

# A tense USSR Ukraine welcomes APR 1991 Greek patriarch

Susan Viets reports from Lvov on the tens of thousands who cheered the triumphant return of a Greek Catholic cardinal from 53 years in exile

RESURRECTION came on Palm Sunday for Greek Catholics in the west Ukrainian city of Lvov, with the triumphal return of their patriarch, Cardinal Myruslav Lybachivsky, from exile in Rome to celebrate his first mass yesterday in the Greek Catholic seat, St George's.

Tens of thousands lined the carnation- and rose-strewn four-mile route from the airport to greet the cardinal on Saturday after he kissed the tarmac. He blessed them as he rode in a white Volga car covered with Palm Sunday pussy-willows by Greek Catholic believers shouting "glory" and singing the national hymn.

"We feel hopeful now... we've been waiting all our lives for someone to come back and help," explained one black-clad *babushka* from the tiny west Ukrainian village of Khkupilka, clutching a home-made pussy of pussy-willows and brightly coloured crepe paper behind the packed courtyard of St George's.

She and her friend did not give their names because one explained: "If we do, they'll come and break our windows...". The priest in a neighbouring village switched back from Ukrainian Orthodox to Greek Catholicism this year and a group of people beat him up.

With two national churches, the Greek Catholic and the Ukrainian Autoccephalous Orthodox, now reinstated alongside the long-time officially tolerated Ukrainian Orthodox church, inter-confessional tension is now rising higher in Ukraine.

Addressing a flag-waving crowd of 100,000 from the balcony of the opera house in central Lvov yesterday, Cardinal Lybachivsky, back for the first time since 1938, said the Synod that dissolved his church in 1946 was "invalid and uncanonical, and violated fundamental human rights".

An emotional cardinal told the crowd: "Forty-five years ago... that gathering passed a death sentence on our native Ukrainian church... but instead this native church of mine was resurrected and rose from the grave! Our church is risen!"

Nuns in black habits, and small boys, kneeled beneath gilded religious portraits in the Great Entrance of St George's as the cardinal blessed the communion bread and wine behind the sanctuary screen and thanked the 7,000 people who were packed inside "for maintaining your faith for four decades". Pigeons circled overhead outside the opera house while the cardinal stood under a banner of a white dove on a gilded background.

He told the crowd: "We shall never cease to work generously for the cause of Christ among our people as citizens of the sovereign Ukrainian state, headed by its legitimate authority, hoping that the Almighty Lord will allow our people to realize, in the not too distant future, that as yet unfulfilled dream of our grandparents and great-grandparents."

People poured into the huge square in front of the opera house carrying the national blue and yellow flag, some with the insignia of the pro-independence movement, Rukh, which rules the three west Ukrainian regions - Lvov, Ivano-Frankovsk and Ternopil - home for most of Ukraine's Greek Catholics. Next weekend they will meet again for a Greek Catholic Easter, which will be celebrated according to Eastern rites.