor utriusque iuris, canonicus maior ecclesiae Vilnensis, praepositus infulatus ecclesiae Olicensis (Ołyka)'.

There is ample information concerning the newly erected diocese of Minsk to be gathered not only from the solemn Papal document —

the Bull, but also the accounts given by the nuncio of that time, Mgr. Litta, and by Arezzo, and in the works of later authors, such as Uładysłaŭ Syrakomla, Ihnat Chodźka and others. Nuncio Litta, whose mission it was to implement the decisions reached in the Papal Bull, wrote in his final report: 'The territory of the new diocese of Minsk is located within the boundaries of the Minsk gubernija, which has as its capital the city of that name. The cathedral is the Church of the Most Holy Name of the Virgin Mary, which formerly belonged to the Jesuit Fathers. A Chapter was formed consisting of six dignitaries, six canons, and the same number of permanently dependent "mansionaries"...' <sup>16</sup>

In order to support the members of the Chapter, a certain income was allotted to them from the larger and richer parishes. It would be interesting to ascertain which parishes these were. In the Papal Bull one finds their names, although often enough this is not very clear due to the incorrect rendering in Latin. The following localities can be identified: <sup>17</sup>

Latin names in the Papal Bull:	Corresponding names in modern Byelorussian:
(Ecclesia parochialis)	(parachvijaľny kaściół)
Husensis	Hłuski
Boryssoviensis	Barysaŭski
Nevisiensis	Niašvižski
Rodoszkoviensis	Radaškavicki
Ikaznensis	Ikaźnienski
Minscensis	Mienski
Ivieniencensis	Ivieniecki
Dokszycensis	Dokšycki
Cinkoviecensis	Cimkovički
Lackovicensis	Lachavicki
Niedzviczicensis	Niadźviedzicki
Klesensis	Klecki

The following parishes were assigned as 'mansionaries' and for some members of the Minsk Chapter: <sup>18</sup>

(Ecclesia parochialis)	(parachvijaľny kaściół)
Haynensis	Hajnaŭski
Kamiensis	Kamienski
Borczinensis	Borčynski (?) Barkoŭski
Zadorczensis	Zadarožski
Miadziotensis	Miadzielski
Volkotatensis	Vaŭkałacki
Bobroysciensis	Babrujski
Dunitzvicensis	Dunitovicki (?)
Chozviensis	Chožaŭski

Some relatively accurate information concerning the diocese of Minsk was provided by M. Nowodvorski, <sup>19</sup> who used material other-

wise inaccessible, collected by J. Chodźko<sup>20</sup> and by the two Papal legates, Mgr. Litta<sup>21</sup> and Mgr. Arezzo.<sup>22</sup> It seems that J. Chodźko had access to authentic sources of information, but in some matters he departs significantly from the facts as revealed by the documents recently published by Rouët de Journal concerning the number of parishes and faithful in the Minsk diocese.<sup>23</sup> The figures given by Rouët de Journal are the more reliable.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century (1806) the Minsk diocese numbered 86 parish churches, 156 diocesan priests and 112,214 faithful.<sup>24</sup> There were also so-called 'filial churches' (*ecclesiae filiales*) which were dependent on the parish churches — 48 in all, and some 174 chapels.<sup>25</sup> At the same time we find in the Minsk diocese thirteen orders of male religious: The Benedictines, Capuchins, Carmelites, 'Kamunisty' (Clerks of the Common Life), Dominicans, etc. — who had altogether 50 monasteries and 425 religious. In addition to these there were eight convents of nuns in which there were 77 sisters.<sup>26</sup> The Bishop of Minsk received annually 6,000 roubles from the State Treasury.<sup>27</sup>

As has already been mentioned, Jacob Dederko was appointed Bishop of Minsk. We have been successful in finding material about him which is preserved in the Vatican archives.<sup>28</sup> This was previously unknown and is in the form of a canonical process conducted by Nuncio Litta himself in June 1798, in St. Petersburg. Giving evidence about the future Bishop of Minsk were Joseph Byškoŭski, Canon of Mahiloŭ, Father Theodore Hłaŭnieŭski, Basilian monk and Auditor of the Uniate Curia in Brest, and M. Rostocki, Canon of Mahiloŭ and parish priest in St. Petersburg.

Jakob Ignat Dederko was born on 27 July 1752,<sup>29</sup> of Carl Dederko and Clara, née Biguška. The same day he was baptized by a Carmelite Father Eduard 'commendarius Uszpolensis'. The baptismal certificate attached to the canonical process was certified in 1775 by Michael Korhaŭ, parish priest of Ušpolsk. In 1776, on the fifteenth day of August, Jakob Dederko received the subdiaconate in Vilna, and on the 18th of that month received the Order of Deacon at the hands of Bishop Felix Tavianski, a Byelorussian suffragan. On 26 August of that year, this same Bishop Tavianski ordained Dederko priest in the church at Inturki. At the end of the canonical process we find the testimony of Martin Pačobut who was rector of the Vilna Academy, Royal Astronomer and 'Societatis Regiae Londinensis membrum necnon Academiae scientiarum Regiae Parisinae socius, decanus cathedralis Smolenscensis'. His testimony of 2 April 1790 concerns the doctorate in both laws which Jacob Dederko received. On 15 November 1798 Dederko was elected bishop and was consecrated in that year in Połack. His consecrator was Bishop Benisłaŭski, Auxiliary Bishop of Mahiloŭ; and the co-consecrators were the Suffragan Bishops Łapacinski and Butrymovič.<sup>30</sup>

Of the further activities of Bishop Dederko we know that he restored the former Jesuit church in Minsk, which became his cathedral. Uładysłaŭ Syrakomla, who in his time attempted to

gather accurate information about Minsk, gives an interesting description of this church.<sup>31</sup> His friend, a certain Adam Szemesz, an artist himself, examined critically all the smallest details and additions to the church, which in his opinion were in poor taste. The portrait of Bishop Dederko and the various inscriptions he attributed to an excess of episcopal conceit and vainglory.<sup>32</sup> In one of the chapels of the cathedral there was a reliquary of the body of St. Felician, the metal of which was a gift from Kryštof Zaviša, vojevod of Minsk at the beginning of the 18th century. The relics are in a silver sarcophagus. 'St. Felician was famous as a patron in all Lithuania', says Syrakomla, 'just as St. Adalbert (Wojciech) in Gniezno; St. Stanislaus in Cracow; St. Justin in Miadziel; St. John in Warsaw, St. Casimir in Vilna; even so Minsk has St. Felician.'<sup>33</sup> There was also a gigantic bell in the church, which had once been presented to the Jesuits. It was known as Jan Sołłahub, and had been brought from Karaleviec in 1750. Bishop Dederko had it melted down and cast into two bells, one of which was still considered the largest in all Minsk. The cathedral of Minsk was renovated in the years 1853 and 1854. It is still standing to this day, but is closed to divine worship.

What was the appearance of Minsk in the times of the first Catholic bishop? We have an idea from an account which Syrakomla wrote some years later. In 1856, there were some 23,952 inhabitants. The nobility included 291 men and 393 women. The 'white' (non-monastic) Orthodox clergy numbered 20, with two monks. There were 52 Roman Catholic clergymen, sixteen nuns, one Lutheran pastor and one Muslim muezzin. Townsfolk numbered 10,091 men and 9,170 women. There were 176 officials and 1,681 military personnel.

Classed according to their confession there were:

Orthodox:	1868 men;	1679 women,
Catholics:	4215 men;	3196 women,
Lutherans:	18 men;	20 women,
Mohammedans:	150 men;	133 women,
Jews:	7200 men;	6673 women.

Thus the Jews formed more than half the population of Minsk. All the inhabitants dwelt in 1,442 houses, 1,093 of which were wooden, and only 349 of stone. There were five Catholic churches in Minsk at that time, three in the city and two in cemeteries. The Orthodox had three churches and five chapels. The Lutherans had their church; the Jews one synagogue and twenty-five houses of prayer; the Tartars had one mosque. In all there were nine cemeteries in Minsk.

According to all the known documents of the papal nuncios, Mgr. Dederko, Bishop of Minsk, was considered a good pastor.<sup>34</sup> Batjuškov<sup>35</sup> reproaches him on the grounds that during the Napoleonic wars he gave young people excessive encouragement to join the ranks of the French army, and went so far as to bribe with money and threaten with anathemas those who refused; he even appeared in

person at Napoleon's headquarters. One may, however, note that according to Batjuškov, other bishops did the same. It is probable that Bishop Dederko was unable to remain peacefully in his see owing to the Czarist regime's hostile attitude towards him. He renounced his administrative obligations in 1816 and died in 1829.<sup>86</sup>

In 1829, the administrator of the diocese was his suffragan Matthew Lipski. He was born in 1771, elected bishop in 1831, and died in 1839 (1841 ?).<sup>37</sup> He was buried in a chapel of the Calvary Church at a cemetery in Minsk.<sup>38</sup> Lipski was succeeded by Paul Rava. Without being elected bishop, he became the administrator of the vacant diocese. The third Bishop of Minsk was Adam Vajtkievič,<sup>39</sup> who was born in Vilna in 1796, elected bishop on 18 March 1852, and consecrated bishop in St. Petersburg by Archbishop Hałavinski in 1853. During the episcopacy of Bishop Vajtkievič, the Archbishop of Mahiloŭ Hałavinski fixed the geographical boundaries of the diocese of Minsk, in accordance with the Papal Bull 'Universalis Ecclesiae' of 1848.<sup>40</sup>

The tenure of Bishop Vajtkievič of Minsk was interesting not only for his own diocese, but for all the dioceses of Lithuania and Byelorussia. The tragic failure of the Uprising of 1830, and the liquidation of the Uniate Church in 1839, were still recent events, when another revolt among the people erupted, known as the Uprising of 1863, led in Lithuania and Byelorussia by Kastuś Kalinoŭski. Several bishops and priests suffered greatly for the part they played in it. The Bishop of Vilna, Mgr. Krasinski, was taken by force to Vjatka in 1864. Some priests, Išora, for example, were shot by Murav'jov for circulating 'Mužyckaja praŭda', the illegal Byelorussian news sheet published by Kalinoŭski.<sup>41</sup> The Samogitian Bishop Vałančeŭski sought to restrain his flock in a dignified letter of moderate tone. Kastuś Kalinoŭski protested against his action in an open letter.<sup>42</sup> Bishop Vajtkievič of Minsk, however, already old and weak, protested against the uprising. In this way he thought he would be able to save both himself and his diocese in the face of Czarist pressures.

At the time of Bishop Vajtkievič yet another very different matter assumed importance; namely, the adoption of the Russian language instead of Polish or Byelorussian in the field of liturgical usage. The Czarist regime was particularly interested in the diocese of Minsk, for here were the greatest number of Byelorussians.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, in some parishes priests started of their own accord to introduce the Russian language. Archbishop Symon of Mahiloŭ, in order to settle the matter more equitably, approached the Vatican, and received its consent to introduce the Byelorussian language.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently the Bishop of Minsk, Mgr. Vajtkievič became an instrument in the hands of the Czarist government and lost his authority among the Polish or polonized people.

By a decree of the Czar, dated 15 July 1869 the diocese of Minsk was liquidated; its parishes were again joined to the Vilna diocese. Bishop Vajtkievič, relieved of the administration of the diocese by the Czarist regime, died in Vilna on 4 January 1870, and was buried

in a Vilna cemetery by Bishop Bereśnievič, the Suffragan Administrator of Samogitia. A large number of faithful participated in the service.<sup>45</sup>

In 1881, according to the directory of the Vilna diocese, there were ten deaneries of the Minsk diocese subordinated to Vilna. These were: 1) Minsk, 2) the Minsk district, 3) Nadniemansk, 4) Barysaŭ, 5) Ihumień, 6) Babrujsk, 7) Mazyr, 8) Słuck, 9) Pinsk, and 10) Navahrudak. There were then 50 parishes, 21 affiliates, 142 chapels, 60 priests, and 187,590 faithful.<sup>46</sup> All the above mentioned deaneries were then located in the Minsk gubernija. They did not, however, form the entire liquidated diocese of Minsk, to which the following churches still belonged: Daŭhinava, Łužki, Łučaj, Mosar, Radaškavičy, Miadzieł, Budstawa, Ikaźń, Pastavy, Zadarožža, Zadziaŭ, Vaŭkałata, Hlybokaje, Miory, Udzieł, Druja, Daścienievičy, Parafianava, Prazaroki, Hiermanavičy. All of these were situated in the Vilna gubernija. Furthermore, Dubrova and Śvislač, located in the Hrodna gubernija in 1881, also belonged to the diocese of Minsk.

Thanks to the negotiations of 24 December 1882 between the Apostolic see and the Czarist regime the diocese of Minsk was again placed under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan see of Mahiloŭ, and stayed in this condition until World War I. In 1918 Pope Benedict XV restored it, and Sigismund Łazinski was nominated Bishop of Minsk.<sup>47</sup> Afterwards he was transferred to the diocese of Pinsk and for a certain time under the Soviet government the Administrator of the diocese of Minsk was Bishop Boleslaus Słoskans, who today in exile retains this dignity and makes use of it. Under this title he has already accepted in his diocese two new Byelorussian priests, who were ordained abroad.

We may certainly hope that the government will not forever oppose the existence of a Byelorussian Catholic diocese in Minsk, and will one day agree to allow a Catholic bishop there, for at the present time in Minsk itself there are about 100,000 Catholics. May that day come soon.

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## NOTES

1. M. Harasiewicz, *Annales Ecclesiae Ruthenae*, L'vov, 1862, p. 59.
2. W. Syrokomla, 'Mińsk', *Teka Wileńska*, 1-2, Vilna, 1857, p. 49.
3. M. Harasiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9, 63.
4. P. N. Batjuškov, in general very unfavourably disposed towards the Catholic Church, admits that about the year 1803 twenty-two Uniate parishes in the diocese of Połack went over to the Latin Rite, the number of faithful reaching 100,000. The Russian government showed great concern over this, and in 1827 issued a decree forbidding Uniates to accept the Latin Rite, so that similar occurrences would not take place again. P. N. Batjuškov, *Belorussija i Litva*, StP, 1890, pp. 330, 354, 368. See also A. Kossowski, *Blaski i cienie Unii Kościelnej w Polsce w XVII-XVIII w. w świetle źródeł archiwalnych*, Lublin, 1939, pp. 121-3.

5. Among the Catholics of the Latin Rite were included those of the Samoigian diocese of about 280,000 Lithuanians, along with about 300,000 of the Vilna diocese. In 1806 the diocese of Vilna numbered in all 136,027, according to the statistics of Nuncio Arezzo. M. J. Rouët de Journal, *Nonciatures de Russie. IV. Nonciature d'Arezzo 1802-1806*, Vatican City, 1927, pp. 437-42.
6. However, here and there even then the Byelorussian language remained alive in both the Uniate and the Latin-Rite Catholic churches. Certainly some religious songs such as 'O moj Boža, vieru Tabie' and those in a collection entitled *Kantyčka, abo nabożne pieśni w narzeczu połockim* (edited and published in 1774 by the Jesuits of Połack) bear witness to this fact.
7. See W. Wielhorski, *Litwini, Białorusini i Polacy*, Alma Mater Vilnensis, London, 1951, pp. 65-6. As the author notes, the statistics given by him are only approximate. One is inclined to think that the number of Orthodox (300,000) given by Wielhorski is a little exaggerated. One should also remember that the number he gives includes all the Orthodox in the Commonwealth, whereas our statistics relate to the Byelorussian territory only. For information on the statistics of the Orthodox in the Commonwealth and in Byelorussia see E. Sakowicz, *Kościół Prawosławny w Polsce w epoce sejmu wielkiego*, Warsaw, 1935, pp. 1-7.
8. See L. Lescoeur, *L'Église Catholique en Pologne*, Paris, 1860, pp. 382-3.
9. P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint-Siège*, Paris, 1912, V, p. 20.
10. K. Lutostański, *Les partages de la Pologne et la lutte pour l'indépendance*, I, Paris, 1918, p. 66.
11. In spite of the importance in Church history of S. Siestrzencevič, the first Archbishop-Metropolitan of Mahiloŭ, only recently has Dr André Arvaldis Brumanis compiled his bibliography: *Aux origines de la hiérarchie latine en Russie. Mgr Stanislas Siestrzencewicz-Bohusz, premier archevêque-métropolitain de Mohilev (1731-1826)*, Louvain, 1968. The author provides an exhaustive bibliography and makes use of archival information hitherto unused. A review of this work appears in *JBS*, II, 1, pp. 98-100.
12. L. Belogolov, *Akty i dokumenty odnosjaščijesja k ustrojstvu i upravleniju Rimsko-Katoličeskoj Cerkvi*, I, Petrograd, 1915, p. 4. This ukase may also be found in A. Theiner, *Die neusten Zustände der katholischen Kirche beider Ritus in Polen und Russland seit Katherina II bis auf unsere Tage*, II, Augsburg, 1841, pp. 224-6. See also U. W. Lehtonen, *Die polnischen Provinzen Russlands unter Catherine II in den Jahren 1772-1782*, Berlin, 1907, pp. 540-60.
13. L. Belogolov, *op. cit.*, p. 27. See also A. A. Brumanis, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-12.
14. The Papal Briefs are published by M. Bossard (*Recueil de Pièces Authentiques*, Paris, 1792, pp. 12-29) in Latin and French translation. The abridged and corrected documents are also given by M. J. Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, I. *Nonciature d'Archetti 1780-1784*, Vatican City, 1952, pp. 457-60. See also P. Pierling, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-58; A. A. Brumanis, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-25.
15. A. Mercati, *Raccolta di Concordati su materie ecclesiastiche tra la Santa Sede e le Autorità civili. I: 1098-1914*, Tipogr. Pol. Vat., Vatican City, 1954, pp. 538-59. A part of the same Papal document was translated into Byelorussian and published in *Bożym ślacham*, 119, London, 1970, pp. 13-4.
16. M. J. Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, II *Nonciature de Litta 1797-1799*, Vatican City, 1943, p. 430. The author of the article 'Mińska djeceża' in the *Encyklopedia kościelna wydana przez X. M. Nowodworskiego*, XIV (Warsaw, 1881 p. 364) adds the names of the Apostles Sts Peter and Paul to the patrons of the cathedral. One can find no confirmation of this in any known source.
17. Localities with the same names are to be found in *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 364; N. Rouba, *Przewodnik po Litwie i Białejrusi*, Vilna, 1910, under names in Polish terminology; X. W. M(eysztowicz), 'Kościół katolickie ob. łac. na obszarach Rosji (1772-1914)', *Sacrum Poloniae Millenium*, II, Rome, 1955, pp. 471-95.
18. All these names have been identified in the sources given in note 17, except *Borczinensis* and *Dunitzvicensis*. *Borczinensis* could refer to Borčyn (un-

known) or Barki — such a place did exist: see *Rossija. Polnoje geografičeskoje opisanije*, IX, StP, 1905, p. 425. *Dunitzvicensis* may correspond to Duniłowicki or Duniłowickaja, adjectives from Duniłovičy about which we find a little information in N. Rouba, *op. cit.*, p. 55. Perhaps this is the same as 'Daniłowicze' which is found on some maps like, for example, Père Jean Nieprecki's 'Carte du Grand Duché de Litvaniae' of 1749.

19. 'Mińska djeceżja', *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, Warsaw, 1881, pp. 363-6. The same description in a shorter form is repeated in *Podręczna enc. kośc.*, XXVII-XXVIII, Warsaw, 1912, pp. 81-2.
20. 'Wiadomość o kościołach i klasztorach djeceżji mińskiej', *Pamiętnik Relig.-Mor.*, new series, IV, Warsaw, 1859, pp. 32, 361.
21. 'Relazione finale de Litta' in Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, II, pp. xliii, 83-4, 95, 172, 175, 180, 430-1.
22. Mgr. Arezzo wrote to Cardinal Consalvi from St Petersburg on 7 December 1803: 'Il Vescovo di Minsk, Mgr Dederko, mi ha rimessa anch'egli la breve relazione di quelle nuova sua diocesi, che rimetto a V. E., non occorrendomi di farci alcuna osservazione...', Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, III. *Nonciature d'Arezzo 1802-1806*, Vatican City, 1922, p. 372. This information sent to the Apostolic nuncio to Bishop Dederko we find in a shorter form in the same work, pp. 451-2.

But Arezzo gives us more exhaustive information on the Catholic Church in Russia in his 'Relazione dello stato attuale della Chiesa cattolice esistenti nello Imperio russo e degli affari trattari in tempo della legazione apostolica da S. E. Mgr. Arezzo', *op. cit.*, pp. 420-96. Rouët de Journal considers this document as the most important ('document de la plus grande importance'), *op. cit.*, p. xlv. No wonder that an authentic copy of it, unknown to Rouët de Journal, made its mysterious way through various hands and is now to be found in the British Museum Library, Department of Manuscripts Add. 8777.

23. According to the *Encyklopedja kościelna* there were 93 parishes in the Minsk diocese with 231,869 faithful (*Enc. kośc.*, XIV, pp. 364-5).
24. 'Relazione finale d'Arezzo', Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 447. The statistics given here are a little different from those of 1804 sent by the same nuncio. See Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, III, p. 451.

The *Enc. kośc. (loc. cit.)* gives the name of 93 parishes and distributes them through the centuries according to their time of origin. It is a pity that there is uncertainty about the time to which this information refers. It seems to give the number of the parishes and faithful before the Minsk diocese's liquidation in 1869, when it was larger than at the time of its beginning.

We include here the names of the parishes of the Minsk diocese and the time, if known, of the foundation of their churches, which usually coincides with the beginning of the parish. Except for the 14th century we shall follow the order given by Meysztowicz, noting, at the end, the differences between his account and that of the writer in the *Encyklopedja kościelna*. For the 14th century we follow *Enc. kośc.* and E. de Ropp, *Elenchus Cleri et Ecclesiarum Archidioeceseos Mohiloviensis in Russia*, Warsaw, 1932.

In the 14th century four parish churches were founded: Abolsk (1386), Hajna (1386), Minsk (1390), Pinsk (1396).

In the 15th century ten parish churches were founded: Chochła, Kleck, Niašviž, Stuck (1410), Kojdanava (1439), Radaškavičy (1447), Dubravy (1453), Miazdieł (1454), Wołna (1474), Lebiedziewa (1476).

The 16th century brought about the founding of eleven parishes: Zastaŭje, Budstaŭ (1504), Ikażń (1509), Pastavy (1522), Voŭkałata (1524), Kuraniec (1539), Dzisna (1583), Švierżań (1588), Niašviž (1593), Pahost, Pieršai (1600).

In the 17th century thirty-six parishes were founded: Lachavičy, Lubiešaŭ, Łahišyn, Mikałajevičy, Zadarožža (1601), Ivianiec (1606), Dokšycy (1608), Zadziaŭ (1622), Davidharadok (1624), Astrahlady (1626), Parafjanava (1630), Rečyca (1634), Pietrykaŭ (1638), Stuck (1639), Ziembin (1640), Biarezino (1641), Miory (1641), Barysaŭ (1642), Hlybokaje (1642), Udzieł (1642), Druja (1644), Miazdźviedzičy (1645), Cimkavičy (1647), Zamoście (1649), Mazyr (1654),

Kaścianievičy (1661), Chožava (1662), Hłusk (1662), Kiemiežaŭ (1675), Zaslauže (1676), Biarezina (1682), Uzda (1684), Rakaŭ (1686), Korań (1695), Kapatkievičy (1696), Prazaroki (1698).

In the 18th century thirty parishes were established: Baboŭnia, Olka, Rubiaževičy, Spas, Ivianiec (1702), Chałopieničy (1703), Daŭhinava (1704), Stuck (1704), Minsk (1710), Jurevičy (1726), Ilja (1734), Maładečna (1738), Bloń (1742), Kimbaroŭka (1744), Łužki (1744), Serafin (1762), Łučaj (1765), Rečyca (1766), Mosar (1772), Zaslauže (1774), Annopal (1790), Łahojsk (1793), Amnišaŭ (1795), Dziadziłavičy (1798), Akałova (1798), Ihumień (today Cervień) (1799).

In the 19th century fifteen parishes were erected: Hermanavičy, Hrozava, Haradok (1802), Barysaŭ (1806), Šaciłki (1813), Staryca (1816), Šaciłki (1818), Stuck (1820), Smiłovičy (1830), Kalvaryja (1839), Charamcy (1845), Viazyn (1846), Krasnaje Siało (1858), Kapył (1859), Minsk (1861).

This list of churches given by Meysztowicz (*op. cit.*, pp. 467-97) seems to be quite correct, but there are still some points which need further explanation. For instance, the number of churches given by Meysztowicz is not the same as that given by Nowodworski in *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 364.

Meysztowicz gives a total number of 102 for the 15th-19th centuries, whilst Nowodworski gives only 90. There are also differences concerning the time of foundation of individual churches. Here we give only some examples.

According to Nowodworski the following churches were founded in the 16th century: 1. Krasnaje Siało; 2. Chožaŭ; 3. Miadźwiedzičy; 4. Niašviž. Meysztowicz, however, refers 1. to the 19th century, 2. and 3. to the 17th century and 4. to the 15th and 16th centuries.

Again, the author of the article in *Enc. kośc.* omits Ravaničy, Rečyca, Kalvaryja, while Meysztowicz does the same with Stoŭbcy and Kamień, this last being a parish of Minsk diocese.

Space does not permit us to compare these authors' list with that of various other sources. We will, therefore, simply adduce them below:

N. Rouba, *Przewodnik po Litwie i Białejrusi*, Wilna, 1910.

E. de Ropp, *Elenchus Cleri et Ecclesiarum Archidioeceseos Mohiloviensis in Russia*, Warsaw, 1932.

R. Jałbrzykowski, *Catalogus Ecclesiarum et Cleri Archidioecesis Vilnensis*, Vilna, 1932, 1938.

25. *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 364. This important information is not to be found in the documents published by Rouët de Journal.
26. This information given by Mgr. Arezzo (in Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 447) is exactly the same as in *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, pp. 346-5. Information is also given regarding the sites of monasteries and the names of the different orders. The large number of monasteries on a relatively small territory is rather striking.
27. Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 447. *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 364.
28. *Arch. S. Congr. de Prop. Fide, Congressi (Mosc. Pol. Rut.)*, fol. 434m, 505-20.
29. Mgr. Arezzo himself gives the wrong date of birth of Dederko, saying that he was born 'nel distretto Vileomeritz (Wilkomir — Č. S.) nel 1750'. See Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 446.
30. *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 364.
31. W. Syrokomla, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
32. Perhaps Szemesz was correct concerning the artistic taste of Bishop Dederko, but his judgement of the bishop's character seems to be totally unjust, at least according to the conclusions one can draw from the documents published by Rouët de Journal. See, for example, the letter of Mgr. Arezzo to Dederko dated 21 November 1803, sent to him after receiving information on the status of the dioceses from the nuncios (*op. cit.*, III, pp. 362-3).
33. W. Syrokomla, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
34. See note 32.
35. P. N. Batjuškov, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

36. Rouët de Journal, *op. cit.*, III, p. 136, note. *Podręczna enc. kośc.* (VII-VIII, Warsaw, 1906, p. 363) states that Bishop Dederko was an ex-Jesuit, a fact not corroborated by other documents such as the *processus canonicus*, for instance.
37. *Podręczna enc. kośc.*, XXIII-XXIV, Warsaw, 1911, p. 357. See also S. Olszamowska-Skowrońska, 'Pie IX et l'Église Catholique en Pologne; la suppression de diocèses Catholiques par le Gouvernement Russe après l'insurrection de 1863-4 (1866-69)', *Antemurale*, Rome, 1965, pp. 41-130, 83-8 etc.
38. See note 37.
39. For a bibliography of works on Bishop Vajtkievič see S. Olszamowska-Skowrońska, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
40. The Papal Bull 'Universalis Ecclesiae' is found in *Acta Pii IX*, I, 1, pp. 134 ff. For the text of the implementation of the decree by Archbishop Hałavinski see *Executorium decretum de limitibus Dioceseos Minscensis*, Minsk, 1865.
41. Hienadź Kisialoŭ, *Z dumaj pra Bielaruś*, Minsk, 1966, pp. 59-60. See also Wacław Studnicki, *Rok 1863. Wyroki śmierci*, Vilna, 1923, pp. 118-21.
42. H. Kisialoŭ, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.
43. The use of the Russian language in Latin liturgical prayers in Byelorussia deserves to be studied more thoroughly. Several works deal with this problem: J. Martinov, *De la langue Russe dans le Culte Catholique*, Lyon, 1874; s. n., *La Chiesa Cattolica in Russia*, I, Rome, 1873; A. V. Zirkevič, *Iz-za russkogo jazyka*, I-II, Vilna, 1911; A. Boudou, *Le Saint-Siège et la Russie*, II, Paris, 1925, pp. 347-98; Z. Olszamowska-Skowrońska, 'U źródeł rusyfikacji Kościoła na Litwie po r. 1863', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 189, Cracow, 1931, pp. 211-24; *ibid.*, 190, pp. 87-94; Adam Stankievič, *Rodnaja mova ŭ światyniach*, Vilna, 1929; Tadeusz Górski, *Stosunek Biskupa Jerzego Matulewicza do spraw językowych w Diecezji Wileńskiej 1918-1925*, Rome, 1970.
44. A. Stankievič, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 66-7.
45. *Enc. kośc.*, XIV, p. 365.
46. See note 45.
47. There is a short pamphlet on Bishop S. Łazinski: *S. p. Ks. Biskup Łaziński, Biskup diecezji Pińskiej*, s. I., 1932, by Juljan Ryster. The fourth issue of *Piński Przegląd Diecezjalny* (Pinsk, 1932) was also dedicated to his memory.
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