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## Economic Pressure on the Church in Ukraine During the Holodomor (1932–1933)

### Introduction

The Holodomor of 1932–1933 is the biggest disaster of the Ukrainian nation in the XX century. The social experiment conducted by the Soviet authorities resulted in millions of innocent victims. The Church, in which the Bolsheviks saw a threat, was one of the primary targets of this artificial famine. During the period of aggravation of social relations, provoked by the introduction of collectivization in 1928 and the fight against the kurkuls as a class, the church and clergy were viewed as supporters of the kurkuls and counter-revolutionaries. Therefore, they had to be completely eradicated and deprived of the possibility to influence worshippers. One of the methods of this extermination was economic pressure.

The position of the church and the clergy during the Holodomor are reflected in a number of historical works by Oleg Boyko<sup>2</sup>, Tetiana

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<sup>2</sup> O.V. Boiko (2011). *Pravoslavna tserkva na Dnipropetrovshchyni v roky Holodomoru (1932–1933 rr.)* [Orthodox church in Dnipropetrovsk region during the Holodomor (1932–1933)]. *Naddniprońska Ukraina: istorychni protsesy, podii, postati: [zb. nauk. pr.]*. 9, 214–222.

Yevseyeva<sup>3</sup>, Oleksandr Ignatusha<sup>4</sup>, Alla Kyrydon<sup>5</sup>, Volodymyr Paschenko<sup>6</sup>, Vyacheslav Olitskyi<sup>7</sup>. Despite the broad scope of the issue, it has not been yet reflected in a complex generalizing work.

The author used archival sources to research the topic, such as documents from the Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, periodicals *Bezvirnyk* (the journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine), *Voyovnychij Bezvirnyk* (newspaper of the Central Council of the Union of Militant Godless of Ukraine), and eyewitness testimonies from the victims and contemporaries of the Holodomor published during Ukrainian independence.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the position of the clergy and religious communities in the Ukrainian SSR under the economic pressure which was part of the Holodomor of 1932–1933. Thus, the main focus was on the following: 1) to clarify the forms of economic pressure by the authorities on the clergy; 2) to analyse the pressure on different church ranks; 3) to determine the consequences of economic pressure on clerics and worshippers.

The study is methodologically based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, systematicity, as well as general scientific and historical methods: analysis, synthesis, comparison, bibliographic heuristics, descriptive and chronological methods.

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<sup>3</sup> T.M. Yevseyeva (2004). Diialnist spilky "voiovnychkykh bezvirnykiv" Ukrainy pid chas sutsilnoi kolektyvizatsii 1929–1933 rr. [Activities of the Union of "Militant Infidels" of Ukraine during the continuous collectivization of 1929–1933]. *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky: Mizhvid. zb. nauk. Pr.* 11, 303–331

<sup>4</sup> O.M. Ignatusha (2008). Razom z narodom: tserkva v umovakh holodomoru 1932–1933 rr. [Together with the people: the church in the conditions of the famine of 1932–1933]. *Holodomor 1932–1933: Zaporizkyi vymir*. Zaporizhzhia: Prosvita, 112–127.

<sup>5</sup> A.M. Kyrydon (2005). *Chas vyprobuvan: derzhava, tserkva i suspilstvo v radianskii Ukraini. 1917–1930-kh rokiv*. [Time of trials: state, church and society in Soviet Ukraine. 1917–1930s.]. Ternopil: Pidruchnyky i posibnyky.

<sup>6</sup> V.O. Pashchenko (1994). *Svoboda sovisti v Ukraini: Mify i fakty 1920–1930-kh rokiv*. [Freedom of conscience in Ukraine: Myths and facts of the 1920s and 1930s.]. Kyiv.

<sup>7</sup> V.O. Olitskyi (2016). Podatkovi tysk, yak forma represii proty pravoslavnoho dukhovenstva na Sumshchyni (1920–1930-ti rr.). [Tax pressure as a form of repression against the Orthodox clergy in the Sumy region (1920s–1930s)]. *Visnyk aharnoi istorii : zbirnyk naukovykh prats*. 16–17, 85–91.

During the famine, authorities actively used economic pressure on the clergy as a key element of the church which was «outside the socialist sector of the economy»<sup>8</sup>. Like peasants, the priests were forced to contribute to grain procurement campaigns and to pay taxes which were beyond their means.

Among the legal grounds for such pressure was the Resolution of the Radnarkom of Ukraine of August 13, 1929 «On the Features of the Kurkul Households to which the Labour Code should be Applied»<sup>9</sup>. The resolution listed a number of features that described the kurkuls. In particular, the moneylenders, sellers, commercial intermediaries and «cult ministers» belonged to the kurkuls.

The mass media, with their powerful ideological influence, were also used as a pressure tool<sup>10</sup>. The primary weapon was the atheistic press, in particular the *Bezvirnyk* magazine and the *Voyovnychij Bezvirnyk* newspaper. In addition to offensive articles, the newspapers published a lot of cartoons. As «confirmation» of their wealth, the priests were depicted with big stomachs, round faces, and bags of money which they allegedly stole from the state. This propaganda intended to form an image of the enemy-priest not only among the older generation, but also in young people and children, owing in particular to the anti-religious alphabet of 1933<sup>11</sup>. In this way, the authorities both mocked the clergy and sought to discredit it. In our opinion, the Soviet authorities used the press in an attempt to justify their policy of economic pressure on churches and priests of various denominations.

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<sup>8</sup> O.M. Ignatusha (2008). Razom z narodom: tserkva v umovakh holodomoru 1932–1933 rr. [Together with the people: the church in the conditions of the famine of 1932–1933]. *Holodomor 1932–1933: Zaporizkyi vymir*. Zaporizhzhia: Prosvita, p.114–115.

<sup>9</sup> I.M. Yelinov (1995). Rozkurkulennia vsuperech marksyzmu (Dokumentovana khronika [Dekulakization against Marxism (Documented Chronicle)]. Retrieved from: <http://www.museum.dp.ua/article0245.html>.

<sup>10</sup> O.P. Chuchalin (2018). *Kyivska yeparkhiia v umovakh vzaemyn radianskoï derzhavy i pravoslavnoi tserkvy (1920–1930-kh rr.)*. [Kyiv eparchy in the conditions of relations between the Soviet state and the Orthodox Church (1920–1930's)]. (Dysertatsiia kandydata istorychnykh nauk). Umanskyi derzhavnyi pedahohichnyi universytet imeni Pavla Tychyny, Uman. p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> Antyrelihiina abetka 1933 r. [Anti-religious alphabet 1933]. Retrieved from <https://cameralabs.org/11789-proshchaj-religiya-antireligioznaya-sovetskaya-azbuka-1933-goda>.

The procedure of «rozkurkulennya» by means of economic extermination of the clergy was widespread in all regions of Ukraine. This is evidenced by dozens of complaint letters to the cult department of the VUTsVK (All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee).

Economic pressure on the clergy manifested in various forms. Often, it was a tax in kind which included cleric contributions to harvesting campaigns in bread, meat or honey. A monetary tax could also be levied, in all of its varieties, for example newspaper subscriptions, bond purchases, target advances, loans, and fines.

The available documents, which include appeals, complaints, reports on clergy to the cult department of the VUTsVK and district executive committees, allow us to learn about the financial situation of the priests, what types of tax were imposed by the authorities, what forms of pressure were applied, and what decisions were made.

### Taxes in Kind

In 1932–1933, when the village was dying from hunger, an impossible-to-pay tax in kind was imposed on clerics who had already lost land, farming and equipment<sup>12</sup>. For example, Maksym Kasyan and Yevhen Nikolsky, clerics from Mala Bilozirka (Melitopolregion – T.H.), appealed to the cult department for an explanation how to meet the meat procurement plan if «each of us has a single cow to feed and support the health of our children»<sup>13</sup>. In 1933, in an address to the Central cult department, the Bobrovytsky district executive committee, and the district prosecutor office, priest Matviy Polonsky petitioned to release him from the tax in kind due to the absence of a household. He mentioned in his letter, «As “odnoosibnyk”, I am obliged to pay a meat tax in the amount of 94 kg. I have no household (I am 73 years old), ... no horse, no cow, no pigs, not even chickens, but, for some reason, I fell into the category of landowners “odnoosibnyk”. I pay the income tax to the state. I ask you to

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<sup>12</sup> V.O. Olitskyi (2016). *Podatkovi tysk, yak forma represii proty pravoslavnoho dukhovenstva na Sumshchyni (1920–1930-ti rr.)*. [Tax pressure as a form of repression against the Orthodox clergy in the Sumy region (1920s–1930s)]. *Visnyk ahrarnoi istorii : zbirnyk naukovykh prats.* 16–17, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 186, p. 107.

void the tax as ungrounded»<sup>14</sup>. In June 1932, a similar situation occurred with priest Ivan Boyev from the Gulyaev village in Odessa region<sup>15</sup>.

Priest Oleksandr Lekhnitsky from the village of Mazurivka, in Shargorod district of Vinnytsia region, wrote about the excessiveness of the tax in kind in a letter to the cult department of the VUTsVK. In particular, on May 29, 1933, the village council obliged the priest to pay 84 kg of meat within 24 hours. The priest's attempts to explain that he had no household, and the references to the circular of the People's Commissariat of Finance of the Ukrainian SSR No. 68 of 19.02.1931 were not successful. Oleksandr Lekhnitsky wrote in desperation: «I am 63, I live ... in a single small room, I neither possess, nor run a household...». At the same time, the priest's colleague inquired with the regional cult inspector and was told that priests who do not have a household are not taxed by tax in kind<sup>16</sup>.

The year when the tax in question was due is noteworthy – May 1933, the time when the Ukrainian SSR was recovering from a hungry winter. Such resolutions once again confirm the cynicism of the Communists.

Secretariat of the Presidium of the VUTsVK responded to the priest complaints and explained to district executive committees that «ministers of the cult who do not have auxiliary profits and are not engaged in agriculture are not subject to meat procurement taxation»<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, local authorities continued to persecute the clergy with impunity, saying that the «disenfranchised» still had to hand over meat to the state<sup>18</sup>. Alla Kyrydon points out that taxation abuse was particularly common at the local administration level<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 128, p. 111.

<sup>15</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 184, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 125, p. 57, 60.

<sup>17</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 206, p. 144.

<sup>18</sup> T.M. Yevseyeva (2004). *Dialnist spilky "voiovnychkh bezvirnykiv" Ukrainy pid chas sutsilnoi kolektyvizatsii 1929–1933 rr.* [Activities of the Union of "Militant Infidels" of Ukraine during the continuous collectivization of 1929–1933.]. *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky: Mizhvid. zb. nauk. pr.* 11, p.314.

<sup>19</sup> A.M. Kyrydon (2005). *Chas vyprobovan: derzhava, tserkva i suspilstvo v radianskii*

Priests from different regions of the Ukrainian SSR tried to defend themselves even under severe pressure. Letters were sent to local cult departments prompting the latter to seek clarification from senior authorities<sup>20</sup>.

Local officials, in particular – the heads of village councils, obliged the clergy to pay a tax in kind not only with meat. In particular, Rokytyanska village council imposed a tax of 12 kilograms of honey on priest Orlovsky in August 1932. The tax had to be paid within three days, which turned out to be impossible<sup>21</sup>. The head of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, Exarch of Ukraine Kostyantyn Dyakov appealed to the Secretariat of the VUTsVK with a request to protect the priest of his denomination, explaining that «an apiary cannot produce such quantity, and besides ... (Orlovsky – T.H.) is engaged in honey production not for sale and speculation, but for personal consumption, while giving away a significant part to the sick and needy...». The cult department of the VUTsVK in turn noted that cult ministers of 50 years or older, including Orlovsky, are not subject to the tax<sup>22</sup>.

The authorities used all means to force the clergy and religious communities to hand over bread to the state. Often the priests were accused of disrupting the grain procurement campaign and conducting anti-harvesting propaganda among peasants. For example, in the Mykhailivka village of Tokmakivskiy district, representatives of the church were unable to provide wheat which gave the local activists a reason to accuse them of deliberate disruption of the sowing campaign<sup>23</sup>. In the Komyshe village of Zinkiv district, Kharkiv region, the supporters of the local priest dug the grain and thus, in the eyes of the local authorities, sabotaged the grain

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*Ukraini. 1917–1930-ky roky.* [Time of trials: state, church and society in Soviet Ukraine. 1917–1930s.]. Ternopil: Pidruchnyky i posibnyky. p. 246.

<sup>20</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 125, p. 80.

<sup>21</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 172, p. 168.

<sup>22</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 172, p. 169.

<sup>23</sup> Tserkovnyky zryvaiut posivnu kampaniiu (1932, April 7). [The clergy disrupt the sowing campaign]. *Voiovnnychi bezvirnyk*. 14. p. 2.

procurement<sup>24</sup>. In Brigadirivsky district, kolgospnyks found 85 pounds of wheat under the church floor, hidden there by the night guard allegedly on the orders of local priest Mykola and the churchwarden<sup>25</sup>. Notably, no evidence of priests' fault was ever published. This highlights the far-fetched nature of the accusations and their ideological orientation.

## Financial pressure

The monetary tax was a form of economic pressure. Notably, financial inspectors, acting in the interests of the authorities, deliberately inflated the amount of tax on clerics, which thus often exceeded their earnings. At the same time, late payment of the tax was interpreted by the authorities as a deliberate obstruction in the building of a socialist state<sup>26</sup>. For example, on March 2, 1933, priest Kortov telegraphed to the cult department for an explanation how he could pay a cultural needs tax of 210 rubles, when he does not even have 10 rubles?<sup>27</sup>

In 1932, protoiereus Pavlo Grevizyrsky inquired the village council for the reason of an inflated tax in the amount of 150 rubles and was rudely turned off. In particular, the local authorities threw the tax alert in his face and accused him and all the clergy of wanting a war: «All of you pops [priests] look for a war but there will be none. And if one does begin, we will first rip your stomachs», said a certain Makarinsky, chairman of the village council<sup>28</sup>. The issue remained unresolved.

Volodymyr Rudenko, a priest from the Kyiv region, in a letter to the VUTsVK asked to explain the reason for an excessive income tax in-

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<sup>24</sup> D. Yar (1932, December 24). Tserkovnyky pozakopuvaly khlib [The clergy buried the bread]. *Voiovnychi bezvirnyk*. 56–57. p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Tserkva skhovanka khliba (1932, May 17). [Church of bread]. *Voiovnychi bezvirnyk*. 19. p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> V.R. Bernatskyi, S.I. Zhyliuk, V.M. Sheretiuk (2017). *Antyrelihiina polityka bilshovykiv na Volyni-Zhytomyrshchyni u 1920–1930-kh rokakh* [The anti-religious policy of the Bolsheviks in the Volyn-Zhytomyr region in the 1920s and 1930s.]. Rivne: O. Zen. p. 120.

<sup>27</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 129, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 172, p. 103.

crease to 718 rubles in 1933<sup>29</sup>. Tymofiy Irha from the city of Slaviansk made a similar request to the central financial department. The priest remarked on the unexpectedly high tax amount, which was many times larger than that of his fellow priests. In particular, Tymofiy Vasylovych gave an example of the continuous tax increase. In 1928–1929 the tax was 26.91 rubles, which then rose to 29.45 rubles in 1929–1930. While the priest did not cite the amount of tax in later periods, he mentioned that «since 1932 I have worked in the cemetery church, bearing the responsibilities of a psalm-reader, just like my priest fellows, however my tax is much higher...». The situation forced Tymofiy Vasylovych to ask the central financial department to «pay attention to the unfair attitude towards me»<sup>30</sup>. Still, the district tax commission refused to recalculate Father Timothy's taxes and ruled the original sum correct.

The absence of household, as Tetiana Yevseyeva emphasized, did not prevent the local authorities to request the priests to pay the targeted advances. For example, on February 20, 1933, the priest Ivan Suhodolsky from the Kuchakove village of Kyiv region complained to the cult department of the VUTsVK. The issue in question was a message from the Kuchakove village council about the payment of targeted advances amounting 150 rubles... «I find it wrong to demand the tax from me, and I ask the secretariat of the VUTsVK to explain me whether I should pay, and if not, then write an order to the Boryspil district to reimburse me 150 rubles»<sup>31</sup>.

There were cases when local authorities, being «unaware», overcharged a so-called state fee on clerics who asked the permission to visit worshippers in their homes. The cult department stated that fee is paid once – at the application stage. However, Velyko-Burlutsky district executive committee charged 3 rubles both at the time of the application and when the permission was granted<sup>32</sup>. For example, a priest was

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<sup>29</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 128, p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 125, p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 128, p. 118.

<sup>32</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 186, p. 76.



required to pay 3.50 rubles both for being added and removed from the register, and 6 rubles for prayer processions before Christmas and Easter! Chuguiv vicariate department asked the cult department of the VUTsVK to explain the laws to the district executive committees<sup>33</sup>.

Following the resolution of the People's Commissariat of Finance, priest Olexiy Belyak from the Novo-Petrykovka village, Mariupol region, addressed the cult department of the VUTsVK in May 1933. The priest complained of significantly overstated income and cultural taxes that did not correspond to his real income. In particular, father Olexiy showed that his income was overestimated by the district finance department every year: 1200 rubles in 1928–1929, 2400 rubles in 1932, and 4320 rubles in 1933. Most likely, the local authorities deliberately ignored the death rate of worshippers – the number of worshippers in the parish decreased, and thus the income could not increase so much. Accordingly, since the priest paid the full tax for 1932, the economic pressure of 1933 was too high for him to pay: the real income of the priest did not even reach 1000 rubles<sup>34</sup>!

Priest Martynov petitioned the cult department of the VUTsVK about the «wrong taxation»<sup>35</sup>.

Such government actions towards the clergy serve as a clear confirmation of the deliberate cruel policy at the highest ranks and not just human mistakes.

The Trinity Church in the Blotnytsi village, Bubnovsky district in Chernihiv region, was closed in May 1931. This was due to unpaid tax of which the local religious community was not even informed. Representatives of the church wrote to the cult department of the VUTsVK in September 1932, «This year neither the village council nor the district financial department did not demand from us any taxes and did not even send any messages». We can assume that the tax amount was inflated in order to devastate the community so that it could not take care of the

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<sup>33</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 186, p. 78.

<sup>34</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 127, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 6. c. 214, p. 98.

church. However, even when the tax was paid the village council did not give the keys from the church. Having complained to the district executive committee, the community discovered that the church owes 4558 rubles! «We cannot pay this amount at once, but we promise to pay the debt within two years»<sup>36</sup>. This last quote demonstrates the determination of worshippers to fight for the church. Such examples are evidence of the religiosity of the population of Ukraine.

In our opinion, local authorities interpreted the Party's resolutions at their own discretion. In this case, the district executive committee together with the village council deliberately delayed informing about the tax, so that a considerable debt could accumulate which would be difficult and even impossible to pay during the famine. And, according to the VUTSVK instructions, if a church does not pay the tax within three months it must be closed immediately<sup>37</sup>.

Such evidence is confirmed by other researchers. In particular, Alla Kyrydon gives a striking example. In 1932, a 10 000 rubles tax was imposed on the Kiev Sophia Parish. A few months after the parish paid this sum, another 20 000 rubles were imposed<sup>38</sup>.

Oleksandr Ignatusha describes a similar case of excessive taxation. In 1928–1929, the religious community of the Nativity of Mother of God Church in Pushkarne village of Kharkiv region paid a 400 rubles tax on its buildings, however at the end of 1933 this rose to 2129 rubles! The researcher is convinced that the state exerted insurmountable pressure upon the clergy in the form of monetary taxes and taxes in kind<sup>39</sup>.

According to Oleg Boyko, this was done to deliberately ruin the church communities, so that parishioners would leave them faster<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 186, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 186, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> A.M. Kyrydon (2011). *Derzhava-Tserkva-Suspilstvo: inversna transformatsiia v suspilstvi* [State-Church-Society: inverse transformation in society]. Rivne: RIS KSU, p. 182.

<sup>39</sup> O.M. Ignatusha (2008). *Razom z narodom: tserkva v umovakh holodomoru 1932–1933 rr.* [Together with the people: the church in the conditions of the famine of 1932–1933]. *Holodomor 1932–1933: Zaporizkyi vymir*. Zaporizhzhia: Prosvita, p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> O.V. Boyko (2011). *Pravoslavna tserkva na Dnipropetrovshchyni v roky*

Case documents stored in the Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine in Kyiv indicate that the cult department of the Kyiv regional executive committee received a considerable number of complaints from Kyiv region. In particular, local authorities refused to register the priests of a particular parish until those agreed to purchase bonds or loans, while the compulsory distribution of these tax types was prohibited by law! In addition, religious communities were subject to further taxes. According to the Kyiv cult department, local authorities «are not interested in determining the actual income of the cult ministers, and this leads to excessive re-taxation..., which in turns result in complaints and unnecessary paperwork». Cult inspector in the Kyiv region named Drekleer noted that this outrage was taking place because there was no responsible person «who would manage this piece of work and held responsible for it»<sup>41</sup>. Thus, it was suggested that the village councils appoint such a person and follow all the instructions.

Local authorities often manipulated in tax matters. For example, the «Fifties» (the founder community) of Gusarivska Church, Kharkiv region, appealed to the VUTsVK with a complaint that they were forced to buy state bonds. The district executive committee replied that the peasants simply misunderstood everything: «The bonds were offered to you on general terms – as peasants and not as the “Fifties” members, even though you could afford much more bonds than **poor non-member peasants**»<sup>42</sup> (author’s emphasis – T.H.). The highlighted fragment clearly hints of the alleged wealth of the citizens who belonged to the «Fifties». Unsurprisingly, one of the elements of the atheistic campaign was to «expose» the «rich churchmen».

Clerics wrote to higher hierarchs on their difficult living conditions, in which the clergy found themselves through no fault of their own, and asked for help. To clarify the situation with the bond purchases,

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Holodomoru (1932–1933 rr.) [Orthodox church in Dnipropetrovsk region during the Holodomor (1932–1933)]. *Naddnyprianska Ukraina: istorychni protsesy, podii, postati: [zb. nauk. pr.]*. 9, p. 222.

<sup>41</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 197, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 183, p. 19.

Ivan Koloskov, the priest of the Chemera village, Chernihiv eparchy, appealed to the Exarch of Ukraine Metropolitan Constantine. In his letter, he wrote that the local village council enforces 500-ruble bonds, and by September 1, 1933 this rose to 3000 rubles! For comparison, the priest quoted the taxes he paid during 1927–1933. In 1927–1928 it was 45.46 rubles, which then kept increasing every year: 264.80 rubles in 1929, 660 rubles in 1932, and 958 rubles in 1933!<sup>43</sup> Tikhon Prylessky, the priest from the Kamenya village, Dzerzhinsky district of Vinnytsia region, in his report to the metropolitan also mentioned this money collection in form of forced bonds on the clergy and religious communities<sup>44</sup>.

When charging money from the clergy, the authorities often did not provide any payment confirmation documents. In our opinion, this allowed village councils to demand money again from a priest who could not provide a stamped payment certificate signed by the chairman and the secretary of the village council. For example, the cult department wrote to the Staro-Vodolazsky district executive committee with a request to explain why the latter did not issue a payment receipt for the sum of 300 rubles to the local priest at the Church of the Intercession, Staro-Vodolagdska sloboda<sup>45</sup>. The certificate would protect the clergy, but, as seen from these examples, the authorities chose not to issue these documents.

Village councils and executive committees had no boundaries in inventing more ways to extract as much money as possible, which led to the poverty among the worshippers and clergy. For example, the VUTsVK demanded explanations from the Nizhynsky district executive committee why the cult minister Rudnytsky was charged 600 rubles and who «personally gave the order»<sup>46</sup>.

Worshippers of the Mykolaiv Church from the town of Hubne complained to the senior authorities on illegal actions of the executive com-

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<sup>43</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 9. c. 12, p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 125, p. 62–63.

<sup>45</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 172, p. 159.

<sup>46</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 206, p. 118.

mittee, which required the prayer house to pay tax for building a fire station. In turn, the cult department of the VUTsVK reached out to district executive committees, regional executive committees and village councils with clarifications on tax policy regarding both clergy and communities. In particular, it stated that «It is forbidden to collect any other taxes or mandatory payments from religious communities except insurance premiums, tax on buildings, and land rent. Furthermore, religious communities are exempt from paying both industrial and agricultural taxes, as well as local taxes». Accordingly, the VUTsVK considered actions of the Habensky district executive committee as «unreasonable and lawless»<sup>47</sup>.

The clergy was unable to pay the incredible sums imposed by the state. But failure to pay led to trial and deportation to Siberia<sup>48</sup>. To prevent this, ordinary people, particularly women, tried to support the clergy. They gathered in groups and walked from door to door asking for help in any way. Such actions made it possible for priests to pay tax. One issue of *Voyovnychij Bezvirnyk* described this situation in such words: «They organized ... groups that have to collect these levies on ten houses. And the atheists ... do not bother to help the unconscientious people to escape from priest clutches»<sup>49</sup>.

A resident of the Mala Bilozirka village (currently Zaporizhzhya region) recalled in his oral testimony how the local priest was taxed. During the famine, he was able to cope with the excessive taxation only with help of those not indifferent. So, to close the church, Komsomol activists planted two bags of grain at priest's house at night, and then came next morning with a search to find these bags. The priest was evicted from the village, and the church was closed<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 6. c. 216, p. 122–123.

<sup>48</sup> S.V. Kulchytskyi (ed) (2008). *Velykyi holod v Ukraini. Svidchennia ochevydtsiv dlia komisii konhresu SShA* Tom 1. Kyiv: Vydavnychiy dim "Kyievo-Mohylianska akademiia", p. 551.

<sup>49</sup> *Risheche borotysia proty popivskykh poboriv* (1932, April 24). [Resolutely fight against extortion of priests]. *Voiovnychiy bezvirnyk*. 15. p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> V. Komov (2008). *Rozpovid cholovika, meshkantsia s. Mala Bilozirka* [The story of a man, a resident of the Mala Bilozirka village]. *Usna istoriia Stepovoi Ukrainy*. Tom 3. Zaporizhzhia: Tandem. P. 201.

In order to rid the village of «religious dope» as quickly as possible, local authorities required newly arrived priests to pay the tax – real or fictional – owed by their predecessors<sup>51</sup>.

According to Alla Kyrydon, authorities tried to make the life of cleric unbearable, since he «represented a camp hostile to the Soviet power»<sup>52</sup>. When tax was not paid, the authorities distrained the available property, as it happened to Trublaevsky, the priest of the Kharpachka village. The cult department responded with a simple formal note asking to act lawfully and be guided by the relevant resolutions of the Ukrainian SSR<sup>53</sup>.

Fines were an integral part of the economic pressure. Local authorities issued a 60-ruble fine upon a Trinity Church parisher Sementsov from the village of Vasytkovky, Ulyanivskyi district. The reason for the fine was a failure of the community to pay a building tax in the sum of 596 rubles within three days! Interestingly, this action was initiated by the village council immediately after the renewal of the members of the «Fifties». The village council did not receive any orders on this matter from the VUTsVK<sup>54</sup>. This once again confirms that the local authorities acted independently, and in such a way tried to beat down the clergy and worshippers.

## Financial position

If in 1920s the financial situation of the clergy of different denominations in Ukraine differed significantly, the Holodomor brought everyone to poverty. The clergy of all ranks suffered from hunger. A striking example of this is the fate of Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Autocephalous

<sup>51</sup> T.M. Yevseyeva (2004). *Diiálnist spilky "voiovnychkykh bezvirnykiv" Ukrainy pid chas sutsilnoi kolektyvizatsii 1929–1933 rr.* [Activities of the Union of "Militant Infidels" of Ukraine during the continuous collectivization of 1929–1933.]. *Problemy istorii Ukrainy: fakty, sudzhennia, poshuky: Mizhvid. zb. nauk. pr.* 11, p. 310.

<sup>52</sup> A.M. Kyrydon (2005). *Chas vyprobuvan: derzhava, tserkva i suspilstvo v radianskii Ukraini. 1917–1930-kh rokiv.* [Time of trials: state, church and society in Soviet Ukraine. 1917–1930s.], p. 248. Ternopil: Pidruchnyky i posibnyky.

<sup>53</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 7. c. 189, p. 20–21.

<sup>54</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 6. c. 218, p. 94, 96.

Orthodox Church Vasyl Lypkivsky. In his letters to Petro Mayevsky in Canada he wrote: «I am in a position that I can only live on alms, because I neither own nor earn anything... Your help is like manna from Heaven to me...»<sup>55</sup>. Dmitry Galevich, a protoiereus of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine, mentioned in letters to his daughter that the hungry years had consequences: «This is the third time that Natalochka has come to me for help. I give her some food, what I could. E.L. also begs to send him even dried crusts, but where would I get them... I had only three malaychyks [corn bun] on Sunday»<sup>56</sup>. Priest Oleksandr Lekhnitsky mentioned the hungry realities of his life in a letter to the VUTsVK. In particular, he mentioned that he had not had a piece of bread for three weeks, the pound of which costed 4.50 rubles «I consider myself lucky if I can get a cup or two of soup corn every second or third day...»<sup>57</sup>.

Catholic priests did not avoid the hungry years either, surviving thanks to the help from church councils and parishers<sup>58</sup>.

The harsh financial situation is evidenced by the fact that church representatives could not even afford new pieces of clerical clothing. Thus, the cult department of the Kiev regional executive committee asked the secretariat of the VUTsVK for clarification how to act when clerics of the Little Sophia Church petitioned to replace their old chasubles with newer ones. The existing dress wore down and the services had to be conducted in torn out chasubles in front of frequent delegations<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> O. Zinkevych, O. Voronyn (eds.) (1987). *Martyrolohiia ukrainskykh Tserkov: u 4-kh t. T. 1. Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva. Dokumenty, materialy, khrystyianskyi samvydav Ukrainy* (1987). [Martyrology of the Ukrainian Churches: in 4 vol. 1. Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Documents, materials about Ukraine]. Toronto; Baltymor: Smoloskyp, p. 493.

<sup>56</sup> D. Halevych (2001). *Nezaareshtovani lysty: lysty sviashchennyka z Ukrainy do Nimechchyny. 1922–1938* [Un arrested letters: letters from a priest from Ukraine to Germany. 1922–1938]. Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim «Kozaky», p. 87.

<sup>57</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 125, p. 58.

<sup>58</sup> N.S. Rublova (2012). Rymo-katolytska tserkva v ukrainskii provintsii 1920–1930-kh rr.: Fastivshchyna [Roman Catholic Church in the Ukrainian province of the 1920s and 1930s: Fastiv region.]. *Z arkhiviv VUChK-HPU-NKVD-KHB*. 1, p. 313.

<sup>59</sup> Central State Archives of Supreme Authorities and Governments of Ukraine, f.1. d. 8. c. 128, p. 54.

## Conclusions

The economic pressure on the clergy became part of the Bolshevik famine strategy, one of the tools for destruction of the church as an institution, and of religion as the basis of world view. Exorbitant taxes in kind and monetary taxes led to extreme exhaustion, psychological destruction of clergy and their families. The actions of the authorities in relation to the priests were clearly discriminatory. The tax burden on the clergy was disproportional to the size of their income, economically unreasonable and politically motivated. The local party elite often took on the role of arbiter of destinies, guided by the public and secret instructions of party and state leaders. Village councils usually ignored requests for documents confirming the payment of a certain tax and, as the result, clerics were unprotected from the Soviet authorities. In turn, this made possible to shift the responsibility for the «excesses» onto the lower authorities. The ruling Communist party relied heavily on the media that actively pictured the priests as enemies and social parasites. As a result of the active repressive policy of the Communist party, the financial situation of the clergy became significantly worse in 1932–1933. Exhausted by unjustified levies, deprived of households and property, the clergy starved throughout the Ukrainian SRR – both in rural and urban parishes. Members of different denominations and all church ranks – metropolitans, protoiereuses, priests and believers – suffered from hunger. This «suppression by hunger» brought the clergy to the verge of physical survival.

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**Summary**

The forms of economic pressure of the Soviet state on clergy and religious communities as part of the Bolshevik famine strategy were analysed. Methodologically, the study is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, systematicity, as well as general scientific and historical methods. During the period of aggravation in social relations, provoked by the introduction of collectivization, the church and clergy were stigmatized by the Soviet authorities as class enemies and supporters of kurkuls. In 1932–1933, the economic pressure on the clergy became one of the tools for their liquidation «as a class». The article uncovers the forms of this economic pressure on the clergy and the church. It was found that the tax burden on the clergy was disproportional to their income, economically unreasonable and politically motivated. Representatives of all ranks suffered from the famine in the Ukrainian SSR. Financial situation of clerics of different denominations got significantly worse during 1932–1933.

**Keywords:** the Holodomor, tax, priest, clergy, religious community