

ANDREW SZEPTICKY

FATHER METROPOLITAN

WRITING in the issues of this review for July 1944 and April 1945, I tried to explain the extremely complex set-up of peoples and Christian allegiances in the borderland that stretches from Lithuania to the Carpathians; that territory which was part of Poland-Lithuania from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, was partitioned between Russia and Austria in 1795, became Polish again from 1921 to 1939, and is now incorporated in the U.S.S.R. The inhabitants of the southernmost part, eastern Galicia (Galych, Halicz), are about one-third Latin Catholic Poles to three-fifths Ruthenians, i.e., Byzantine Catholic Ukrainians; and of these last I wrote that it seemed likely, in view of the circumstances and of historical precedent, that the Soviet authorities would seek to force them into the Russian Orthodox Church. Actually that process had already begun: in April 1945 all the Galician Ukrainian bishops were arrested and deported into Russia, and in March 1946 a handful of lower clergy and laity, calling themselves 'The Synod of the Uniate Church in the Western Ukraine', reported to Marshal Stalin that the 350-year old reunion with Rome was revoked.¹ It can hardly be doubted that the signal for this move was the death on the preceding November 1st of the archbishop of Lvov, Andrew Szepticky, who had not only been for forty-four years head of the Catholic Ukrainian church but for long the most respected and most loved of all Ukrainian public figures anywhere.

Count Alexander Szepticky was born in 1865 on his father's estate at Prybylce, near Yavorov in eastern Galicia, which then was in the Austrian empire. The family of Szepticky (pronounced Sheptitsky) originated near Kiev but, like most of the Ukrainian nobility and gentry, many of its members became polonised and in religion abandoned the Slav-Byzantine for the Latin rite. When therefore young Alexander, after brilliant studies at Pressburg (Bratislava) and Cracow, gave up the law and at the age of twenty-three received the habit at the Basilian monastery of Dobromyl, it was something of a sensation: a Szepticky had affirmed himself as a Ukrainian and had returned to the ecclesiastical rite of his forefathers. It was then that he took the name of Andrew, patron saint of the Russians and Ruthenians.

¹ Cf. Pope Pius's encyclical letter *Orientalis omnes*, translated in *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 6 (April-June, 1946), wherein the Pope 'recalls with special honour' the subject of this article.

By 1892 Father Andrew was a priest, and a doctor both of theology and philosophy, and for seven years was actively engaged in pastoral work. (In the course of centuries the Galician Basilians had lost almost all semblance to monks and were virtually clerks regular.) At the end of this short period he became bishop of Stanislavov, and hardly a year later was promoted to the archbishopric of Lvov (Lviv, Lwow, Lemberg). This was the Ukrainian primatial see, carrying the titles of metropolitan of Galych and bishop of Kamenets-Podolsky, and its holder was *ex-officio* vice-president of the legislative assembly of Galicia and had a seat in the Herrenhaus at Vienna. The new metropolitan was only thirty-five years old.

The huge archdiocese of Lvov then comprised over 700 parishes with over 1½ million faithful, and by devoting two or three months in every year to visitation Metropolitan Andrew got to know every one of those parishes personally, preaching, hearing confessions, and calling on the people in their homes. His pastoral letter of 1902 on canonical visitation deserves translation, but this was only one among many—on the priesthood, marriage and the family, social problems, frequent communion, and the rest, in some of which later pronouncements of the Holy See were anticipated: all were distinguished by a very practical and concrete quality. One of his first undertakings was the reorganisation of the metropolitan seminary, which became one of the largest and best ecclesiastical colleges in the Church. At this time the tide of emigration was in full flood, and the metropolitan was instrumental in getting the first Ruthenian bishop sent to the United States, and again, after his visit to Montreal for the eucharistic congress in 1910, one for Canada.²

Metropolitan Andrew was deeply concerned for the health and conservation of the specifically Ukrainian culture and arts, and as a step towards a Ukrainian university at Lvov he established there in 1913 a museum, with a library and archivium attached, to which gifts were sent from all over eastern Europe. The library had one of the best Russian collections in the world; among its treasures were the originals of Father Aurelio Palmieri's unfinished work on Eastern Orthodox theology. Two years earlier he had set up in Rome an historico-ecclesiastical commission for research into matters of Ruthenian and Ukrainian importance in the Vatican and other archives; this work he entrusted to that accomplished orientalist Father Cyril Korolevsky.³

² This was Niketas Budka. He retired and came home in 1928 and, though seventy years old and apparently a British subject, is now interned in the U.S.S.R.

³ Father Korolevsky's monograph *Le métropolitain André Szeptickij* (Grottaferrata, 1921) is the best printed source for his life up to 1920. There is a very useful commentary by Father Feuillen Mercenier in *Irenikon*, t. xix, no. 1 (Chevetogne, 1946).

But from the cultural as well as the religious point of view one of the metropolitan's greatest works was his monastic foundation. Since all Ukrainian monks were engaged in active ministry he wanted to re-establish houses where traditional Eastern monasticism could be carried on. His opportunity came in 1903, when he found some peasants who had started monastic life on their own. He gave them land at Sknylov, and by 1906 this *laura* of St Antony Pechersky was well established. Its rule was based on the *typikon* given by St Theodore to the Studium at Constantinople in the eighth-ninth century, which about 1050 was translated by St Theodosius Pechersky for the use of the famous *laura* of the Caves at Kiev. Those of these 'Studites' who were drawn to intellectual work were encouraged to occupy themselves with Ukrainian ecclesiastical, historical and cultural themes, and to study means of approach to their separated brethren in Russia.

In character, interests and life there were marked points of resemblance between Cardinal Mercier and Andrew Szepticky, and not least in their activity on behalf of Christian unity. Metropolitan Andrew was naturally preoccupied with the separated Russian Church,⁴ and in 1907 Pope Pius X gave him powers and faculties of a very wide and unusual kind, based canonically on the fact that the metropolitan was bishop of Kamenets-Podolsky, a diocese entirely in Russian territory and still in existence, though without Catholic faithful. As an Austrian subject, the metropolitan had to proceed with extreme caution, for his religious activities might at any time have involved serious political consequences. The local political situation was seen in all its complexity when war broke out in 1914. On the occupation of Lvov by the Russians under General Brusilov, no Austrian or Polish civil official but the Ukrainian metropolitan was made responsible for the good behaviour of the citizens; but within a fortnight Mgr Szepticky was himself deported into Russia. Secretly in a hotel at Kiev he ordained Father Joseph Bocian to the episcopate in respect of those Russian territories which by his special powers were under his jurisdiction, and then he disappeared from view for two and a half years.

During his internment at Kursk, Sudal and Yarosalvl, Metropolitan Andrew was on the whole fairly well treated; and directly he was released by the provisional government at the revolution of March 1917 he went to Petrograd to organise the small but growing body of Russian Catholics of Byzantine rite. He put them in charge of an

⁴ A masterly article by the metropolitan on the Catholic and Orthodox mentalities was printed in *The Commonwealth* (New York) for 8th October, 1930.

exarch, the remarkable Father Leonid Feodorov,⁵ and it was then that Andrew Szepticky first attracted the hostile notice of the Bolshevik leaders.

He received a tumultuous welcome on his return to Lvov in October 1917, but there was soon a bitter civil war between the Ukrainians and the Poles in Galicia, followed by a Red Army invasion. The metropolitan 'desired a free existence for The Ukraine in alliance with Russia and maintaining neighbourly relations with Poland';⁶ and so he was interned in his house by the Poles, and again at Poznan, not to be completely at liberty till after 1923, when Polish sovereignty over Galicia was recognised by the powers. The shocking events of the previous years meant that all his work had been undone, and the first task was to rebuild the pastoral life of the archdiocese. There was an acute shortage of parochial clergy, and the fact that over three-quarters of them were married (in accordance with Eastern custom), which had been a source of strength in the renaissance of the Ukrainian church during the nineteenth century, was now a grievous economic handicap. But the work was carried through. In particular, the Lvov seminary went from strength to strength: in 1931 it became a degree-conferring academy of theology, and by 1939 its senior students alone numbered over 200.

The Studite monastery at Sknylov had been destroyed in 1914, and the monks dispersed as 'Russian partisans'. Metropolitan Andrew re-established it at Unov, with his brother Clement as abbot, and subsequently several more monasteries, a house of studies at Lvov, and other lesser establishments were founded, as well as three houses of nuns. In 1939 the monks numbered about 200, of whom some twenty were hieromonks, i.e., priest-monks. Hand in hand with this achievement went progress with the museum, *eikon* and other picture collections, and other elements in the projected Ukrainian university, and that care for war-orphans and others in need who were always so close to the heart of their 'Father Metropolitan', as he liked to be called. With the dispersal of the Studites since 1939 something unique and precious has been taken from the Church: it has been said that Western Catholics who visited them could 'appreciate more fully what Subiaco and Monte Cassino were in the sixth century'.⁷

5 An account of the Exarch Leonid, the cause of whose canonisation may some day be introduced, was contributed by the present writer to *Thought* (New York), December, 1938. He received great support from some Dominican tertiary sisters, led by Mother Anna, wife of Father Vladimir Abrikosov, whose history has not yet been made fully public.

6 'Testis' (an intimate friend of Szepticky) in *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, Vol. V, no. 11 (Ramsgate, July 1944).

7 For a first-hand account of the Studites see an article by Father Korolevsky in *Pax*, no. 84 (Caldey Abbey, 1927).

What Andrew Szepticky was able to get done in the second twenty years of his episcopate is the more remarkable because of his increasingly chronic ill-health and the unhappy relations between the Polish government and its Ukrainian subjects, with such things as the 'pacification' of 1930 and the events that led up to it. The official discriminatory attitude against the Eastern church, and the uncooperativeness (to put it gently) of so many Polish ecclesiastics towards Mgr Szepticky were all a part of this; nor did all the bishops and others of his own metropolitan province always see eye to eye with him. Perhaps above all else he tried to be a peace-maker: but the children of God under this head are not always blessed by those for whom they labour. And so it was with Andrew Szepticky. Yet he never lost courage, and stood up unflinchingly, not only for his own people and their church, but for all who were oppressed: in 1938, for example, he issued a protest against the brutal coercion of members of the Orthodox Church in the Kholm district.⁸ And he cherished no optimistic illusions. One who was very close to him says that even in 1930 he had a strong presentiment of impending world-wide calamity, and that he had no faith in the mind and methods of contemporary civilisation either to ward it off or to provide new means for the strengthening of Christianity.

Andrew Szepticky was above all the father of his people. 'Only he who has seen the metropolitan living among his people at Lvov can clearly picture the life of one of the great Eastern bishops of the fourth century. The people surround him with their veneration; they press forward to kiss his hands or his robe. He orders his diocese less by methods of administration than by long and intimate conversations: *cor ad cor loquitur*. His is a great heart, full of generosity and nobility; he is a man of prayer and faith, without a trace of sentimentality, but with the strength, goodness and realism of a patriarch' ('Testis', *loc. cit.*). And that patriarchal quality was emphasised by his personal appearance: tall, bearded, full of dignity, his expression kindly and his eyes searching.

Szepticky's influence was operative far beyond the borders of Galicia. Already before 1914 he was a leader in the organisation of the Velehrad congresses in Moravia, and in this reunion work he was a disciple of Vladimir Solovyev and Cardinal Pitra. 'What could be better for the East than Benedictine monasteries of the Byzantine rite?' he said. Pope Pius XI listened, remembered Leo XIII's views

⁸ For the text of this suppressed document, see Dmytrievsky's *L'Union des Eglises et les Persécutions polonaises en Ukraine* (Brussels, 1938). The metropolitan accused certain Polish elements of forcible 'conversion' of Orthodox; we now witness the opposite process.

on the same matter, and in 1924 issued a letter asking the Benedictines to give special attention to work towards the reconciliation of the East.⁹ At the same time there arose from conversations between the metropolitan, Dom Lambert Beauduin, and other monks at Sant' Anselmo in Rome the project which took shape as the bi-ritual monastery of Amay in Belgium (now at Chevetogne). His attendance at a reunion congress in Brussels in 1925 was the last time he went abroad; the disease from which he suffered at length reduced him to almost complete paralysis and constant pain: but his great mind and spirit never failed.

In earlier life Andrew Szepticky, a provincial hierarch of Eastern rite, was confessor to the imperial crown prince of Austria, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg (the victims of the Sarajevo assassination in 1914): that was remarkable. In later life he was recognised as the moral leader of Catholic Ukrainians abroad as well as at home, the Rusins of the Podkarpatska Rus looked up to him with love and reverence, so did many Orthodox Ukrainians and Russians: that was remarkable too. But most remarkable of all was that the spiritual counsel of this bishop in the heart of central Europe was sought from so far away as France and Belgium, The Netherlands and England. All sorts and conditions of people came under his spell—the spell of goodness, gentleness, sincerity and fearlessness. It was characteristic of Andrew Szepticky that he humbly aspired to martyrdom; and in a real sense the last thirty of his eighty years of life were one long martyrdom. Of what happened after 1939 not all is known. He flared up in protest against Nazi conscription of Ukrainian youths for forced labour and against their persecution of Jews in Galicia, and he refused to celebrate a Liturgy of thanksgiving on Hitler's birthday; then the Russians came back, and he saw his flock and the fruits of his works—the monastic foundations, the seminary so carefully watched over, the tireless visitations, the great pastoral letters, the undertakings for the advancement of Ukrainian culture—all thrown down and trampled on once more. And he knew that worse was to come, though he did not live to see it.

Towards the end of October 1944 he became seriously ill. One who was with him records a conversation at this time in which the metropolitan talked of Pascal and Newman, and speculated on the possible canonisation of Savonarola. 'He thanked me for bringing him *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which he wanted to read again, he said, because it was about one person taking the place of another, an idea that had always

⁹ See 'Testis', *loc. cit.* A translation of the people's letter, with commentary by Dom Lambert Beauduin, was printed in *Pax*, no. 80 (Caldey Abbey, 1926).

appealed to him: all his life he had wanted to suffer, if by so doing he could save others from suffering'. On the 28th he was anointed; and during the night, while apparently asleep, he began to talk, 'without moving or opening his eyes, in a steady voice that seemed to come from far away. He said that he was going to die, that these were his last words, and that his voice would not again be heard until the day of judgment, when he would be listened to by those who before were unwilling to hear him; he spoke of divine judgment and of God's boundless mercy; and he as it were bequeathed his spirit to his flock'. Next morning he seemed much better; but two days later there was a relapse, and on Wednesday, October 19/November 1, when only his man-servant was present, Andrew Szepticky died.

For three days an unbroken stream of people came to look their last on the face of the Father Metropolitan as his body lay in the great cathedral church of St George the Victorious, built by his kinsman the Metropolitan Leo Szepticky in 1779. 'I was struck', says the observer already quoted, 'by the atmosphere of peace and a sort of quiet joy among those who were about him. It was shared, when the first shock was over, even by his brother, the Higumen Clement, who loved him so tenderly, and the monk Afanasy, who had been at his side for fifteen years. Life had been a heavy cross for Metropolitan Andrew; and "We ought to be glad", they said, "he has now got what he longed for—freedom and peace". And throughout the time that his body lay in the cathedral a spirit of brotherhood reigned among those gathered in the house and the church; they were consoling days of common life together'. On November 5 the streets of Lvov were thronged for the funeral.

It is said that Marshal Stalin sent a wreath.

Six months later Mgr Szepticky's successor, the Metropolitan Joseph Slipy, was arrested and deported, together with his suffragan and assistant bishops.

DONALD ATTWATER.

RUSSIAN CHRISTIANITY TO-DAY

THESE are at present two main parties among the Russian Orthodox emigrés. Some of them are in communion with the Patriarch of Moscow and accept his jurisdiction, while the rest stand aloof. The latter are suspicious of the apparently close connection between the Patriarch and the atheistic Soviet Government. The former are impelled by a sort of spiritual patriotism to give their