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Iurii DANYLETS

PhD (History), Associate Professor of the Department of the Archaeology, Ethnology and Cultural Studies, Uzhhorod National University, 3 Narodna Square, Uzhhorod, Ukraine, postal code 01030 (jurij.danilec@uzhnu.edu.ua)

ORCID: 0000-0003-0592-3907

Researcher ID: P-6617-2017

Scopus-Author ID: 56032318300

Vasyl MISHCHANYN

PhD hab. (History), Associate Professor of the Department of Modern History of Ukraine and Foreign Countries, Uzhhorod National University, 3 Narodna Square, Uzhhorod, Ukraine, postal code 01030 (vasyl.mistchanyn@uzhnu.edu.ua)

ORCID: 0000-0002-1705-0333

Researcher ID: AAY-5123-2021

Scopus-Author ID: 56031499200

Юрій ДАНИЛЕЦЬ

кандидат історичних наук, доцент кафедри археології, етнології та культурології, ДВНЗ “Ужгородський національний університет”, пл. Народна, 3, м. Ужгород, Україна, індекс 88000 (jurij.danilec@uzhnu.edu.ua)

Василь МІЩАНИН

доктор історичних наук, доцент кафедри модерної історії України та зарубіжних країн ДВНЗ “Ужгородський національний університет”, пл. Народна, 3, м. Ужгород, Україна, індекс 88000 (vasyl.mistchanyn@uzhnu.edu.ua)

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THE ANTI-RELIGIOUS POLICY OF THE SOVIET STATE IN TRANSCARPATHIA IN 1953

Abstract. The purpose of the study is to analyze the religious policy of the Soviet authorities in Transcarpathia concerning confessions in the region during the final stage of Stalinism and trace the beginnings of the intensification of the anti-religious campaign in 1953. To analyze the activities of the republican and regional commissioners (in the affairs of religious cults and in the affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church) in implementing the religious policy of the Soviet Union center, the reaction of certain denominations leaders to the authorities actions, (non)reception of atheistic propaganda and agitation by the population. **The research methodology** is based on the principles of historicism, systematicity, scientificity, verification, authorial objectivity, as well as the use of general scientific (analysis, synthesis,

generalization), special and historical (historical and typological, historical and systemic) methods. **The scientific novelty** consists in the attempt to analyze one of the most difficult stages of the state-church relations of the Soviet period in the multi-confessional Transcarpathia. **The Conclusions.** The religious situation in Transcarpathia was difficult during the final period of Stalinism. In 1949, the Greek Catholic Church, one of the largest denominations in the region, was liquidated by the Soviet state by force. Part of the Greek-Catholic priesthood “reunited” with the Orthodox Church, part officially switched to civilian work, continuing to perform religious rites confidentially. More than a hundred priests were sentenced to long prison terms. Having resolved the issue with the Greek Catholic Church, the authorities tried to establish a complete control over the remaining denominations. At that time, in particular, the largest was the Orthodox denomination, which in 1945 left the Serbian Orthodox Church and came under the jurisdiction of the Ruska Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church also maintained a fairly strong position. At that time the main task of the communist government was to “reduce the religiosity of the population”. Already at the end of 1952 and at the beginning of 1953, the authorities took active actions. At the regional, district, and local levels, lecturers conducted hundreds of lectures on natural and scientific, anti-religious topics, showed films, and held explanatory talks. The first anti-religious publications appeared in the regional press. It should be noted that there was some progress in anti-religious work (going to work during religious holidays, 100% school attendance), however, this campaign did not achieve the predicted results. The Bolsheviks never succeeded in transforming the worldview of the population of Transcarpathia into a purely atheistic one.

Key words: the USSR, Zakarpattia region, the Soviet power, anti-religious policy, church, priests, lectures.

(АНТИ)РЕЛІГІЙНА ПОЛІТИКА РАДЯНСЬКОЇ ДЕРЖАВИ НА ЗАКАРПАТТІ В 1953 р.

Анотація. Мета дослідження – дослідити релігійну політику радянської влади на Закарпатті стосовно конфесій краю завершального етапу сталінізми та прослідкувати початки активізації антирелігійної кампанії у 1953 р. Розглянути діяльність республіканських та обласних уповноважених (у справах релігійних культів та у справах РПЦ) у втіленні релігійної політики союзного центру, реакцію керівників окремих конфесій на дії влади, (не)сприйняття населенням атеїстичної пропаганди і агітації. **Методологія дослідження** базується на принципах історизму, системності, науковості, верифікації, авторської об’єктивності, а також на використанні загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, узагальнення) і спеціально-історичних (історико-типологічний, історико-системний) методів. **Наукова новизна** полягає у спробі дослідити один із найскладніших етапів державно-церковних відносин радянського періоду в багатоконфесійному Закарпатті. **Висновки.** Релігійна ситуація на Закарпатті завершального періоду сталінізми була складною. У 1949 р. у краї радянською державою силовими методами було ліквідовано греко-католицьку церкву – одну з найбільших конфесій краю. Частина греко-католицького священства “возз’єдналася” з православною церквою, частина офіційно перейшла на цивільну роботу, продовжуючи таємно виконувати релігійні обряди. Більше сотні священників було засуджено на тривалі терміни ув’язнення. Розв’язавши питання з греко-католицькою церквою, влада намагається встановити цілковитий контроль над рештою конфесій. Зокрема, найбільшою на цей час стала православна конфесія, яка в 1945 р. вийшла з підпорядкування Сербської православної церкви і перейшла в юрисдикцію Руської православної церкви. Доволі сильні позиції зберігала й римо-католицька церква. Тепер головним завданням комуністичної влади стало “зменшення релігійності населення”. Вже наприкінці 1952 р. на початку 1953 р. влада переходить до активних дій. На обласному, окружному та місцевому рівнях лектори читають сотні лекцій на природничо-науковій й антирелігійній теми, демонструють кінофільми, проводять роз’яснювальні бесіди. В обласній пресі з’являються перші публікації на антирелігійну тематику. Доцільно відзначити, що певні здобутки в антирелігійній роботі все ж були (вихід на роботу під час релігійних свят, стовідсоткова відвідуваність учнями шкіл), проте прогнозованих результатів ця кампанія не досягла. Трансформувати світогляд населення Закарпаття на суцільно атеїстичний більшовикам так і не вдалося.

Ключові слова: СРСР, Закарпатська область, радянська влада, антирелігійна політика, церква, священники, лекції.

The Problem Statement. Transcarpathia is known for its multi-ethnicity and multi-religiousness. The process of Sovietization of the region, which began in October of 1944 there, when the Red Army ousted the Hungarian-German invaders, entered its active phase in January of 1946, when Transcarpathian Region was created, a constituent administrative unit of the Ukrainian SSR (the USSR). The communist government made every effort to integrate the region into the Soviet Union as soon as possible. Religious policy was not an exception. We agree with the researcher D. Kostyuk that “during the existence of the Soviet Union, the authorities tried to control all aspects of a social life, including a spiritual one, and the Church was under the close attention of the state leadership” (Kostyuk, 2020, p. 80).

The Analysis of Recent Sources and Publications. Recently, the topic of the Soviet religious policy in post-war Transcarpathia has become the subject of research by historians of Uzhhorod University. They did research on the state-church relations with the Orthodox (Danylets' & Mishchanyn, 2011; 2013; 2013a), Greek Catholic (Pahirya, 2014, Fenysh, 2006), Roman Catholic (Kapitan, 2013) and Protestant (Leshko, 2008) denominations. The topic of anti-religious policy in Transcarpathia is presented in the research works of A. Tershak (Tershak, 2019; 2021). I. Datskiv and L. Kapitan (Datskiv & Kapitan, 2022) study the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in the Ukrainian SSR.

The embodiment of anti-religious policy during the entire post-war period in Soviet Ukraine was analyzed by A. Sychevskyy (Sychevs'kyy, 2018). There are scientific publications on certain southern regions of the Ukrainian SSR (Kostyuk, 2020; Tatarchenko, 2017). The process of conducting anti-religious agitation in the Western Ukrainian region became the subject of research by I. Shustak (Shustak, 2013). The specific facts of anti-religious and atheistic propaganda in Zakarpattia region are provided in the publications by Yu. Danylets (Danylets', 2015; 2016; 2018) and V. Mishchanyn (Danylets' & Mishchanyn, 2011; 2013; 2013a).

The majority of researchers share the same opinion that the anti-religious campaign began in 1954. Thus, on July 7, 1954, the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU was adopted “On Major Shortcomings in Scientific and Atheistic Propaganda and Measures to Improve it” (Postanovlenie, 1971), which launched the first wave of the anti-religious campaign officially. But already on November 10, 1954, a new resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU was issued “On Errors in the Conduct of Scientific and Atheistic Propaganda among the Population” (Postanovlenie, 1971a). According to P. Bondarchuk and V. Danylenko, the anti-religious campaign caused much dissatisfaction not only among the clergy and the faithful, but also among the majority of the population. Therefore, the leadership of the CPSU tried to shift the responsibility for “drawbacks” to the lower party and state bodies (Bondarchuk, 2012, p. 67).

However, a thorough study of the materials of the State Archive of Transcarpathian region gives us grounds to assert that at the beginning of 1953, a rather massive attack on religion began in the region. In the archival file, we find a 10-page summary of information by the representative of the Council for the Affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church under the Council of Ministers of the USSR on Zakarpattia region, A. Sherstyuk: “Information on the Situation of the Orthodox Church in the Region and the Course of the Struggle between the Orthodox Church and the Uniate Church”, dated March 4, 1953.

The purpose of the article is to analyze, on the material of documentary sources, the beginning, process, forms and methods of anti-religious propaganda in Zakarpattia Oblast in 1953. It was at that time that the state policy concerning religion and church began to change. After the death of J. Stalin, the state interfered in the life of religious communities more and

more actively. In 1954 M. Khrushchov's attempt to strengthen the anti-religious policy failed and was postponed until 1958.

The Results of the Research. Based on the materials of the republican census of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1930, A. Sherstiuk, Commissioner for the Affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church, provides statistics for Transcarpathian region (State Archives of Transcarpathia Region (SATR), f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 1): the Greek Catholics – 359 191 (49,6 %); the Orthodox – 112 034 (15,4 %); the Jewish religion – 102 542 (14,4 %); the Roman Catholics – 69 262 (9,5 %); reformers /evangelists/ – 74 173 (10,3 %); atheists – 492 (0,1 %); the Hussites /the followers of Jan Hus/ – 2 218 (0,3 %); the others /sectarians/ – 989 (0,2 %).

It is noted separately that before the rule of the Soviets, as of September 1, 1944, the Greek Catholic Church was the owner of 447 church buildings, in which 306 priests served, another 69 priests were retired or taught in gymnasiums. In addition, 4 for men and 1 for women monasteries of the Basilian order operated in Transcarpathia, and a theological seminary in Uzhhorod also operated.

At that time, there were 117 parishes of the Orthodox Church, which was the owner of 147 church buildings. Already with the establishment of the Soviet power, as of January 1, 1949, there were 250 churches, including 21 monasteries, and 144 priests.

A. Sherstyuk singles out “three main periods” in the history of the struggle of the Orthodox Church, enunciating the Bolshevik postulates, that “the struggle of the Ukrainian and Russian population of Transcarpathia against the Uniate Church and for the Orthodox Church was actually a struggle for joining the Russian and Ukrainian people. This age-old dream of the Transcarpathian people could only come true after the liberation of Transcarpathia by the Soviet Army” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 2).

The first period is the revival of the Orthodox Church from 1900 “until the liberation of the Transcarpathian people from the fascist slavery by the Soviet Army”. The party official defines the second period, i. e., from October of 1944, when “the Orthodox Church received equal rights with the Uniate Church. Immediately, the Orthodox Church uses its rights to attack the Uniate Church” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 2). Although, at the same time, he admits that in 1946 – 1947 the Greek Catholic Church did not lose almost a single parish. According to A. Sherstyuk, the third period began in February of 1949. It was the last massive attack on the Greek-Catholic Church in Transcarpathia by the Soviet state, which the party official tries to present under the guise of the struggle between the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholics, without pointing out that the Orthodox Church became only a tool in the hands of the Soviet authorities, and the Greek-Catholic leadership of the church was under increased pressure of the authorities and state security agencies. Instead we read the following: “1. The decision of the Regional Council of Workers' Deputies agreed with the Council for the Affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church under the Council of Ministers of the USSR on the transfer of the premises of the Greek-Catholic Cathedral in the town of Mukachevo to the Orthodox is implemented. 2. In February of 1949, the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR dated December 27, 1947 on the transfer to the Orthodox Church of the Greek Catholic Cathedral premises and the premises of the residence of the diocesan administration of the Uniate Church in the city of Uzhhorod is implemented. 3. In connection with the transfer of the Greek Catholic Cathedral premises and the residence of the Uniate bishop to the use of the Orthodox Church, the Capitular Vicar Murani sent a message to all Uniate priests, that his activity as the Capitular Vicar ceased, and the chapter house also ceased to operate” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, pp. 3–4). In two more paragraphs of the document it

was noted that during the transfer of the premises “there were no misunderstandings”, and “the Uniate Church compromised itself among the masses of believers”.

In a separate block of the commissioner’s report there was singled out the item under the title: “On the Reunification of the Uniate Clergy with the Orthodox Church”. It was written that 127, i. e., “almost half of the Uniate clergy reunited with the Orthodox Church”. The rest declared openly that they did not want to “break the oath given to the Roman throne”. Some of them switched to illegal status, performed religious rites secretly, and also conducted “the anti-Soviet agitation against collectivization and other measures of the Soviet government”. The rest were looking for another job, as they believed that there was no point in reuniting, because “at this time, being a priest means barely existence. Parish premises built for priests by believers were taken away. Land is not given. Believers joined the collective farm and cannot give anything to the priest. The Orthodox priests also have nothing to live for. There are no privileges. Big taxes. It is better to go to the civil service. Salary and respect will be guaranteed” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 5).

As a result of the violent liquidation of Uzhhorod Uniate Church by the Soviet authorities, 229 Greek-Catholic parishes joined the Orthodox Church. Thus, after the “unification”, there were 346 parishes with 567 church buildings in the Orthodox Church. 254 priests served there: 144 Orthodox priests and 110 “reunited”. Commissioner A. Sherstyuk also noted that “in 1953, 512 church buildings belonged to the Orthodox Church, i. e., it decreased by 55 churches, of which 30 churches were closed in 1952. Religious communities decreased by 43. The clergy who served in parishes churches was reduced by 30 people” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 7).

For the party official one of the main issues was the decrease in religiosity among the population in Zakarpattia Oblast. He noted that although “religiosity dropped during the period of the Soviet power significantly”, it still “continues to be high and covers the absolute majority of the population”. Such decline could also be explained by the fact that part of the Greek Catholic faithful stopped attending church liturgies. Another part, especially the intelligentsia, began to attend liturgies at the Roman Catholic churches.

High religiosity among the population of Transcarpathia was also evidenced by strict observance of religious holidays by the majority of collective farm workers and loggers. Even if a priest urged them to go to work, few obeyed him.

A. Sherstyuk wrote the following words in one of the documents that “I have not yet carried out restrictions on the activities of the Orthodox Church, I mean that the activities of the more reactionary Roman Catholic Church and other communities are not restricted” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 9). He also mentioned the “Yehovist sect” among the reactionary ones, for the refusal of young men to serve in the Soviet army, the refusal to receive passports, state loans, and to participate in voting during deputies election of various levels. Restrictions on Orthodoxy, according to the party official, “would only facilitate the growth of more reactionary churches than the Orthodox Church” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 9).

The authorities took the first steps to liquidate the Orthodox monasteries. Thus, if in 1950 there were 17 Orthodox monasteries in Transcarpathian region, of which 10 were for women (258 nuns), 7 were for men (111 monks), then in 1953, 15 monasteries remained – 2 monasteries for men were liquidated (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 10).

In 1953, in accordance with the resolution in the affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church under the RM of the USSR, arrangements were made between regional city executive committees and religious communities of the Orthodox Church to transfer to the latter

“indefinite and free use of church premises /churches/ and objects of religious worship” (SATR, f. R-195, d. 8, c. 25, p. 157). On December 12, 1953, the head of the executive committee of the Transcarpathian Regional Council of Workers’ Deputies, I. Turianytsia, instructed local officials by sending them a confidential letter: “After the transfer of the church premises of the self-liquidated Uniate Church to the Orthodox Church, two or three Orthodox churches are considered to be operating in many villages. And that situation is observed during the period when the needs of believers are satisfied by one or two churches, and other churches are actually closed and church services are not held in them. In this regard, there are cases when religious communities complain that they are overburdened with state payments for church premises that are not used by them and in which church services have not been conducted for several years” (SATR, f. R-195, d. 8, c. 25, p. 158). It was recommended that the local authorities enter into agreements on operating churches, and the keys to churches, which are not in use, should be handed over to the district executive committee or village council. In some period of time, such premises were turned into farm buildings.

For example, at the beginning of 1953, a list of “houses of prayer closed with the sanction of the Council and handed over for cultural needs” was drawn up. These were 6 synagogues of Transcarpathian region, which were taken away from the Jewish communities. In particular, in 1947, Uzhhorod synagogue was transferred to the Philharmonic, in 1950, Vyshkovo synagogue – used “for economic needs”, and the Horinchevo, Drahovo, Sokyrnytsia, Svialiava synagogues were transferred to the “Kolhospnyk” society gymnasium” (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 72, pp. 1–2). However, “the synagogue in the village Horinchevo is not used in the village, in Sokyrnytsia is transferred to the school, half of the premises are classrooms, and the other half is a teacher’s residence. A minor reconstruction was carried out. In the village of Drahovo – the synagogue was transferred to the grain storage of the collective farm. A complete reconstruction was not carried out” (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 72, p. 7).

Synagogues continued to be taken away by the authorities. Thus, by the decision of the Executive Committee of the Transcarpathian Regional Council of Workers’ Deputies No. 2078 of December 25, 1952, the synagogue in Mukachevo on St. Uzhhorodska 7, was transferred “at the disposal of Mukachevo Town Council for cultural and educational needs” (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 72, p. 11).

From the first quarter of 1953, the Council for Religious Cults under the Council of Ministers of the USSR introduced a new, approved by the Central Statutory Administration of the USSR, form of a statistical report on registered religious communities, houses of worship and ministers of worship (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 70, pp. 8–10). This new form of a statistical report, in our opinion, was done for the sake of a clear accounting and control of religious denominations.

From domes of church premises, which were not used for various reasons (the former Lutheran prayer house in the city of Uzhhorod on Gorky Square, of the former Reformed prayer house of Podvynohradovo, the Greek-Catholic monasteries of M. Berezny, Imstychevo) it was proposed to remove the bells and hand them over for remelting of non-ferrous metals (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 72, p. 3).

The issue of community registration was also under the special focus of the heads of the Council for Religious Cults under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (I. Poliansky) and the Ukrainian SSR (P. Vilkhovy). M. Rasputko, the representative of this organ in the Transcarpathian region, almost got a penalty for violating “the state discipline” because he did not submit the conclusions and decisions of the Regional Executive Committee on the

registration of the Reformed religious communities in Uzhhorod and Mukachevo and the Jewish community in Khust in time (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 71, p. 1).

In relations with the Soviet authorities, some denominations tried to show their commitment to it. Thus, on March 4, 1953, the regional dean of the Reformed Church, Adalbert Hanchi, addressed the priests of the Reformed Church: "On the radio, I learned about the misfortune – the sad news that our dear Leader and Teacher, Head of Ministers Comrade Stalin became very ill. I call on all the priests of Transcarpathian region to conduct the Divine Liturgy with the faithful and pray for the recovery of our beloved and dear Leader Joseph Vissarionovych Stalin" (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 73, p. 2). Even after the death of J. Stalin, A. Hanchi supported the political initiatives of the Soviet Union enthusiastically. In particular, on June 19, 1953, the dean supported the resolutions of the World Congress of Peace Supporters in Budapest officially: "Transcarpathian reformed believers, together with all the people of our Soviet Motherland, cast their vote for peace and give all their strength to protect and preserve peace" (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 73, p. 3).

On March 7, 1953, Mocharko, the senior presbyter of the Evangelical Christian Baptists, mourned the death of the Soviet leader publicly: "In connection with the death of the great leader of our state, Joseph Vissarionovych Stalin, please call on the faithful to unite around the government of the Soviet Union and honour the memory of the great leader by arranging a prayer meeting, a fervent prayer for our government and our Soviet country" (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 75, p. 1).

After J. Stalin's death, with the beginning of the rehabilitation of the victims of political repressions, M. Rasputko, the commissioner of religious cults in Transcarpathian region, had a certain problem, which he could not solve on his own, having asked for advice from higher authorities. On September 1, 1953, the administrator of the Roman Catholic Church appealed to him with a request to register J. Tovt as a priest in the village of Serednie, who had been convicted by a military tribunal in the fall of 1944, and at that time he was released prematurely (SATR, f. R-1490, d. 1, c. 74, p. 5). On September 6, 1953, the villagers of many neighbouring district villages collected signatures in support of J. Tovt, and P. Vilkhovy wrote back that if the Ministry of Internal Affairs authorities registered J. Tovt in the village of Serednie for a permanent residence, he did not object to it.

In 1953, the first feuilletons against the Orthodox clergy were published in the regional press. We mean the feuilleton published in the newspaper "Molod Zakarpattia" on April 5, 1953 under the title "Web" and in the newspaper "Sovietskoye Zakarpatie" on April 30, 1953 – "Baptism in Sokyrnytsia". They appeared on the initiative of their authors, because for some time the authorized representative of the Ruska Orthodox Church did not know how to react to them (SATR, f. R-544, d. 2, c. 32, p. 2).

The investigation of the facts described in the "Baptism in Sokyrnytsia" feuilleton lasted almost three months. The feuilleton was discussed at the Komsomol meetings in the district. The case of three Komsomol members was considered at the Bureau of the District Committee of the LKSU. The members of the VLKSM Holova and Monych received a severe reprimand with a note in the record card, and Reshylova – the reprimand only (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 42).

In the same year, the desecration of the Orthodox shrines was recorded. Thus, the priest of Nyzhniy Bystry, Khust district, reported the fact that in October of 1953, unknown people who drove the car, number plate 55-17 ZYS, tied a rope to the cross, broke the cross and dragged it 5 kilometers from the place. In a letter to the district prosecutor, the Commissioner

of the Council for the Affairs of the Ruska Orthodox Church interpreted this event as “a hooligan act that offends the feelings of believers” (SATR, f. R-544, d. 2, c. 34, p. 45).

At the end of 1952 – the beginning of 1953, anti-religious propaganda intensified. For example, from October of 1952 to April of 1953 in Uzhhorod, in artils, enterprises and organizations of the city 92 lectures were conducted by lecturers of the regional lecture bureau, by the members of the Society for the spread of political and scientific knowledge and by the lecturers of the city lecture group of the cultural and religious department. Let's name some of them: “Marxism, Leninism on Religion” (a lecturer – “comrade” Kulahin), “Science and Religion about the Origin of a Human Being” (“comrade” Kudienko), “The Irreconcilability of Science and Religion” (T. Sevbo), “The Uniate Church in Transcarpathia at the Service of Imperialism” (“comrade” Chubukov), “On the Origin of Religious Holidays and Rites and their Reactionary Essence” (“comrade” Butsko), “The Vatican at the Service of Reaction” (“comrade” Povch), “The Origin and Class Essence of Religion” (“comrade” Lustih) and the others (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 11).

As of April 15, 1953, 148 lectures were conducted in Berehiv district, which were attended by 14,208 people. Lectures were conducted at enterprises, collective farms and state farms, MTS, at seminars held in the district center. I. Sirko, the secretary of Berehiv District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, noted that as a result of the anti-religious work carried out, “production work improved”, “during “Paska” holidays (Easter), the majority of collective farmers worked in collective farm fields”, “in such seven-year schools as Berehy, Ivanivka, Dobrosillia, Kvasovo, etc., there was 100% school attendance” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, pp. 12–13).

In the first quarter of 1953, in Velykoberezniansky District, a meeting “On the Importance of Natural and Scientific, and Anti-religious Propaganda” was held with the heads of village lecturers, lecturers of the district lecture group and lecturers of the department for the spread of political and scientific knowledge. Seminars of lecturers of rural lecture groups were held on the same issue. At the end of January and the beginning of February of 1953, a film festival was organized on scientific and natural topics at 6 cinema buildings, 36 times films were on, before the watching of which lectures were conducted. In total, in the first quarter of 1953, about 8,000 conversations were held and 83 lectures were conducted on the following topics: “Opposition of Science and Religion”, “Origin and Class Essence of Religion”, “Science and Religion about the Structure of the Universe”, “Sectarianism and its Reactionary Role” and the others (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 14).

Mishchenko, the secretary of the Velykoberezniansky District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, noted that collective farmers often ask lecturers the following questions: “Why does religion teach about the origin of a human being?”, “Why is the church separated from the state?”, “Whose interests does the church protect in capitalist states?”, “Why is church ceremony allowed in our country?” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 15).

Especially on the eve of major religious holidays communists held amateur concerts in village clubs. The goal was to attract more young people here. Thus, in 1953, on the eve of Easter, 10 lectures on anti-religious topics were conducted in the villages of Velykoberezniansky district, 11 concerts were held, and dancing parties were organized in the majority of clubs.

On December 29, 1952, in Volivsky district, the plenum of the district committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine discussed the issue “On the State and Measures to Improve Lecture Propaganda in the District”. Chief focus was on the “production of anti-religious

propaganda among the population” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 20). Although the quantitative indicators of anti-religious measures were impressive, the head of propaganda and agitation department of the district was forced to state: “There is still a low level of anti-religious propaganda in the district, as a result of which many young people still attend churches” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 21).

The best lecturers received praise from party members at various meetings and seminars, and were noted in reports. Thus, the secretary of Irshava District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Kapitan reported: “The best lecturers of the district lecture group V. I. Huz, V. P. Kerechany, Roman, Liakh, Matsak, Khodakovsky and the others systematically conduct lectures on scientific, natural and atheistic topics”. The personality of V. Huz, a lecturer, was mentioned as an example who conducted the lecture “Catholicism is the Enemy of Science” for collective farmers in Irshava. In the lecture, he “elucidated how modern Catholicism serves imperialism, fights against natural science and social sciences, that the Catholics are closely connected with the right-wing socialists” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, pp. 22–23).

The secretary of Mukachevo district committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine noted in the report that in some villages of the district (Kopynivtsi, Mykulivtsi, Horonda) scientific, natural and anti-religious propaganda had been launched. As a result, according to the party member, in Kopynivtsi a priest Chenheri used this to his advantage when a “miracle flower” appeared in the church. “Flower”, however, was “detected and measures were taken” to improve propaganda (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 25).

In Rakhiv district, when lectures were conducted by the party leadership of the district, drawbacks were recorded: there were cases when the lectures were conducted without a prior discussion or review; some lecturers did not connect the lecture content with local facts. But the biggest accusation was that some lecturers conducted lectures on a low ideological and content level. Thus, the freelance lecturer Kushnir “made many mistakes while conducting the lecture, and that is why, he was expelled from the lecture group” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 29).

The absence of anti-religious propaganda was noted in certain villages of Tiachiv district – Hanychi, Kalyny, Kalyny-Zarika, Hlyboky Potik, Tarasivka, Krychevo and Kolodne. Not a single anti-religious lecture was conducted in these villages, and there “many Komsomol members attend church liturgies, and in Hanychi, Kalyny, H. Potik sects operate” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, p. 36).

“Religious sects” (the Baptists) operated also found in Uzhhorod Region, in the villages of Antalovtsi and Khudliovo. Although it was noted that during the elections “almost all sectarians took part in voting”. The Department of Agitation and Propaganda of Uzhhorod District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Hyria also pointed out that the district and political department newspapers did not publish much material on atheistic issues. Instead, the table book of Uzhhorod agitators became the pamphlet by P. Karmansky “The Vatican – the inspirer of obscurantism and world reaction” (SATR, f. P-1, d. 1, c. 2281, pp. 38–39).

The Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research. Thus, during the final period of Stalinism, the religious situation in Zakarpattia Oblast was quite complicated. In 1949, the Greek Catholic Church, one of the largest denominations in the region, was liquidated by the Soviet state by means of forceful methods. One part of the Greek-Catholic priesthood “reunited” with the Orthodox Church, another part of it switched to civilian work officially, continuing to perform rites secretly. More than a hundred priests were convicted.

Having resolved the issue with the Greek Catholic Church, the authorities tried to establish complete control over the rest of the denominations. In particular, at that time the largest was the Orthodox denomination, which in 1945 left the Serbian Orthodox Church and came under the jurisdiction of the Ruska Orthodox Church. The Roman Catholic Church also maintained a fairly strong position. The reformists and various “sects” made a certain amount of trouble for the communists. At that time the main task of the communist government was “to reduce the religiosity of the population”.

At the end of 1952 – the beginning of 1953, the authorities took an active action. At the regional, district and local levels, lecturers of the regional lecture bureau, members of the society for the spread of political and scientific knowledge and lecturers of city and district lecture groups of religious and secular departments conducted hundreds of lectures on natural and scientific, anti-religious topics at enterprises, institutions and organizations, collective farms and state farms of Transcarpathian region. Thousands of discussions on atheist topics were also held. In order to encourage listeners to visit such events, the authorities organized watching films, amateur concerts, etc. The first anti-religious publications appeared in the regional press.

It should be noted that there were some gains in anti-religious work (going to work during religious holidays, 100% school attendance), but this campaign did not achieve the predicted results. The Bolsheviks never succeeded in transforming the worldview of the population of Transcarpathia into a purely atheistic one. Considering a rather thorough analysis of the topic of (anti)religious policy in Soviet Transcarpathia during Khrushchov period, we see further prospects in the study of the peculiarities of its implementation during the period of stagnation.

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