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Materials of the state archive of Karaganda region on the religious policy of the Soviet state in 1970–1980

In the article, an attempt was made to characterize the religious policy of the Soviet state in the 1970s-1980s on the basis of materials from the State Archives of the Karaganda Region (GAKO). On the example of reports and information reports of the Authorized Council for Religious Affairs in the Karaganda region, the author analyzes the activities of the religious associations of the region. The author concludes that the religious policy of the state in a particular region is typical for the whole country of the Soviets. The author also believes that the religious policy of the Soviet state in the 1970s-1980s was of a dual nature. On the one hand, the general line of the party and government remained the same - it was an uncompromising struggle against religion, and on the other hand, the state course was nevertheless substantially adjusted in order to build state-religious relations on the principles of compromises and stability.

Keywords: Soviet state, religious policy, anti-religious propaganda, atheism, religious associations.

In the 1970-1980-ies in the Soviet Union, religious policy is considered more loyal than previous periods in the history of the country. Indeed, there wasn't strict administrative control over the activities of religious organizations, revelatory articles in the press, and especially the mass closure of churches and mosques. But some stability in the relations did not exclude oppression of believers at the household level. Of course, there was no open confrontation, but control over the Church structures did not weaken and going beyond the existing legislation was prevented in every possible way. As Russian historian A.A. Fedotov wrote the persecution abated, «but continued in a milder form» [1; 145-146].

According to the law «On religious associations» (1975) religious organizations regain the rights of a legal entity and were able to buy necessary household items, but didn't have rights to their buildings. It was given to believers only for use. Along with positive changes in the life of believers and religious organizations, especially with regard to property rights, state bodies still had the right to interfere in the activities of the religious community [2; 397-399]. Thus, in the work of the Council for religious affairs, so-called preventive conversations with representatives of unregistered religious groups were practiced. They were invited by postal telegrams signed personally by the Commissioner of the Council for such conversations. There are several preserved protocols of such preventive conversations in the State archive of Karaganda region. Such discussions were usually attended by representatives of the local Executive Committee, the Chairman of the Commission who was responsible to assist to the Executive Committee on observance of the legislation on cults. For example, there was conversation with a senior preacher of the unregistered group of the early Mennonites schismatic V.Ya.Enns with regard to the breach of Soviet laws on religious cults. In the Protocol of warning is written that 10 February 1970, Mr. V.Ya.Enns were invited to the Executive Committee to the Commissioner of the Council for religious Affairs comrade Zh. Rakhimov Conversation was held in the presence of Deputy Chairman of the Karaganda city Executive Committee comrade P.D. Vystrobskiy.

During conversation it turned out that Mr. V.Ya. Enns travelled in the surrounding areas of our region and outside the region with the aim of religious excitement among the population and the dissemination of religious literature. On May 1-2, 1969 he visited the Alma-Ata with 14 children and he was one of the organizers of the meeting of religious children, where about 500 people were involved.

Mr. V.Ya. Enns in conjunction with the pastor of the Karaganda Evangelical Christians-Baptists-schismatic D.D. Classen illegally held christening of baptist-schismatics and mennonits-schismatics in natural waters of Tel'manskiy area and in Karaganda in summer 1969. During the conversation it was found out the establishment of Sunday children's religious school. Mr V.Ya. Enns, without denying the organization of a religious children's school, categorically refused to name the teacher of a religious school, stating that he was ready to be criminalized for religion. Then he said that he was well aware of existing legislation on religious beliefs. By the decision of the administrative Commission of the Executive Committee of Oktyabrsky district he was fined for 50 rubles for illegal religious worship. He stated that he is ready to take responsibil-

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ity for organizing a religious children's school. Our brothers and sisters in faith have shown care and will always take care of the «prisoners» and their «families» [3; l.24]. Enns refused to sign the protocol. The Protocol was signed by the Commissioner of the Council for religious affairs of Karaganda region Zh. Rakhimov. By the way, Enns' assistant D. D. Classen was prosecuted under article 130, part 2, and article 200 part 1 of the criminal code of the Kazakh SSR in November 1970 and in the first half of January of 1971, was convicted for a period of 3 years [4; L. 8].

This Protocol shows that there is no strong fear of priests and believers in the face of state bodies in the Brezhnev period, as it was in the previous periods of the country of the Soviets. This may concern that the laws on cults were loyal and did not provide strict measures against violators of the law. We assume that it was morally difficult for believers, because there was no feeling of complete freedom. There was a regular control by state bodies in their work and daily life with the help of propaganda created in the society a negative image of believers.

This right was given to them by the Constitution of 1977, in the 52nd article religious associations had only the right to worship, and the state still had the right to interfere in the internal life of religious associations and control over its activities: «citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess any religion or not to profess any, to send religious cults or conduct atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hatred in connection with religious beliefs is prohibited. The Church in the USSR is separated from the state and the school from the Church» [5]. Local authorities exercised control over the financial affairs of churches and mosques. This was introduced receipts and salaries, financial statements etc.

The Council on religious affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers (established in 1965 as a result of the merger of the Council for the Russian Orthodox Church and the Council on religious cults) was headed by V.A. Kuroyedov from the beginning of its foundation until 1984. In the Union and Autonomous republics, territories and regions, the Council was assisted by Commissioners, together with the Executive committees of the local councils of people's deputies, who monitored the observance of Soviet legislation on cults by religious associations and believers.

According to experts' opinion, during Brezhnev's period (1965–1982) on the territory of the Soviet Union on the legal position were following religious organizations: the Russian Orthodox Church: 1966 y.–7523, 1981 – 7007 parishes (the official reason for the closure of parishes is the reduction of the village population);

By the early 1980s, the Georgian Orthodox Church had 45 parishes located in the territory of the Georgian SSR; by the early 1970's, there were more than 300 old believer parishes in the USSR; the Catholic Church in the USSR in the 1970's had 1070 communities mainly in places of compact residence of Catholics (Lithuania, Latvia, Western regions of Belarus, the Ukraine and Moldova); The Armenian Apostolic Church in the early 1980-ies had 38 churches on the territory of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic; All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the early 1970-ies had about 3 thousand communities, and emerged from its membership in 1961 of the Council of churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and, by the way, is not recognized by the authorities, there were over 400 (the split was caused by disagreement of some communities with the political line of the leadership SEJM, who was accused of compromise with the authorities); Evangelical Lutheran Church operated mainly in the territory of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania and numbered in the mid-1980s to about 580 communities; in the mid 1980-ies the Methodist Church in the Soviet Union had 15 prishes and operated on the territory of Estonia; the Mennonite communities in the mid-1980s were represented by 53 registered communities (100 unregistered communities) and united ethnic Germans living in Western Siberia and Central Asian republics; by the mid-1980s there were 235 registered organizations of Christians of Evangelical faith (Pentecostals) in the Soviet Union; the number of seventh-day Adventist communities who were united in 1981 increased from 159 in 1968 to 342 by the mid-1980s; registered Judaist associations by the mid-1970s were 181 and almost the same number of unregistered; 2 registered Buddhist organizations and about15 were operating without any registration; Islam being the second largest religious in the Soviet Union in 1968 consisted of 1091 registered mosques in the Muslim regions – the Volga region, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Transcaucasia, but there was still a large number of unregistered communities, the mosques which operate at homes and madrasas operating under the guise of teahouses and guest houses. It should be noted that "the religious situation in Muslim regions» was significantly influenced by the national factor. Firstly, the practice of Islam has helped to preserve the national identity of the population in areas where Muslims have historically been assimilated, for example, in the Volga region. Secondly, traditional cultures and customs have largely been preserved in Muslim regions. This ensured the relative stability of Islam in an atheistic society. In addition, the clan-related relations that persisted in a number of Muslim regions significantly neutralized the rigidity of the general line of the Central leadership of the country» [6].

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During 1960–1970-ies illegally acting communities of Jehovah's witnesses, true Orthodox Christians, the knights, Innokentiev's followers, adventists-reformists, whips in the USSR. There were no mass persecutions against them, but until the mid-1980s the struggle against illegal religious organizations and groups continued.

Within the framework of monitoring the observance of legislation on cults, the authorities have taken administrative and criminal measures against them: fines, searches, arrests, trials, ideological campaigns by party and public bodies.

Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Karaganda region Z. Inkarbayev in his reference «On the state of the religious situation and the major weaknesses of the control over observance of legislation about cults in the region», noted, that there are significant shortcomings and omissions in monitoring compliance with the law on cults. «The religious situation in the region remains difficult. 1 January 1987, there were 49 religious associations and groups of nine denominations, 36 of which were registered with the authorities as of 1 January 1987. 13 registered religious communities and groups, which consist of 700 believers, operate without registration in the authorities, some of which are in extremist positions. However, in a number of cities and districts of the region (Karaganda, Temirtau, Shakhtinsk, Nurinsky, Telman districts), the work on streamlining the network of religious communities and groups, and suppressing the actions of religious extremists is not enough.

Law enforcement agencies are poorly involved in the fight against religious extremists. Rites have increased significantly in the Russian Orthodox Church. The number of christening has increased by 14 percent over the past decade, and 21 percent among school-aged children. The number of funerals performed according to the Church rite is also kept at a high level. So, the number of private funeral service was 1246 in 1986. Along with 17 registered servants of cults at 2 Muslim mosques their illegal activities continue more than 20 self-proclaimed mullahs in the region. Essentially, all the dead are buried with the participation of mullahs. A major concern causes the activities of religious communities and groups of Protestant religion, most of which consists of citizens of German nationality. Currently, there are 32 sectarian groups, ten of which are entirely composed of citizens of this nationality. The number of religious groups are increased has been observed. Over the past five years, the number of believers has increased by almost 300, with an increase at the expense of young people. The Executive committees of the city and district Councils of people's deputies do not delve deeply into the processes taking place in religions, do not conduct proper work against the activation of the influence of servants' cults and religious activists on the population and, above all, young people and children. New Soviet ceremonies and holidays are poorly implemented in the region. In this regard, the regional Commission for the promotion and introduction of new Soviet holidays and rituals has not rebuilt its work» [7; 322-324]. This reference characterized the work of the authorized bodies for the implementation of directives on the normalization of the religious situation in the Karaganda region. The situation was unsatisfactory according to the head of the Executive Committee of the region, who insisted on the adoption of recommendations and guidelines for improving the work. First of all, it was recommended that the authorized state bodies should ensure that the legislation on cults is not violated, to establish systematic work on atheistic propaganda, and to introduce new Soviet holidays and rituals more widely. Executive committees, regional department of housing and communal services and their divisions in cities and districts were given the setting to monitor the implementation of the order of the Ministry of agriculture of the Republic № 2 from 7. 01. 1972, which prohibited the construction of tombstones with religious symbols in violation of established norms, preventing the emergence of so-called ancestral cemeteries [7; 324-326]. Despite the implementation of the General line of the party and the government for an uncompromising struggle against religion, the facts show that the years in power of Leonid Brezhnev were for religious associations and believers the best time in the entire Soviet period. Statistics shows that during this period the number of clergy has increased, especially due to young professionals, and the composition of parishioners who observed the educational level increased. Religious organizations were able to restore their contacts abroad and gradually revive theological traditions.

Also, the Soviet authorities tried to solve conflicts with religious organizations and believers without excessive publicity, as it was necessary to maintain a certain image of the country in the international arena. It was particularly difficult to decide on a causeless closure of a Church or mosque. Moreover, religious organizations were participants in the peace-building activities of the state, as of their income is required to allocate money to the Peace Fund (for active participation in the Soviet Peace Fund certificates of honor were awarded to servants' cults of all registered religious communities of the country). But the task of building a non-religious society still required the Council for religious affairs to carefully monitor the fact that the organization of religion did not go beyond the Soviet legislation. The Commission on check of activity of

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religious organizations of the planning and carried out raids. As well as N. S. Khrushchev times in the basis of anti-religious propaganda was put scientific atheism and therefore to explain to Soviet citizens «pernicious of religion» lectures were given by specialists of higher educational institutions, lecturers of the society «Knowledge». Party and state bodies were obliged to include in the plan of their activities items on anti-religious propaganda. Heads of state bodies, enterprises and institutions monitored the «atheistic» purity of their employees. There were times when they could dismiss a person from work only for the fact that he christened his child.

According to Soviet laws governing folk education, parents were obliged to educate their children in the spirit of Communist morality, which was based on atheistic views. Therefore, the desire of some parents to teach their children religion has led to punishment and even deprivation of parental rights. The authorities were sure that the children did not attend religious institutions. If this happened, not only parents, teachers, but also clergy were punished. Many of the clergy were affected by their associates, who cooperated with the authorities and provided information about the life of the community. Despite the fact that the authorities tried to punish believers only in extreme cases, people were not often put in prison for the faith. For example, a high-profile case of a Soviet teacher, Orthodox dissident B.V. Talantov, whom the authorities punish for his religious beliefs. He was accused of anti-Soviet activities and sentenced in 1969 (died in prison hospital of a heart attack in 1971). By the way, B.V. Talent specifically studied in University the principles of Marxism-Leninism in order to oppose their ideological opponents. Unfortunately, the state officials responsible for control of religious associations and believers, did not seek to study professionaly religions, and so often made mistakes while making crucial decisions [8]. One of the most popular forms of violence against so-called religious dissidents was forced incarceration in a psychiatric hospital. Too active «advocates of faith» were dismissed from work, summoned to the CSS (KGB), etc.

Various social organizations were mandated to assist the state in conducting atheistic propaganda. In particular, Authorized Council for religious Affairs of Karaganda region Rakhimov says in his information report for 1970, that the district women's Council on a regular basis organized checks of anti-religious work directly at enterprises, organizations, institutions, and the Chairman of the women's Council held seminars on this issue. Great attention of the district Commission on the observance of Legislation on cults, together with the Commission to introduce into the life of the new rites paid attention to the systematic carrying out of solemn wedding. Great attention of the district Commission on the observance of Legislation on cults, together with the Commission to introduce into the life of the new rites paid attention to the systematic carrying out of solemn wedding. As a result, for 9 months of 1970 there were 41 registrations: newborn – 2, holidays, presentation of passports – 4 and others. Album «the introduction of new rites» was decorated. Traditional ceremonial send-off of recruits in the Soviet Army with the participation of managers of mines, enterprises, institutions, labor veterans and participants of the Great Patriotic War. There were evenings of age in comprehensive schools [4; 17-21].

In addition to the district women's Council in the anti-religious campaign Commission for monitoring and compliance of the Soviet legislation on cults at the Council for religious Affairs of the Karaganda regional Executive Committee was attended. In one of the reports of this Commission for the 1970s, it is written that the Commission monitors members of the cult and religious associations. In one of the reports of this Commission for the 1970s, is written that the Commission monitors members of the cult and religious associations. At some enterprises, educational institutions assets were created among members of the commission and deputies who directly conducted individual work with believers [4; 12-14, 16].

In General, the main strategy of the state in the fight against religion was based on the creation of obstacles to their full-fledged activities: reducing the number of communities, preventing the opening of new parishes and religious schools, countering increasing of the number of members in religious organizations, as well as the implementation of permanent control over the activities of communities. The authorities fought with all their capabilities against their competitors in terms of solving social problems. At the legislative level, the social activities of religious associations were prohibited, since it was believed that, firstly, they were not included in the list of religious needs, and secondly, it was believed that in the Soviet Union all social problems were solved and religious associations should not gain authority in society by solving problems that do not exist. The country did not prohibit religious preaching, if it takes place in the premises of religious organizations. Violation of this rule was punished by the authorities, especially if the sermon was of a political nature and was directed against the state ideology and politics.

Violation of this rule was punished by the authorities, especially if the sermon was of a political nature and was directed against the state ideology and politics. In turn, the clergy and leaders of religious associa-

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tions tried not to conflict with the authorities, showed loyalty and sometimes punished those who spoke with anti-state appeals to the faithful.

If during Stalin's and Khrushchev's times the Soviet authorities did not care about the opinion of the world community about the fate of Soviet believers, but during of L.I. Brezhnev and even more M.S. Gorbachev this opinion was taken into account. After all, the USSR has positioned itself as a democratic state in which human rights are not violated in terms of observance of the principle of freedom of conscience. After the signing of the Helsinki act (1975) by the Soviet Union, the country had to assume additional obligations to respect human rights. And this meant, that it isn't necessary to demonstrate zeal in the fight against religion and its followers. At the legislative level, the world community has demonstrated loyalty to the faithful. In particular, in 1975, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of 23 of June returned religious associations legal status partially, taken away from them by the Decision of the VCIK and the SNK of April 8, 1929 [6].

The Soviet government hoped that with the development of science and technology and through competent anti-religious propaganda, religion would gradually disappear itself. But history has shown the opposite and the revival of the religious identity of Soviet citizens in the late 1980-ies.

The Soviet authorities often confused folk traditions with religious rites. For example, such customs of the Kazakh people as payment of kalym, abduction of the girl, etc. were attributed to Muslim people and respectively condemned. While those who know the canons of Islam could explain that the paradox was that Islam also condemned the abduction of a girl without her consent. So, the attack on the religious feelings of Soviet citizens often looked like the attack on the national traditions and customs [9].

In quantitative terms, there were no many believers in the Soviet society in 1970–1980th years, especially those who demonstrate their religion. The relation of society was different: officials followed them on duty, and ordinary citizens' relation was indifferent to them. A resident of Temirtau V.V. Gorovoy recalls: «In the 1970s and 1980s, the authorities were more loyal to religion than in previous years. So I was not a witness to the fact that some of my friends have suffered because of their faith. I was not a religious man, but assumed that there is some higher beginning. Among my relatives and acquaintances there were no servants of the church. I didn't go to the church, but once I went to a small church and I was surprised by the presence of a large number of icons and portraits of saints on the walls. In the second half of the 1980s, I taught history at the University and, as a result of my professional activities, I became familiar with the contents of the Bible. Due to the fact that the parents were atheists, there was no religious literature at home, but the religious feast of Easter celebrated by baked cakes, painted eggs, etc. My grandmother was a religious person, but she believed at the household level and did not try to introduce her grandchildren to religion. In general, I was not interested in religious issues and the circumstances of the activities of religious organizations during this period. Matters of religion was interested me from professional viewpoint. In my opinion, the Soviet people treated their faithful fellow citizens patiently, we can say neutral. During «Brezhnev» period there wasn't such a big atheistic fanaticism among the population. Almost all religious events riddled with atheistic propaganda, but they had no impact on me» [10].

In his memories, a resident of Karaganda S.A. Akhmetov says that in his youth religion was not available to him, youth of the 70s did not even know about location of mosques and churches. Among his relatives and acquaintances there were no clergymen and believers, and the theme of religion was not relevant. Therefore, there was no interest to believers. Believers themselves tried not to stand out among other people and therefore did not advertise their religious feelings. Religious holidays weren't celebrated in his house. Donations to the mosque were not made until the 1990s.

Mosque didn't attend respectively. The rite of circumcision took place, but I didn't have any idea that the ceremony has a religious nature. I didn't take part in atheistic events and even I had no idea about believers' difficulties which they faced in the city and in the whole country. But I knew that it was free to say that you were a believer, but not desirable. I didn't face with the religious literature, but I knew that parents and older people have it. Representatives of other religions present in the religious life of the city were not met [10].

As can be seen from these memories, during 70–80-ies Soviet citizens had a «vague» idea of the life of believers and religious associations, but did not show activity in atheistic events. It is possible to tell that the majority of citizens of the Karaganda region had an indirect relation to religion – religious holidays were celebrated, but at the same time didn't consider themselves as believers. Perhaps religious holidays were perceived as a tribute to the traditions and customs of their people, but there was no true religion in their minds. This religious situation shows that the anti-religious propaganda and the systematic struggle against the faithful have practically turned the Soviet society into an atheistic one.

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The attitude of the authorities towards religion during Gorbachev's period was more than cool, especially during 1985 to 1987, when General Secretary of the Central Committee called for vigilance against manifestations of religiosity. But perestroika processes also touched issues of religion. As a result, there was a transition from atheistic propaganda to cooperation with religious organizations. For example, a number of activities have been carried out at the legislative and social levels: in 1988, the Council of religious Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers abolished the rule that prayer buildings are the property of the state; in 1989, penitentiary institutions were allowed to cooperate with religious organizations and servants of cults, and as a result, prisoners were entitled to participate in religious ceremonies, and religious associations could provide assistance to convicts; in 1990, the USSR law «on freedom of conscience and religious organizations» was adopted, which radically changed the nature of relations between the state and religious organizations. In particular, in accordance with article 5, support for atheism by the state was terminated («the state does not fund the activities of religious organizations and activities to promote atheism»). Religious organizations were also granted the right of a legal entity and were allowed to make international contacts independently, without state mediation. In some Union republics religious legislation has been liberalized. For example, under the freedom of religion act (1990), citizens were allowed to study religion as an optional subject in educational institutions. And in October 1990 the famous Decree on the separation of Church and state and school from Church was even canceled [11; 23].

Thus, it can be argued that the religious policy of the Soviet state in the 1970–1980-ies was dual. On the one hand, the General line of the party and the government remained the same – it is an uncompromising struggle against religion, and on the other hand, the state course was still significantly adjusted in order to build state-religious relations on the principles of compromise and stability. During this period, the authorities and the atheistic part of Soviet society understood that the entire previous period of struggle against religion had led to nothing, and people's faith could not be eradicated. In addition, over time, religious associations loyal to the state to some extent became part of Soviet society. In addition religious associations which were loyal to the state became part of Soviet society.

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1970–1980 жылдардағы Кеңес Одағының діни саясаты бойынша Қарағанды облысының Мемлекеттік мұрағаттарының материалдары

Мақалада Қарағанды облысының Мемлекеттік мұрағаты 1970–1980 жылдары Кеңес мемлекетінің діни саясатын сипаттайтын материалдарына жан-жақты талдау жасалды. Есептер мен Қарағанды облысының кеңесінің Дін істері жөніндегі уәкіл ақпараттық сұраулар мысалында авторлар облыстың

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діни бірлестіктердің қызметіне сипаттама берді. Мақала авторлары нақты саладағы мемлекеттің діни саясаттың негізі Кеңестердің бүкіл ел үшін тән деген қорытындыға келді. Олар 1970–1980 жылдардағы Кеңестік мемлекеттің діни саясаты екіжақты сипатқа ие деп есептейді. Бір жағынан, партия мен үкімет жалпы желісі өзгеріссіз қалды — бұл дінге қарсы ымырасыз күрес болып табылады, бірақ, екінші жағынан, мемлекеттік мөлшерлемесі әлі айтарлықтай ымыра мен тұрақтылық қағидаттары бойынша мемлекеттік-діни қарым-қатынастарды құру үшін түзетілді.

Кілт сөздер: Кеңес үкіметі, діни саясат, дінге қарсы үгіт-насихат, атеизм, діни бірлестіктер.

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Материалы Государственного архива Карагандинской области о религиозной политике Советского государства в 1970–1980-е годы

В статье на основе материалов Государственного архива Карагандинской области была предпринята попытка охарактеризовать религиозную политику Советского государства в 1970–1980-е годы. На примере отчетов и информационных справок Уполномоченного совета по делам религии по Карагандинской области авторами проанализирована деятельность религиозных объединений области. Авторами сделан вывод о том, что основа религиозной политики государства в отдельно взятой области является типичной для всей страны Советов. Также авторы считают, что религиозная политика Советского государства в 1970–1980-е годы носила двойственный характер. С одной стороны, генеральная линия партии и правительства оставалась прежней — это бескомпромиссная борьба с религией, а с другой — государственный курс все же был существенно скорректирован для того, чтобы выстроить государственно-религиозные отношения на принципах компромиссов и стабильности.

Ключевые слова: Советское государство, религиозная политика, антирелигиозная пропаганда, атеизм, религиозные объединения.

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