

THE UKRAINIZATION OF Kholm AND PODLACHIA ORTHODOX EPARCHY,
1940–1944

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Abstract

The article deals with the development of the Kholm and Podlachia Orthodox eparchy during the Nazi occupation of Poland. The Kholm region became a major center of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Kholm cathedral was returned to Orthodox Ukrainians, and many religious publications were issued in Ukrainian there. The Kholm and Podlachia eparchy was re-established (with Ilarion Ohienko as bishop) and Ukrainianized. The Kholm church program of the Archbishop Ilarion Ohienko, which included the balanced use of the Ukrainian language in worships, building a parish network and training a constellation of nationally conscious clergy, aimed to constitute an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church with a patriarchal system in territories occupied by the Nazis. To activate the national ecclesiastic life, Archbishop Ilarion founded a printing house, a publishing house, a bookstore, a library, a museum, the eparchial storage of church things, and also the brotherhood engaged in charity affairs. The German police allowed the establishment of a theological seminary, but de facto it had the status of an academy. In 1944 Ilarion Ohienko was elevated to the rank of metropolitan by the Council of bishops. The Kholm eparchy was finally abolished when it became part of Poland after the Second World War.

Key words: *the Orthodox Church, occupation, eparchy, parish, clergy, Second World War.*

Introduction

The Second World War led to new changes in position and organization of Orthodox Church in Polish territories. In November 1939 the beleaguered Metropolitan Dionisii Valedynskyi of Warsaw, attacked by Russian nationalists, was forced by the Gestapo to resign in favour of an outsider Archbishop Seraphim Lade of Berlin. Less than a year later, in September 1940, with active Ukrainian encouragement Dionisii recanted his abdication and persuaded governor-general of Poland Hans Frank to confirm him as Metropolitan of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the Generalgouvernement in return for a pledge of civil obedience to Nazi rule. Although officially his jurisdiction encompassed only the Generalgouvernement, the later expansion of German rule eastward into the Soviet Union allowed Dionisii indirectly to extend his authority there as well (Mironowicz, 2005: 200-203; Smyrnov, 2019; Wynot, 2015: 58).

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During the period of German occupation on the territory of Kholm region and Podlachia, there was a Ukrainian national-cultural and spiritual revival, a significant component of which was the national-church movement for Ukrainization / de-Muscovite of the Orthodox Church. The revival of the Kholm and Podlachia Orthodox eparchy in the German-occupied Poland and the ordination of the ambitious Archbishop Ilarion Ohienko (1882-1972), who possessed tremendous social, political and scientific experience, contributed to the transformation of the Kholm region into the leading centre of the Ukrainian national ecclesiastic movement. "In the short time of our work, Kholm received a new image – it became the Ukrainian center of Transbuh Ukraine, primarily the cultural and ecclesiastic one," wrote the wartime head of the Ukrainian Central Committee Volodymyr Kubiiiovych (Kubiiiovych, 1975: 388). In the Kholm and Podlachia eparchy, Archbishop Ilarion made a lot effort to implement a broad Ukrainianization activity aimed at developing the Orthodox Church on national traditions. On the instructions and insistence of the hierarchy, the clergy launched intensive educational, cultural and educational work among his laity.

The Kholm institutions have focused on organizing publishing, collecting and compiling an eparchial library, and translating liturgical literature in Ukrainian. There was actively conducted patriotic education of youth, organized national holidays, and the celebration of milestones (Lysenko & Hrynevych, 2004: 176). Archbishop Ilarion put a lot of effort into preparing the priests by opening a seminary in Kholm, which was close to the theological academy level of education. His head pastor activities in the Kholm period require a deeper analysis, which, unfortunately, is difficult due to the loss of the eparchial archive.

Ilarion's church program

On September 30, 1940, the Council of bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Generalgouvernement with the participation of Metropolitan Dionisii Valedynskyi and Bishop Tymofii Shretter decided to divide the Warsaw Metropolitanate into three uneven eparchies: Warsaw, Kholm and Podlachia, and Cracow-Lemko region. The Kholm and Podlachia eparchy, through its church-historical significance, was elevated to the rank of archdiocese, and its eparchial bishop received the title of Archbishop of Kholm and Podlachia. "In connection with the formation of two new eparchies, the population of which consists entirely of Ukrainian ones, to the cathedra of the archbishop of Kholm and Podlachia... we select Dr. Ivan Ohienko, a professor of the Orthodox theological faculty of the Warsaw University, as a well-known scholar and figure in the church and cultural regions for the benefit of the Ukrainian people", noted in the resolution of the Council (*Church Bulletin*, 1943: 5).

The solemn designation of Archimandrite Ilarion took place on October 19, 1940, and the next day in the Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos on

Danylo's Hill in Kholm, he accepted bishop consecration. During the Great Entrance, Metropolitan Dionisii proclaimed Ilarion Archbishop of Kholm and Podlachia (Smyrnov, 2016).

On October 21, 1940, the Council of bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Generalgouvernement blessed Archbishop Ilarion to take control of the Kholm and Podlachia eparchy and create an ecclesiastic consistory, and also elected him as deputy Metropolitan Dionisii (AWMP). On November 12, a meeting of the fathers-deans and former members of the Kholm Church Council was held. In his speech Archbishop drew attention of the clergy to the need for close ties with people, raising the level of education and culture, obligatory preaching for each worship service, attracting intelligentsia and youth, teaching religion in schools, organizing children's school choirs, learning the old Ukrainian language, supporting poor laities, paying debts for the maintenance of the eparchial administration, as well as church discipline (*Ukrainian Orthodox Herald*, 1940: 6).

According to the decree of Archbishop Ilarion, divine worship was recommended to be performed in Church Slavonic with Ukrainian pronunciation, which was introduced "very carefully, gradually and tactfully" depending on the national consciousness of the laity. There is encouraged to read the Hours, the Apostle and the Gospel in Ukrainian language. At the request of the laity, divine worship could be performed in Ukrainian, but only after the special blessing of the bishop. Sermons should be declared only in Ukrainian (*Ukrainian Orthodox Herald*, 1940: 13).

Kholm clergy, adhered to the principle of Archbishop Ilarion "to serve the people is to serve God", successfully combined pastoral work with national patriotic work. He saw the preservation of Orthodox identity organically linked to the creation of his own national tradition, the patriotic education of youth. An exceptional role in the religious life of the region was played by church-national celebrations.

To activate the national ecclesiastic life, Archbishop Ilarion founded a printing house, a publishing house, a bookstore, a library, a museum, the eparchial storage of church things, and also the Brotherhood of the Nativity of the Theotokos engaged in charity affairs. With significant scientific, publishing, and literary enlightenment experience, Archbishop Ilarion made the printed word one of the main means of his pastoral work. In 1942, the Kholm and Podlachia Consistory bought from the Germans a formerly rented Jewish printing house, which was equipped in the premises of the Brotherhood of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

According to calculations of Mykola Tymoshyk, in spite of the obstacles of the German administration, 45 titles of various books were published in Kholm. In this Ukrainian printing house in Kholm region liturgical books, sermons and religious poetry of Archbishop Ilarion, popular science editions, three issues of the Kholm calendar, "Ukrainian Orthodox Herald", "Reports from

Kholm and Podlachia eparchy" (60 issues), newsletter "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" were published (Tymoshyk, 2000: 306-307). "These brochures, together with the Ukrainian translation of the Gospel by Ilarion, tens of thousands of copies were distributed free of charge among students of the Kholm gymnasium, seminary, commercial and rural elementary schools, laities", wrote historian Yurii Makar (Makar, 2011: 437).

In 1942 in Prague, the publisher Yurii Tyshchenko published two volumes of essays on the history of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church composed by Archbishop Ilarion, published in a significant circulation of 3,000 copies at that time. Such publications that were popular for readers, brought significant profits to both the publisher and the author. The third and fourth volumes of the Ukrainian Church, which were prepared for publication, burned down in Prague with the closer front line (Tymoshyk, 2000: 305). Among the unfulfilled plans of Archbishop Ilarion, it is worth remembering the attempts to publish the journal "Native Language" and a separate weekly for the Ukrainian population of Kholm.

"For my work, for spreading pure Christian ideology among my faithful, Holy Scripture was very necessary, but it was not there", wrote Metropolitan Ilarion, "Under the terms of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, I translated the entire Bible, and in 1939 a part of it – the New Testament with the Psalter – was published in Warsaw. In 1940 this publication was repeated, but the gestapo immediately arrested it" (Ilarion, 1966: 13). It is worth noting that the third edition of the New Testament translation was published in 1942 in Stockholm with a circulation of 10 thousand copies, but Ohienko received it only four years later in Lausanne (Tymoshyk, 2000: 253).

What kind of the Ukrainian Church Archbishop Ilarion saw we can understand from his letter to Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi dated November 14, 1941: "Ukrainian intelligentsia, agitated by unscrupulous units, sometimes do not understand what the restoration of the old Ukrainian Church should be before, or it is more correct for the de-Russification it – it blindly sees this only in the worship of the Ukrainian language and requires a violent general introduction of this, not at all interested in restoring the very spirit of ancient Ukrainian Church. It does not understand that it is possible to rule the services in Ukrainian, and the Church will still remain Moscow in spirit, tradition, ideology" (Liakhotskyi, 2001: 296).

The national-ideological foundations of the development of Ukrainian Orthodoxy were summarized in the work of Metropolitan Ilarion, *"The Ideology of the Ukrainian Church"* (Kholm, 1944), and later was repeatedly reprinted. By the national ideology of the Church, he understood "the excellent refraction of Christianity in the perception of it by one or another people" (Metropolitan Ilarion, 1991: 45). Based on the historical experience of the development of Kyiv Orthodoxy in 1686, the hierarch highlighted the main features of the Ukrainian Church. "The task of our time is to fully revive the old Orthodox

Ukrainian Church with all its majestic and pious features and its high ideology," emphasized Archbishop Ilarion. He called this process not as Ukrainization, but de-Russification of the Church (Metropolitan Ilarion, 1991: 45-71). Undoubtedly, Ohienko's research on the original features of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, characteristic of the local tradition, continued for many years of intense intellectual work of the scientist. However, a generalization of the national-ideological foundations of the development of the Ukrainian Church occurred precisely during the war years during his stay at the Kholm cathedra and was published in 1944.

On October 19-21, 1941, the Kholm eparchial council took place, which restored the ancient tradition of collegiate rule and expressed gratitude to Archbishop Ilarion "for the improvement and standardization of ecclesiastic and religious life" and put forward his candidacy for the Kyiv cathedra. It was attended by 28 representatives of the clergy, 2 from monasticism and 18 from the laity. During the meeting, questions of cooperation with the occupation authorities, the development of the eparchy, the training of priests, the role of the clergy in the life of rural communities, and the national-patriotic education of students were raised (Acts, 1942: 20).

In his speech at the Council, Archbishop Ilarion outlined the programmatic principles for the development of ecclesiastic life aimed at the de-Russification and de-Polonization of the Church. According to him, "the essence of Ukrainization is not only the introduction of a living Ukrainian language, but the complete de-Russification of the Church... I derive Russian and Polish influences everywhere, I revive my old Ukrainian traditions. On November 12, 1940, I categorically forbade the use of Moscow pronunciation, ordering conduct divine worship in Old Ukrainian language, where the population and living Ukrainian desire it... We can now proudly say that our eparchy is all Ukrainian" (Makar, 2011: 432).

In an invocation to the all-honest clergy and God-loving Ukrainian citizenship dated May 12, 1942, Archbishop Ilarion once again set forth his vision of the development of ecclesiastic life and urged: "Look for restoring your Ukrainian Church as it has been with us for centuries for its forced enslavement. The church is purely Orthodox, quite conciliarly right on a highly authoritative, comprehensively strong, holy. We now have our own Ukrainian succession from the apostles, the canonical Hierarchy has already been gracefully set ... We need to fully resurrect all the ancient Orthodox Ukrainian Church, which it was before its canonical Moscow enslavement – in complete holiness, canonical purity of the Orthodox" (Makar, 2011: 432-433).

A number of facts testify to the revival of Ukrainian liturgical traditions in the liturgical life of the eparchy. For example, on Forgiveness Sunday, after Vespers, Archbishop Ilarion restored the old custom of "forgiveness," which included passing the head pastor word to believers with a call to repentance, a mutual request for the forgiveness of sins, and

kissing the feet of the large Crucifix in the middle of the church. There are started to serve Passia in the first four weeks of Great Lent in the Kholm cathedral, which became the eastern counterpart of the Way of the Cross (*Ukrainian Orthodox Herald*, 1941: 10). The Christ-centred order of the Passia service was established by Petro Mohyla first in the Kyivan Cave Lavra, and then throughout the Kyiv Metropolitanate. The weekly Lenten services included a reading of the four Gospels, which spoke of the Passion of Christ and death on Calvary, indispensable sermons on these topics, as well as the canon and prayers, focused on the course of Christ's suffering.

In 1943, the Archbishop Ilarion revived the old Ukrainian church tradition of reading the Gospel by the deacon, and as a bishop facing the people on a Solea in front of the royal gates. The Kholm newspaper reported, "The tradition of reading the prayers of the Orthodox Ukrainian Church and for all Ukrainian people after a pure litany has also been drawn. Vladyka Ilarion read the prayer in the Solea" (*Kholmska Zemlia*, 1943a: 4).

It is worth noting that the hierarch had the extraordinary talent of a speaker-preacher. "It so happened that even those Orthodox who were not attending Mass in the morning hurried across the whole city to the cathedral, just to listen to his sermon", recalled seminarian Illia Romaniuk, "Traditionally, it began on a spiritual topic, but invariably ended on a national one. As a rule, it went on for quite some time, and everyone listened with great attention to it" (Ivanyk, 2014: 140).

A significant and resonant event in the ecclesiastic life of the region was the return in 1943 of the greatest shrine – the wonderworking icon of the Kholm Virgin Mother of God, which was lost after the First World War. On this occasion, Vladyka Ilarion addressed the clergy and believers with the archpastoral message, "Virgin Mother of God has returned again to the Kholm". There was noted: "The whole of the Kholm land rejoices with us, it is watered with tears and blood, because at last the Virgin Mother of God takes our hurt people under her strong care and intercession ...! The Kholm Virgin Mother of God becomes now the faithful protector of the entire Kholm land, becomes a hope for all of us, becomes the only miraculous apostolic icon for us ... the Virgin Mother of God has resurrected again, and with it our whole hurt nation will be resurrected, our wasted land will blossom" (*Kholmska Zemlia*, 1943c: 4).

On October 3, 1943, the clergy solemnly transferred the icon of the Kholm Virgin Mother of God from the St. Andrew's Church to the cathedral, where it remained until the end of German occupation. On this occasion, on October 15, the Council of bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Generalgouvernement issued a special decree: "To offer sincere prayer thanks to the Lord God and the Virgin Mother of God for the great mercy that was found in the return of the holy miraculous image of the Mother, protector and intercessor of the poor and the tormented Kholm region, and to share with the hierarchy, clergy and faithful of the Kholm and Podlachia eparchy their joy

about this great event" (UAA, Minenko Collection, box 2, item 23). After many years of wandering, in 2000 Nadiia Horlytska, Fr. Gabriel Korobchuk's daughter, passed a unique shrine to the Volhynia Regional Studies Museum.

The German-Soviet war and a tangible revival of religious life in Central and Eastern Ukraine prompted Archbishop Ilarion to substantiate the concept of church rebirth in the occupied territories. According to Fr. T. Minenko, the demand was initially put forward in it: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church should be autocephalous with the patriarchal system. Vladyka Ilarion, whose great ambitions went beyond the framework of the Lublin district, was to become its administrator, then the First Hierarch (Minenko, 2000: 227-228). Ohienko did not hide his deep conviction that he was the best qualified candidate for the leadership of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The initial version of the concept was published in the memorial on the future structure of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which was signed on August 31, 1941 by three Kholm institutions: the Society of Ukrainian Theologians, the Archbishop's Council and the Church Brotherhood. The main factor in the revival of Ukrainian statehood was to be the autocephalous Church. "State faith in Ukraine is the Orthodox faith," the memorial noted (UAA, Minenko Collection, box 5, item 178).

Ilarion Ohienko supported the paternalistic paradigm of the Byzantine symphony between the church and the state, did not meet the new requirements of the time. Moreover, as follows from the memories of Fr. Semen Smereka, he dreamed of a personal union of the patriarch and head of state, as it was in Romania (Minenko, 2000: 232). Since the Ilarion's conception of the organization of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was based on the principles of "national meaning" and not on church canons, the memorial does not refer to the rules of the Ecumenical Councils. In addition, such important issues went beyond the competence of the eparchial institutions and the Kholm hierarch himself and should have been considered at the Council of bishops. Ilarion's striking advancement in fostering Ukrainian national consciousness in Kholm region was partly clouded by his difficult personality which tended to precipitate antagonistic relations with a number of prominent Ukrainian political and public leaders (Gerus, 1985-1989: 116).

Theological education

Archbishop Ilarion's Church experience in Kholm, accompanied by the development of the laity network and the Ukrainianization of the eparchy, provided for the preparation of a new clergy capable of embodying the ambitious plans of the hierarch. As a former professor at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at Warsaw University, he was very well aware of the importance of the functioning of a higher theological school. Therefore, in September 1940, he asked V. Kubiiovych to raise the question of opening a theological academy. Ilarion Ohienko, in particular, noted that the Orthodox Church in the Generalgouvernement would not be truly autocephalous

without its own higher theological institution, where “they will study all theological disciplines from the Ukrainian point of view, where they will teach the true history of the Ukrainian Church, its age separately, its traditions” (Makar, 2011: 437).

In the end, the struggle of Archbishop Ilarion for the opening of a higher theological school in Kholm ended in May 1943. The German police allowed the establishment of a theological seminary, but de facto it had the status of an academy. “This will be the first Orthodox Theological Seminary in general with the Ukrainian language of teaching in all Ukrainian ethnographic lands and the first Orthodox priests, Ukrainians brought up and trained in the Ukrainian national spirit for the future service of the Church and the people, will leave it”, Stepan Baran assured in “Lvivski Visti” newspaper (*Lvivski Visti*, 1943: 4). In a speech on the occasion of the ceremonial opening of the seminary on May 4, 1943, Archbishop Ilarion emphasized the special role of education in the life of the clergy, which during historical disasters has always been a guide of the people, “holding the national-church steering rudder” (Makar, 2011: 438; *Kholmska Zemlia*, 1943b: 6). Doctor of Theology Father Semen Smereka was appointed as Rector of the Seminary, and Master of Theology Father Yevhen Barshchevskyi, who, after a solemn prayer, gave the first lecture on the history of the Church, was appointed as vice-rector.

On May 23, an article “Why Churches are not crowded” appeared in the weekly “Kholmska Zemlia”. The author of the article was likely the editor-in-chief of the newspaper S. Baran, who linked the opening of the seminary with the need to educate a nationally conscious clergy. He drew attention to the fact that since most priests were indifferent to the national problems of their laity, “there was an alienation between the clergy and parishioners with great harm to us”. Clerics turned into officiants who organized christening, weddings and funerals for money. Therefore, the temples are half empty, because “the singing, holy water sprinkling and censer today are far from enough”. The author sees a way out of this situation in strengthening the preaching of his native language, the education of youth and the science of religion in school. According to him, the priest will be able to receive respect among the parishioners “only by sacrificial national work outside the church fence”. This task should be performed by the newfound theological seminary, which “educates the clergy which remains faithful to their people” (*Kholmska Zemlia*, 1943: No 21. P. 4-5).

First, 20 secular candidates and 10 priests who did not have a completed education were enrolled in the seminary. The latter studied extramurally and passed exams orally. As follows from the report of the administration for the 1943-1944 academic year, 53 students studied at the seminary. Duties of the rector performed by Fr. Yevhen, and the director of the boarding school – Archpriest Gabriel Korobchuk. The professors' council, headed by Archbishop Ilarion, dealt with the issues of the educational process. A high level of teaching of theological and humanitarian disciplines was provided by the professor-

teaching corporation, consisting of not only spiritual, but also secular figures. Archbishop Ilarion taught "Methodology of Scientific Work", "Contemporary Church Slavonic Spelling"; Fr. E. Barshchevsky – "History of the Church", "Logic", "Psychology", "Christian Philosophy", "Fundamental Theology", "Moral Theology", and "Methodology of Religion Teaching"; Archpriest Yu. Romanovych – "German Language"; Fr. H. Metiuk – "The Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament", "Dogmatists", "Comparative theology with sectology", "Homiletics", "Patrology"; Fr. G. Korobchuk – "Liturgics", "Slavonic Language", "Typikon"; S. Kuzyk – Greek and Latin Language; H. Kras – Greek and Latin language; P. Domanchuk – "Church Singing"; D. Liubych – Ukrainian Language and History; Ye. Malyk – Biology; V. Vovk – German Language; V. Solovii – "Canon Law"; Yu. Vasinchuk – Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry; Archpriest A. Yunak – "The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments"; Vsevolod Volkanovych – "Slavonic Language" (UAA, Minenko Collection, box 10, item 369).

Teachers and students of the seminary used the eparchial library to prepare for classes, as well as books from the personal library of Archbishop Ilarion. The administration has made efforts to replenish the funds of the seminary library, which, in the end, received from various sources up to two thousand books of scientific and theological content.

The leadership of the educational institution paid great attention to educational work among seminarians who lived in a boarding school and deepened their knowledge of pastoral theology and business etiquette. "They educated us in a very patriotic spirit", recalled seminarian I. Romaniuk, who avoided mobilization in the German construction service. "On Danylo's Hill, in the centre of Kholm, near the cathedral, the rector of the seminary Barshchevskyy arranged for us to take the oath to serve Ukraine" (Ivanyk, 2014: 140). In addition, a self-help society for students was in charge of the rector, whose task was to "help poor students and develop a sense of duty, self-discipline of work and personal dignity" (UAA, Minenko Collection, box 10, item 369). About 30 students lived in the seminary's boarding school on full assuring.

Emigration

In conclusion, we should briefly tell about last months of the activity of Archbishop Ilarion at the Kholm eparchy. On March 16, 1944, the Council of bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Generalgouvernement in Warsaw, after hearing a report on the state of the Kholm and Podlachia eparchy, decided: "To reward Vladyka Ilarion, Archbishop of Kholm and Podlachia, with the honorary title of Metropolitan, recognizing him with the Metropolitan's privileges a right to wear white hood, and ask God to give the Kholm eparchial hierarch strong forces and also to work on the God's vineyard and among those incredibly difficult circumstances among which

is his work lately" (*Information from the Kholm eparchy*, 1944: 1). This decree was solemnly announced on March 26 after the liturgy in the crowded Kholm cathedral, and was also published in the eparchial newsletter. On this occasion, the Metropolitan received numerous congratulations from the German administration, the public and the clergy. In addition, Ilarion Ohienko once again addressed the Council of bishops with the initiative to rename the Church to "Ukrainian Autocephalous...". However, the German government did not allow him to realize this plan (Urban, 1996: 62, 64).

Fleeing from Polish terror and fearing the approach of the Red Army, Kholm clergy gradually began to leave the laities. Metropolitan Ilarion ordered the priests to take their families to calm cities, and to stay in their places, continue to serve the laity and blessed to leave only in case of real danger. There was about 10-12% of such persons according to him. On July 18, 1944, the ill Metropolitan Ilarion, together with his closest associates, left Kholm to Krynica. The vicar bishop Tymofii remained in the eparchy. "I was tired, – and this is my biggest sin – to go to death consciously, and therefore I went to hungry wanderings", wrote Metropolitan Ilarion later on this subject (Ilarion, 1967: 11). He lost part of the library and archive during the evacuation. In August, Ohienko ended up in Štrbské pleso in Slovakia, where he continued to engage in church affairs. Since 1945 he lived in Switzerland, where he underwent three heavy operations, and in 1947 he moved to Canada.

Conclusions

Therefore, the national and church movement for the Ukrainization / de-Muscovite of the Orthodox parishes of the Kholm region and Podlachia, headed by Archbishop Ilarion, despite the complexity of the dynamics and ambiguity of perception, has become a significant factor in the self-affirmation of Ukraine and the idea of autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church. Giving a generalized assessment of the activities of the Kholm archpastor during this period, A. Nesterenko noted that "the eparchy at the ages of Metropolitan Ilarion has already become national-Ukrainian, and not only formally, but also spiritually" (Nesterenko, 1958: 72).

Thus, the situational assistance of the German authorities to the intentions of the Orthodox believers in Kholm region and Podlachia, that is, their desire to Ukrainianize the Church, resulted in the revival of the idea of gaining its autocephalous status. The Kholm church program of the Archbishop Ilarion Ohienko, which included the balanced use of the Ukrainian language in worships, building a parish network and training a constellation of nationally conscious clergy, aimed to constitute an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church with a patriarchal system in territories occupied by the Nazis.

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