



HIGHLIGHT OF THE SOVIET POLICY REGARDING RELIGION IN THE PERIODICAL LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: - After the Bolsheviks came to power, their aggressive policies intensified in local territories. During the 20-30s of the past century, the Soviet government carried on the cruel policy, which was intended to make the local population irreligious. This article serves to illuminate those processes via periodical sources.

KEYWORDS: The Bolsheviks, the poor, the atheists, League of Militant Atheists, MTS (Machine-Tractor Station), opium.

INTRODUCTION

One cannot rate history without the help of sources. Because existing order tries to blur the event of the past. We can see that the same processes occur during the Soviet regime and sources serve as the primary data during the study of those processes. This article is dedicated to exploring political processes that occurred in the 20-30s of the past century through periodical materials.

After the Bolsheviks came to power and started building a socialistic society, they

struggled fiercely against religion not only to form a classless society but also to create a country of poor atheist people who could achieve anything with their power.

The Soviet government's attitude towards religion in Uzbekistan was widely propagandized and highlighted in the periodical literature.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

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The Soviet government started publishing a journal called "Atheists" to oppose the religion in Uzbekistan.

Since some articles and various information in this journal served the existing political system, they targeted religion. It clearly shows communists' viewpoint regarding religion in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, other periodical literature also propagandized against religion. Struggle against religion was one of the main objectives of the Communist party in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Process of propaganda against religion consisted of two parts:

1. Promotion part. It included lectures in clubs and "red teahouses".
2. Event part. It was composed of various events in the eve of holidays such as:
 - short lectures
 - theatrical plays
 - songs, which aimed to attract the population.

Communists viewed religion as their major enemy and oppression against religion became more and more vile. For this reason, they confronted religion under the slogans such as "Religion and religious organizations – enemies of cultural revolution" and "Undermining the damage of religion means directly supporting religious beliefs".

Multiple circles, "raikom"s and bureaus were formed under atheist organizations and cells in Tashkent and Kokand in 1925, after which the atheist movement started to gain power.

The Central organizational bureau of the League of Atheists held the First Congress of Atheists of the Republic of Uzbekistan, during which the Republic elected the Central Atheist Council to guide the atheist movement.

It was stated that "movement against the religion among the city workers, "kolkhoz" members, laborers of "sovkhoz" and "MTS" became so widespread during the fourth year of the first five-year period of social reconstruction that it increased 13 times compared to 1923. League of Militant Atheists consisted of 12 000 members in 1928, 19 000 in 1929, 40 000 in 1930, 90 000 in 1931, 160 000 in 1932". Following directives were given in order to finish the mass collectivization process in 1932-1933:

1. Creation of LMA cells under each "kolkhoz", "sovkhoz" and "MTS".
2. Elimination of obstacles that oppose the struggle against religion in countryside.
3. Replacement of Arabic alphabet with Latin alphabet.

Bolsheviks attempted to dereligionize not only the population of Republic's center – Tashkent, but also the population of distant regions.

Even though propaganda against religion in the Soviet Republic and Ukraine started in 1922-1923, this process began in Uzbekistan only 2 years earlier. However, this short period was enough to spread atheism widely among laborers. We have more than 10 000 "leagues of militant atheists". However, despite that, starting from October 15 of this year, the cultural campaign is announced to eliminate illiteracy in Uzbekistan. Objectives of atheists during the cultural campaign against illiteracy were:

1. Cells of the League of Atheists should thoroughly explain the importance of the cultural campaign in ending illiteracy.
2. Educated atheist should teach uneducated people.

3. Register illiterate workers in local districts or towns and organize literacy centers.
4. Arrange exhibitions and corners under the theme of “Eliminating illiteracy and religion” or “Illiteracy of the population is the enemy of culture”.

They operated under those guidelines and viewed religion as a poison, stating, “Religion is the opium of the people”. They struggled fiercely against religion and followed the baseless idea of the communists’ “great genius” who said the following about religion’s social roots: “Religion is a weapon of enslavement of workers in the hands of exploiter classes”.

The central committee of the communist party of Uzbekistan, on the 6th general meeting, demanded to fulfill the decree of “Whoever supports religion, shall not be accepted to the party”.

Communists considered anyone of any religion who lived according to religious beliefs as the enemies of the Soviet regime. For this reason, they confiscated all properties of that person, before sentencing to death under baseless allegations.

In a trial held against Numonkhon eshon in Bekhbudiy (Karshi), his lands (almost 19 hectares), barley crops (approximately 2320 kilogram), two horses and an ox were confiscated and sentries were appointed to a house where he lived. After that, one of the persons who obtained his lands suddenly died, while the other one became paralyzed. However, politicians, in order to distract the population, accused Numonkhon eshon of murder by poisoning and sentenced him to death, while his son was exiled from Kashkadarya.

Soviet government considered religion as the main obstacle in the way of attracting people

to agriculture in order to become independent from cotton as soon as possible, so false information was spread in order to confuse population: “People who fast and eat disorderly get sick. Those people become incapable of working”. Soviet government was planning to create millions of cheap workforce that could provide raw cotton, which was valued as highly as gold during that period – everything under the pretense of freeing local women and girls from “the curse of religion” while fighting against religion at the same time.

Hundreds of mosques, “madrasa”s and historical buildings were destroyed because of “cultural revolution” movement and some of them were transformed into propaganda centers of communists.

Written sources state: “Almost no mosques are left in Turkestan. Our biggest and oldest “madrasa”s and mosques are turned into communist clubs and the images of Lenin and others are hung on the entrance “peshtak”s. One day in Andijan, religious people who were going to morning pray were imprisoned, while imam and sufi were accused of “gathering people against the government” and exiled to Siberia. Such cases happened everywhere”.

Communists concentrated on bringing up the local youth in the spirit of communism. Periodical literature provides a lot of information regarding this issue.

Communitic propaganda declared: “It is impossible to turn ordinary workers into the conscious and active builders of classless socialistic society without fighting against customs and traditions, without eliminating bourgeois vestiges from economy and people’s minds. This slogan should guide all of our actions”.

CONCLUSION

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Ultimately, needless to say that the Islam was strongly persecuted during the Soviet regime. Communists put their chauvinistic policies into practice by fighting against religion. Periodical literature of that period contains various information about this issue. One of the most important objectives of modern times is to explore the past with the help of historical materials and convey results to our nation, especially, our youth. This will help our new generations to fully comprehend the history and draw appropriate conclusions.

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