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Persecution for the faith Ruthenians in Austria-Hungary Before World War (100th Anniversary of the Second Marmarosh-Sighet Trial 1913 – 1914)*

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***Переслідування русинів за віру в Австро-Угорщині
напередодні Першої світової війни
(до 100-річчя другого Мараморош-Сиготського
процесу 1913–1914 рр.)***

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The Orthodox movement among the Rusins in the Austro-Hungarian Empire began in the early 20th century. It was caused by a number of factors of socio-economic and political nature. Without the Orthodox clergy, the Orthodox Christians could not develop wide missionary activities. Initially, the movement was local, it was limited to a few settlements. A qualitatively new period in the history of the Orthodox movement was associated with the name of Alexander Kabaliuk. Despite being thoroughly controlled by the police and the Greek Catholic clergy, the Orthodox movement spread to several villages: Koshelevo, Berezovo, Lypcha, Nizhni Bystry, Horinchovo, Tereblia,

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Krivaya, Bedevlia, Belky, Osiy, Ilnitsa, Dulovo, Dolgoe, Zadneye and Oleshnik.

Kabaliuk was ordained to the priesthood with the name Alexis upon finishing the monastic theological classes at the Monastery of St. Onufry (Onufrius) of Chelm on August 15, 1910. After adopting Russian citizenship and receiving the relevant documents, Kabaliuk went to Mount Athos to exchange his Russian monastic documents for the Athos ones. It would enable him to return home with the Greek missionary documents without let or hindrance.

In 1911 Alexis (Kabaliuk) met with the Serbian Patriarch Lucian (Bogdanovich), who appointed him assistant to Greek Gabriel (Aurel) Motin, an Orthodox priest in Miskolc, who gave guidance to the Orthodox Christians in the villages of Veliky Luchky and Iza. On June 17, 1912, the police and border guards rummaged Alexis' (Kabaliuk) house in Yasinya village. They confiscated the chalice, the priest's vestments and books from the family chapel, and sealed up the door. After this incident, Hieromonk Alexis went to the U.S., where he conducted missionary work among the Rusin immigrants.

Failures in missionary work in the village of Iza forced the Hungarian government and the Greek Catholic Church to take on more radical methods. Additional units of gendarmes and soldiers were sent to the major centers of Orthodoxy to suppress the movement against the Union. The gendarmes demanded that each peasant was to have a certificate from the local priest to the effect that the peasant attended the Greek Catholic Church. If the peasant did not have such a document, he was subjected to torture and persecution. Besides, the Orthodox Christians experienced financial pressure. After useless efforts to stop the movement with the fines and illegal exaction, the Ministry of the Interior sent Adviser Horner to Maramorosh-Sighet, who was assigned to crush the Orthodox faith. Secret agents, provocateurs, investigators, funded by the government, began to operate on the territory of Ugorska Rus'. The police conducted several raids during which about 180 people were arrested.

Those arrested were kept in zhupanat and district prisons, where they were victimized and tortured with intent to beat false confessions out of them. On December 29, 1913, 94 people were on the dock in Maramorosh-Sighet, among them men and women within the age range from 17 to 64. The evidence by which the Prosecutor tried to prove anti-state activities by the defendants, included pictures, which portrayed the monasteries of Mount Athos and Kiev, icons, liturgical books published in Kiev, Odessa, Moscow, and periodicals published in Chernovtsy and Kiev.

The hearings were held in the Hungarian language, but only a few detainees could understand it. The defence lawyers drew attention to the fact that the court interpreters wrongly interpreted the statements of defendants and witnesses. Most of the prisoners rejected anti-state agitation allegations. They stated that it was of purely religious nature. The hearings of witnesses caused a real failure of the prosecution. The witnesses were Uniate priests, tavern keepers and officials. Not having enough evidence, on February 5, 1914, the prosecutor released from custody a significant number of detainees, clearing them of all charges. Despite all the efforts of legal defence and the protests of the international community, on March 3, 1914, Hungarian authorities issued a shameful verdict: 32 people were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and had to pay large monetary fines. Hieromonk Alexis (Kabaliuk) got the longest prison term: (4 years and 6 months in prison and a fine of 100 kronas).

The Maramorosh-Sighet Trial in 1913 – 1914 showed to the international community that in Hungary the authorities used provocateurs and bribed witnesses, and that they did not adhere to the religion and belief legislation. Judicial defence showed that the Hungarian authorities, not being able to condemn Orthodox Christians for the secession from the Union, wrongly charged them with treason. The verdict demonstrated the defeat of the judicial system of the Empire and its crisis. Their methods of investigation shocked the general public and sparked interest of many European periodicals which objectively assessed the Orthodox movement.

Keywords

Orthodoxy, Orthodox, litigation, Transcarpathia, Maramoroch-Sigot/Maramorosh-Sighet, Alexis (Kabalyuk/Kabaliuk).