

The Union of Uzhorod and the Document from April 24, 1646

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The Union of Uzhorod was a response to the Union of Brest in the territory of North-East Hungary, namely in the former Eparchy of Mukachevo. Although this union in its final form related to the Greek Catholics living in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, the document itself was signed by the priests of today's Slovak-Ukrainian border area, thus from the estates of Humenné and Uzhorod. Until now there were doubts whether any document was signed at the Union. Some historians and theologians even questioned the Union itself. The finding of the document from April 24, 1646 signed by all sixty-three priests however, refutes this speculation; (although the signatures are still to be authenticated by an expert, because it seems that some are duplicated).

The document itself consists of a double sheet of paper from that time period. The first page contains the Latin text. The second half of the first page and the next page contain the signatures of the priests. There are also unidentified fingerprints found on these pages. The other two pages were originally blank, now the fourth page contains notes from the Drugeth archive, probably from the 18th century. Neither page bears traces of any seal. The second sheet is slightly damaged in places where the document was folded into a smaller size. This document is 31.5 cm in height and 19.5 cm in width. At this time, the document is in the *depository of Drugeth* from Humenné in the State Archives in Prešov. Daniela Pellová worked on it from 2001 to 2008.

The document was originally in the archives of the Drugeth family, which had always been in the mansion in Humenné. During this time, it may not have been under the best of care. During World War II, the archive was repeatedly moved thus disturbing its order and several documents were lost. Finally the archive ended up stored in four cabinets in the attic. Before the arrival of the front in 1944, the archive was transferred to the basement. During the passage of the front, the archive was thrown out into the street where some documents were ruined, destroyed and many had been stolen. After the war, the historical materials were collected and shoved into the castle library until 1947, when the castle burned down and the fire damaged some documents. Later, the archive was assigned to the care of the state institutions and in 1952 it was moved to Levoča and later in 1957 to Prešov.¹

It is questionable how many copies of the document dated April 24, 1646 in Uzhorod, the priests actually signed. There are two possibilities – either there was only one document produced or for a number of different reasons, there were several copies produced. If there were several copies, one was likely drawn up for the owner of the Uzhorod and Humenné estates – the Drugeth family, which aligns itself with the change in their relationship to the priests who signed it. It is possible that the request came from Anna Jakusics, Bishop George's sister. This theory is supported by the absence of seals. The text of the document does not require the seal of the Bishop, but calls for the seals of the priests. Although legally it was required to have these seals at the bottom of the document, it is unlikely that, in those times, Greek Catholic priests had a signet ring. No such original document that may have been drawn up at that time and properly sealed, has

1 D. Pellová, *Drugeth z Humenného (1292–1945). Inventár (I. časť)*, Prešov, The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic – State Archives in Prešov (SAPO), 2010, p. 2–3.

yet been found. Historian, Fr. Michael Lacko, SJ was convinced that such original document is in the archives of the *Propaganda Fide*.² However, he did not find it after opening the archives.³

The second option is that just one document was written. This document could only have ended up in the archives of the Drugeth family in Humenné by way of Bishop George Jakusics. Since the bishop was sickly and the situation in the region was restless, he could only entrust this document to his sister. Maybe he took it with him and the document became part of his sister's inheritance (the reason could be the subordination of priests to Humenné-Uzhorod lords), since Bishop Jakusics died on November 21, 1647.⁴ This version is supported by the fact that the document does not show any signs of being copied. This is also confirmed by the signatures that are quite chaotic in the beginning, then organized into two columns. If several documents were signed simultaneously, all could be described as the originals.

The signing of the document, April 24, 1646 by sixty-three priests (but in the document is about eighty signatures) was part of the process of unification of the Eparchy of Mukachevo, which was completed in the mid-18th century. It was not the first attempt at unification. Since many parishes in Slovakia recognized the jurisdiction of the Przemysl bishop, often for the origin of entire villages from Galicia, this Union of Brest in 1596 also affected them. This was largely a re-

2 M. Lacko, *The Union of Užhorod*, Cleveland – Rome, Slovak Institute, 1976, p. 132.

3 I. Baán, Appointments to the episcopal see in Munkács, 1650–1690. in T. Véghseő (ed.), *Symbolae. Ways of Greek Catholic heritage research. Papers of the conference held on the 100th anniversary of the death of Nikolaus Nilles, Nyíregyháza 2010. Collectanea Athanasiana I/3*. Szent Atanáz Kiadó, Nyíregyháza 2010, p. 155–160. p. 155.

4 P. Sedlák, *Kresťanstvo na území Košického arcibiskupstva. Dejiny Košického arcibiskupstva III*. Prešov, Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2004, p. 275.

sponse to the emergence of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1589. Unified Przemysl Bishop Athanasius Krupecki already brought reports of the Union to Hungary in 1610.⁵ Later on, not only was he involved in this but for some time he also managed the united parishes in Slovakia⁶. He was one of the activists who tried to bring union in Krásny Brod in 1614⁷, which is indirectly confirmed by a letter of Athanasius Krupecki from April 27, 1614 to Count George Drugeth. In the letter Krupecki even suggests that similarly as in Krásny Brod, with the assistance of Count Esterházy, they declare Union in Mukachevo as well.⁸ Although this did not happen that day, according to the historians, it did happen the following day.

Bishop Basil Tarasovics was of great importance to the Union of Uzhorod. Bishop Basil accepted it “ad personam” in May, 1642 in the chapel of the imperial summer palace in Laxenburg, in the presence of Emperor Ferdinand II. and Bishop George Lippay, which was subsequently endorsed by Pope Urban VIII.⁹ The situation in the Muk-

- 5 J. Coranič, *Z dejín Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku*, České Budějovice, Sdružení sv. Jana Nepomuckého při Biskupství českobudějovickém, Centrum církevních dějin a dějin teologie Teologické fakulty Jihočeské univerzity v Českých Budějovicích, 2014, p. 42.
- 6 W. Bugel, *Ekleziologie Užhorodské únie a jejich dědiců na pozadí doby*, Olomouc, Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2003, p. 45.
- 7 J. Juvencius, *Historiae Societatis Jesu Pars Quinta – Tomus Posterior, Ab anno Christi MDXCI. ad MDCXVI. Auctore Josepho Juvencio Societatis ejusdem Sacerdote. Romae, Ex Typographia Georgii Plachi, Caelaturam & Characterum Fusoriam Profitentis, apud p. Marcum, 1710, p. 399.* Bazilovics incorrectly states the year 1612. J. Bazilovič, *Dejiny Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Uhorsku*, (Eds. M. Bizoňová – J. Coranič). Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2013, p. 157. Most historians, however, speaks of in 1614 relying on A. Hodinka. A. Hodinka, *Munkácsi Görög-katholikus Püspökség Története*, Budapest, Kiadja a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1909, p. 302.
- 8 Sapo, fond Drugeth from Humenne, inv. n. 828, 16/1614, box 331.
- 9 A. Hodinka, *A munkácsi görög szertartású püspökség okmánytára I. 1458 – 1715*. Ungvár, 1911. p. 90–93; M. Lacko, *The Union of Uzhorod*, Cleveland – Rome, Slovak Institute, 1976, p. 81 – 84.

achevo eparchy was complicated. While the western part of the eparchy, which was largely an area of mixed faiths, wanted to be united and thus on an equal footing with the Catholic Church; the eastern part, which was also the seat of the bishop, under the influence of Protestant princes, did not want to accept the union. Basil Tarasovics decided to go to Mukachevo and renounce Union to prevent Calvinization of the eparchy. In spite of all that, there was no formal renouncement of the Union, since Peter Parthenius Rotošinsky, proposed successor of Tarasovics, remained on the Drugeth estate. Following the death of George Drugeth, his wife and sister of the Bishop of Eger, Anna Jakusics, in December, 1645 invited her brother to Uzhorod for the funeral of John IX. Drugeth. That is where he met with Peter Parthenius Rotošinsky and Gabriel Kosovicky, another major proponent of the unification. After consulting, they sent out a letter to all priests with an invitation to meet and proclaim the Union. At that time Katarina Drugeth donated a missionary house in Uzhorod to both monks.¹⁰ April 24, 1646, on the Feast of St. George (the Latin church tradition), the patron saint of Bishop Jakusics, in the chapel of the Uzhorod Castle belonging to the Drugeth family, 63 of about 650 non-unified priests of the Greek-Slavic rite signed the document to adopt the Union. The Union was signed mainly by priests from the Drugeth estates in Uh, Zemplín and Saris County.¹¹ The document was probably prepared in advance, read on-site and signed by the priests in attendance:

„Nos infra scripti, nostro et Successoru nostroru nomine fatemur, quod nos Ill^m et R^m D. D. Georgium Jakusith etc Eppu Agrien etc eiusq Legitimos Successores in Eppatu Agrien, pro ueris et legitimis nostris Eppis, Ordinarijs, Praelatis, et Dioecesanis agnoscentes, ei uel ijs omnem debi-

10 P. Borza, *Kapitoly z dejín krestanstva. Od reformácie po 20. storočie*, Prešov, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, Gréckokatolícka teologická fakulta, 2011, p. 33.

11 Gy. Janka, *Az ezeréves egri egyházmegye és a görög katolikusok*, in *Athanasiana* 19 (2004), p. 150.

tum honorem et obedientiam, quantum iurisdictio Sprualis et Ecclscia ipsius, uel eor requirit, fide etia ac iuramento mediante Promittimus et spondemus. Nullum etia pro Ordinario nro Eppo aliu praeter dictu, uel dictos Ill^m et R^m Eppm uel Eppos habentes, quam diu in eiusdem uel eorundem Dioecesi permanserimus. A nullo praeterea sine eiusdem, uel eorundem consensu, ratihabitione, dimissiorialibus Ordinem ullum Sacru suscipere Parochias mutare, uel quippiam agere, quod ipsius iurisditioni contrauéniret atténtabimus. Eos etiam Superiores nostros Subordinatos siue Suffraganeos, Vicarios, siue Archidiaconos, quos id praefatus Ill^{mus} et R^{ms} Eppus uel Successores nobis proposuerint, pro ueris et legitimis Superioribus habituros fide nostra Christiana interueniente spondemus. In cuius rei maiorem firmitatem ac robur has manus nrae subscriptione et Sigillo munitas Iras dedimus. Vnguarini die 24 Apr. Anno 1646.¹²
[Signatures priests.]

Document translation:

We, the undersigned, are acting on our behalf and on behalf of our successors, that we recognize His Grace and His Excellency, Lord George Jakusics, Bishop of Eger, and his legitimate successors in the Eger Diocese as our true and legitimate bishop Ordinaries, prelates and diocesan's officials. Under oath, we pledge and promise to him or rather to all of them, honor that is due to them as well as spiritual and ecclesiastical obedience or any obedience that is due to them. Also, we do not consider as our Ordinary any other bishop except the aforementioned, His Grace and His Excellency, bishop or bishops, as long as we are part of his or their dioceses. And we will be mindful that without the consent, permission or dismissal of the said bishop or bishops, we will not accept any consecration, transfer to another parish or do anything contrary to this same jurisdiction. By confessing our true Christian faith, we promise that we will also acknowledge as our superiors the subordinate suf-

12 Sapo, fond Drugeth from Humenné, inv. n. 652, 8/1646, box 267. The document was identified May 4, 2016.

fragan, vicars, that is, archdeacons, that the aforementioned, His Grace and His Excellency bishop or his successors institute for us, as our true and legitimate superiors. As a further confirmation and to strengthen this promise, we attach our signatures and our seal. Uzhorod, April 24, 1646.

[Signatures priests.]

This document talks about the subordination of priests of the Greek-Slavic rite to the Bishop of Eger in all areas of church life, to accept the Bishop of Eger as their own and to reject any other bishop. This was mostly referring to Bishop Basil Tarasovics, then bishop of Mukachevo and Athanasius Krupecki, Bishop of Przemyśl. These priests who became part of the clergy of the bishopric of Eger, did not place any demands in writing with respect to the rite. The relationship between Bishops of Eger and Eastern Christians in the 18th century carried on in the same spirit of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, although during the reign of Bishop Francis Barkoci, the priests fell under the Latin rite.¹³ Conditions contained in the document suggest that the initiators of the whole unification were the priests of Greek-Slavic rite, and so they had to accept the conditions under which the clergy have become part of Eger bishopric:

- Accept the Bishop of Eger and his successors as their bishop;
- Accept the jurisdiction of Bishop of Eger over themselves and of their parishes in full;
- Refuse the prior and any other bishop;
- Accept such incorporation into the structure of the Eger bishopric, as determined by the bishop.

In spite of that, this text indirectly provides benefits that these priests expected from the Union. First, there was equality with the Eger Latin rite clergy because the document did not speak about sub-

13 Gy. Janka, *Az ezeréves egri egyházmegye és a görög katolikusok*, in *Athanasiana* 19. (2004) p. 153.

ordinating them to the Latin rite priests, but by subordinating themselves to the Bishop of Eger to the same extent as his priests did. The document also shows that these parishes should be managed by the suffragan bishop and vicars – archdeacons who would be assigned to them. Thus, they did not fully integrate into the structure of the Latin parish; they were to retain a certain autonomy. These conditions of the Union were fully realized in the case of the united parishes in Spis, where the priests formed a separate deanery and initially had the same rights as in the case of the Latin clergy. This was also the case in the rest of the Archeparchy of Esztergom.¹⁴

This act of incorporation of the priests of the Greek-Slavic rite in the Eger bishopric was confirmed by George Lippay, primate of Hungary, on May 14, 1648 and in September it was reaffirmed by the Hungarian synod of bishops in Trnava. That is where Parthenius demanded that united believers be placed under the king's protection.¹⁵ It is likely that even then Parthenius did not have the document. In 1652, this required a transcript of the process of entire Union known as *Documentum Uzhorodensis Unionis* which was addressed to Pope Innocent X:

“By the grace of Christ, elected most holy Father and universal Patriarch.

We priests of the holy Greek rite, inhabitants of the noble and apostolic kingdom of Hungary, situated through the Districts specified with our signature, realizing that the sacrament of the king is to be hidden, but that the works of God are to be revealed and to be shown to all peoples more clearly than the sun, seeing that they are such that through them the ineffable goodness and clemency of our most merciful God towards rational creatures is wont to be made manifest.

14 J. Coranič, *Z dejín Mukačevského gréckokatolíckeho biskupstva*, in *Roczniki teologiczno-pastoralne* 3. Limanowa : MM Limanowa, 2009, p. 103.

15 I. Rath, *Eparchie munkáčka od r. 1498 do nastoupení Tarasovičova r. 1634*, Praha, 1936, p. 49.

According to this principle and this angelic rule we declare to Your Holiness, we preach and we lift up to the heavens with titles of most devout praise before the whole world. What is that [that we declare]? The grace of our God and Saviour freely poured out among us, by which working in us and foretelling most lovingly the salvation of our souls, we, having abandoned and driven from our hearts the Greek schism, are restored and affianced again to the Immaculate Virgin Spouse of the Only-begotten Son of God, that is the holy Roman Church, hitherto abominated by us and held in hatred without any cause. This same return of ours, indeed, was accomplished in the year of salvation one thousand six hundred and forty-six, on the twenty-fourth day of April, while Ferdinand III the most sacred Emperor of the Romans was ruling, in the Latin castle-church of Uzhorod situated on the estate of the most illustrious Count George of Humenne, in this fashion:

The bishop of Mukachevo, Basil Tarasovics, who has already departed this life, when following the party that was both schismatical as well as heretical, he had broken the bond of holy Union, publicly abandoned the Catholic Church. The venerable father in Christ, George Jakusics, bishop of Eger, now resting in Christ, considering this, having with him the Reverend Basilian fathers summoned for this purpose, Father Peter Parthenius, who today is our bishop, and father Gabriel Kosovicky, most courteously invited us by letter to Uzhorod, and after seasonable discourse from the aforesaid Fathers about holy Union, he accomplished, with the Holy Spirit disposing us for it, what he purposed, and appointed the day dedicated to St. George the Martyr for making the profession of faith.

On that day we sixty-three priests came together and followed the aforementioned most Reverend Bishop of Eger to the church named above. So after the enactment of the mystery of the bloodless sacrifice performed in our Ruthenian tongue, and after sacramental expiation of their sins by some of the priests, we pronounced the profession of faith in an audible voice according to the prescribed formula, namely:

We believe all and everything that our Holy Mother the Roman Church bids us believe. We acknowledge that the most holy Father Innocent X is the universal Pastor of the Church of Christ and our Pastor, and we with our successor's desire and wish to depend on him in everything; with, however, the addition of these conditions:

- First: That it be permitted to us to retain the rite of the Greek Church;
- Second: To have a bishop elected by ourselves and confirmed by the Apostolic See;
- Third: To have free enjoyment of ecclesiastical immunities.

To these the most Reverend bishop acceded without difficulty. The whole of this, too, the most Illustrious Benedict Kisdi, Bishop of Eger, with his Vicar General, and the Reverend Father Thomas Jaszbereny, religious of the Society of Jesus, being present ratified in the year one thousand six hundred and forty-eight. This business of ours received very great support from the paternal solicitude both of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Primate of Hungary George Lippay, Archbishop of Esztergom, twice invoked by us through a mission undertaken by the aforesaid Reverend Basilian Fathers, and of the Most Reverend Bishop of Vacz, Matthias Tarnoczy also, to both of whom we are for ever obliged.

Bringing these events before the notice of Your Holiness we unan-
imously and humbly beg Your paternal benediction, the advance of
our cause and the confirmation of the Most Reverend father Peter
Parthenius elected by us as bishop.

In Uzhorod, in the year one thousand six hundred and fifty-two,
the fifteenth day of January.

The most humble servants of Your Holiness, priest of the Greek rite,
Alexius Ladomersky, archdeacon of Makovica
Stephen Andrejov, archdeacon of Spiš
Gregory Hostovicky, archdeacon of Humenné
Stephen, archdeacon of Seredne
Daniel Ivanovics, archdeacon of Uzh

Alexius Filipovics, archdeacon of Stropkov.²¹⁶

Currently, there are three Latin copies of this document – recensio Posoniensis (Bratislava 1655, 1711), recensio Viennensis (Vienna 1765) and recensio Agriensis (Eger 1767). Parthenius himself gave orders to have Bratislava's copy translated from the original Church Slavonic.

Content wise, there is a significant difference between the text of 1646 and that of 1652. In the context of the newly discovered document, the date. April 24, 1649, referred to in a document from 1652 does not seem wrong, as claimed by Michal Lacko SJ, but likely as a turning point in the development of the content of the Union. Following the death of Basil Tarasovics and George Jakusics, circumstances in the Eparchy of Mukachevo and the Eger bishopric changed as did the attitude of the clergy united to it, expressed in the formulation of three conditions of the Union. According to Joannik Bazilovics, these conditions were voiced again by Bishop Basil Tarasovics, when prior to his death, he once again renewed his unity with the Catholic Church. This directly contradicts the text of the declaration by priests in 1652, which speaks of Tarasovics as a non-unified bishop. As reported by Bazilovics, Parthenius on his own initiative, as Tarasovics appointed successor in the episcopate, on the third anniversary of the April 24, 1649 signing of the Union, called the priests to Uzhorod and once again, in much greater numbers; they adopted the Union, which was confirmed by five archdeacons in 1652. According to Bazilovics the reason for this re-confirmation of the Union were various riots.¹⁷ Unification conditions were similar to those of the Greek-Slavic believers in the Polish-Lithuanian State, approved by Pope Clement

16 J. Bazilovič, *Dejiny Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Uhorsku*, (Eds. M. Bizoňová – J. Coranič). Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2013, p. 62–63. Translation by: M. Lacko, *The Union of Užhorod*, Cleveland – Rome, Slovak Institute, 1976, p. 107–109.

17 J. Bazilovič, *Dejiny Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi v Uhorsku*, (Eds. M. Bizoňová – J. Coranič). Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2013, p. 62–69.

VIII on December 24, 1595 by the constitution *Magnus Dominus*.¹⁸ This change meant that from the original sixty priests confirming the decision of Tarasovics as well as the Parthenius, his successor, the number increased to four hundred priests not only from the Drugeth estates.

The document of the Union of Uzhorod, April 24, 1646, opened the way for the adoption of the declaration with the terms of April 24, 1649 and thus marked a significant milestone for Greek-Slavic believers. It was the beginning of a long journey for emancipation, which was crucial to maintaining its Greek-Slavic rite differences.

18 P. Šturák, *Brest-litovská únia, genéza jej uzatvorenia a dôsledky pre ďalší život Cirkvi*, (2. časť) in *Theologos – teologická revue*, 2013, vol. 15, n. 2, p. 108–110.